

“WOMEN CHARACTERS IN MAHESH DATTANI’S PLAYS”

* Kalpana Agarwal and Sapna Agnihotri

*Govt. T.R. S. College, Rewa (M.P.)

Received: 21/11/2016**Revised:** 25/11/2016**Accepted:** 1/12/2016**ABSTRACT:-**

Mahesh Dattani is a name that guided a faltering Indian English Drama on the path of reliability, steadfastness and distinct identity. A director, actor, dancer, teacher, and writer, he was born on August 7, 1958. He writes about the marginalized sections of our society such as minorities, women, gays, and transsexuals. His works deal with burning social issues of contemporary Indian society. His plays have been staged to critical acclaim all over the country and abroad. He, in his plays, keeps women at the centre of his dramatic world and may be called an avant-garde feminist. His plays not only bring up gender issues and the space allotted to women in a patriarchal society, but also they deal with gender biases and prejudices which still affect the lives of many girl-children even amongst educated, urban families. In the present paper a study is made on Mahesh Dattani’s Tara that explores the fate of the women in general and fate of the girl child in particular in rural or urban Indian families. It speaks about male chauvinism prevalent in the present form and brings about the stark reality of the woman playing fiddle to man. It is a comment on the predicament of women in the past, reflects the status of women in the present and dramatizes the complexities of the social setup. It is contextual and relevant in the light of the increasing incidents of feticide, infanticide and widening gap in the sex ratio of male and female child. Through this play, Dattani talks of the concerns and perceptions of the new woman and shows how the women are not satisfied with the status of a homemaker bestowed on them by the male dominated society.

Keywords: - stark reality, reliability, steadfastness, patriarchal, reflects the status, feticide, infanticide, widening gap and distinct identity.

IDENTITY CRISIS

In the history of Post-Independence drama in English Mahesh Dattani has occupied a significant place with his multi-faceted personality. In fact, Mahesh Dattani is a name that guided a faltering Indian English Drama on the path of reliability, steadfastness and distinct

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identity. A director, actor, dancer, teacher, and writer, he was born on August 7, 1958. He writes about the marginalized sections of our society such as minorities, women, gays, and transsexuals. His works deal with burning social issues of contemporary Indian society. His plays have been staged to critical acclaim all over the country and abroad. Alyque Padamsee says regarding him, at last we have playwright who gives sixty million English speaking Indians an identity.

He has used the contemporary sensational social issues as a theme for his plays such as, Gender discrimination in *Dance like a Man* (1989), *Tara* (1990), and *Bravely Fought Queen* (1991), Communalism in *Final Solutions* (1993), Gay community in *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998), *Seven Circles Round the Fire* (1998), *Victims of incest in 30 Days in September* (2001), and *Incest, gender bias, and death in Brief Candle* (2009). All these plays embody many of the classic concerns of the drama world. His plays not only bring up gender issues and the space allotted to women in a patriarchal society, but also they deal with gender biases and prejudices which still affect the lives of many girl-children even amongst educated, urban families. Dattani enjoys the distinction of being the first and only Indian English playwright to win Sahitya Akademi award for his play *Final Solutions* in 1998 thereby becoming a morale booster for other playwrights of Indian drama in English. He is the true successor of Girish Karnad and largely responsible for the revolutionary progress of English drama. He, in his plays, keeps women at the centre of his dramatic world and may be called an avant-garde feminist. His plays not only bring up gender issues and the space allotted to women in a patriarchal society, but also they deal with gender biases and prejudices which still affect the lives of many girl-children even amongst educated, urban families. They are also marked for dealing with commonplace themes in the language of common people expressing their hope, aspirations, desire, frustration, joy and anguish, and effort to cope with their day-to-day problems.

As a founder of a performing arts group called 'Playpen,' Dattani produced quite a few plays of his and also those of others. Though he is known for his powerful play *Final Solutions*, his equally powerful play *Tara* has won acclaim of the theatre audience in the world. The play was performed as *Twinkle Tara* in 1990 in Bangalore and won tremendous response from the public. But, next year, when it was staged in Mumbai, it was called *Tara* gives us a glimpse into the modern society which claims to be liberal and advanced into thought and action. It speaks about male chauvinism prevalent in the present form and brings about the stark reality of the woman playing fiddle to man. It is a comment on the predicament of women in the past, reflects

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the status of women in the present and dramatizes the complexities of the social setup. The play is an exhortation to the society to shed the age old prejudices against women and have a progressive outlook. It is contextual and relevant in the light of the increasing incidents of feticide, infanticide and widening gap in the sex ratio of male and female child. It is not just the story of the protagonist of the play, but it is the story of every girl child born in Indian family whether urban or rural.

Tara, though the main character of the play has been a victim of the social prejudices against women, she has all the traits of an emerging new woman. She is more enthusiastic and full of jest and spark of life. She has high aspiration which she cannot accomplish because of her handicapped state. She bears some kind of grudge against the society. She seems to have some kind of hatred towards the outside world. Her world is compressed and consists of her parents and her brother whom she is very close to. She is a lively girl who wants to twinkle and shine, just like her name. But she does not get enough opportunities as his brother gets, eventually wastes away, and dies. She symbolizes the modern society, which claims to be liberal and advanced. But in fact it is a cripple mentality. Though her parents are educated they show a marked difference between male and female child. They, particularly her father, feel that giving equal opportunities to men and women is not always justifiable. Indian society that values men and male qualities more than women and female traits gives a striking twist to Dattani's Tara.

It reflects Dattani's concerns and perceptions of the problems arising out of clash of values, old and new. He reflects on the predicament of women in the past, comments on their status in the present. The play dramatizes his understanding of who considers responsible for their predicament and exhorts us to shed our age-old prejudices in order to have peace and harmony in family and society. Through this play, Dattani talks of the concerns and perceptions of the new woman and shows how the women are not satisfied with the status of a homemaker bestowed on them by the male dominated society. He also delineates their aspirations when he shows how Bharati insists that Tara and not the members of her family must decide what she wants for herself. The women who belong to Bharati's generation are eulogized by men for their beauty. Even such women would love to enjoy when men appreciate their charm. But Tara, the new woman gives importance to her intelligence because she knows very well what she requires to live meaningfully. In the play, Tara and Roopa belong to two different classes. Their perceptions differ. Roopa accepts the predicament of girls in society and narrates what the Patel's did without any sounding concern. But Tara is surprised when she learns from Roopa the fate that waits a new born girl child. In the history of Post-Independence drama in English

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CONCLUSION:-

To conclude, we may say that Dattani's Tara presents the bizarre reality of women playing a secondary role to man and the idea of female infanticide. Tara, as daughter, experiences the maltreatment and partiality from her parents. In fact, the purpose of this play is to illuminate the minds of female gender for not to give preference to a male child over a female child. Through this play, Dattani stresses women to look back at their journey of life. They must be like Tara and become women in real sense. The play also humbly suggests the mother not to become upset at girl's birth, not to treat their girl children contemptuously, and not to stop them from scaling newer heights in their life to come. The play enthrallingly questions the role of a society that treats the children of the same womb in two different ways. It shows the status of women in the century. Though women repeatedly prove themselves to be successful in every field, the deep rooted gender discrimination continues among even the affluent and educated people living in a so-called modern life in the metropolitan cities. It enquires how women are not made to think or decide what to do but simply submit to the wishes of man. Women as a mother, a wife, a daughter, and as a sister turn out only to be women, submitting to their wills and losing their own identity. Dattani talks of the concerns and perceptions of the new woman and shows how the women are not satisfied with the status of a homemaker bestowed on them by the male dominated society.

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