

STUDY OF MAHESH DATTANI'S CULTURAL IDENTITIES



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M.Phil., Roll No. :140705: Session: 2014-15

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ABSTRACT

Culture is the way of life of a community or a social group of people or a clan etc., as well as their common beliefs and practices, according to an anthropological definition of the term, which simplifies a word with a meaning that is otherwise rather complicated. Members of the same culture make sense of the world or interpret it in a manner that is virtually identical to how other members of their culture do so. In other words, they realize and interpret the world around them in practically the same way. But it goes without saying that even within the confines of a single culture, there will be a wide range of emotions, ideas, and thoughts, and it is quite probable that all of

these things are susceptible to being interpreted in a variety of different ways. The idea behind culture, on the other hand, is that it organizes and governs the social practices of its members, as well as having a significant impact on how those members behave by shaping them in line with the culture's rules and mandates. The particular meanings that objects take on depend entirely on the one who is doing the interpreting. The manner in which we conceptualize and categories things, as well as the values we ascribe to them, all contribute to the meanings that we assign to the objects that we represent. Participants of the same culture are considered to be a part of the same cultural circuit, and as a

result, they share the same cultural codes. These cultural standards frequently play a role in the construction or conception that

we do of something that actually exists in the real world, and as a result, the way that we portray that item to ourselves.

Keywords: Cultural, Identities, Practices, Representation

INTRODUCTION

In this context, representation has very tight ties not just to identity but also to knowledge. In point of fact, it may be rather challenging to understand what it means to "be English," or indeed what it means to "be French," "be German," "be South African," or "be Japanese," independent of the many of ways in which our concepts of national identity or national cultures have been expressed. Without these 'signifying' systems, we would be unable to assume such identities (or, alternatively, to reject them), and as a result, we would be unable to construct or maintain the shared 'living world' that we refer to as a culture.

Therefore, representation plays an important role in the process of generating meanings, in which the culture and the paraphernalia associated with it play a constitutive role. Therefore, the moment one starts using representation in any social context, it instantly assumes a position that is both a means of communicating and a means of contesting what it conveys. This happens as soon as one begins to use representation in any social circumstance. The significance of Mahesh Dattani is not limited to the fact that he writes about or is a representative of the hidden concerns connected to gender and culture in Indian society; rather, it also resides in the fact that he problems associated with these themes. According to what Erin Mee writes in A Note on the Play of Tara, "by pulling taboo subjects out from under the rug and placing them on stage for public discussion, Dattani challenges the constructions of 'India' and 'Indian' as they have traditionally been defined in modern theatre." Dattani's play challenges the constructions of "India" and "Indian" in modern theatre. (Dattani 319)

The problem of gender inequality in India is a multifaceted and convoluted topic. The idea that women are fragile and unable to provide for themselves or their families is one that has persisted throughout time and will likely continue to do so as long as this stereotype continues to be perpetuated. In addition to this, there is the trying process of bringing up a girl-child, giving her an education, and then marrying her off. Both of these activities involve a significant amount of expense, which in the case of a boy-child would otherwise be considered an investment. This is the burden of giving dowry as opposed to the excitement of receiving it. A

picture of the entrenched patriarchy emerges unashamedly from the text as Roopa, the daughter of the neighbour, reluctantly refers to the abhorrent practise of the Patels, who used to drown their 'girl-child' in milk in order to avoid the obligation of paying dowry.

This paints a picture of the entrenched patriarchy. This also points to the fact that her status as a weakling in society is largely attributable to the fact that she is economically sterile and so cannot have children. This invidious feminine reverence towards the financially dominant male, on the other hand, experiences a full about-face if this diacritic of economic instability is taken into consideration. Patriarchy is not based on a person's gender but rather on their economic status. The wealthier a woman is, the less likely it is that she will be a victim. And not only that, but after that she attempts to colonise her husband, who is otherwise the apparent representation of patriarchy in the relationship. This is the manner in which the notion of feminism in India has been problematized and put into question in Tara, and Dattani is discovered to be contributing aspects to the prevalent, so-called generic concepts of feminism.

REVIEW LITERATURE

When Chandan states that he will not go to college without Tara and that if Tara has to miss one year for kidney transplant, he too would lose one year, Patel is genuinely upset about it even though Tara is not less brilliant than Chandan. Patel is simply concerned about Chandan's career. In this scene, Dattani portrays and imports the patriarchal society, in which nobody in the families of Indian society will bother about the welfare of the girls, as Dattani reflects through Tara's character in Tara. He claims on multiple occasions that he has some future plans for Chandan, but he hardly shows any interests in Tara's future. Despite the fact that they are both disabled, Tara's situation is more perilous. It is made abundantly evident that Tara is in a hopeless state by Bharathi's commentary on her. Bharathi reassures Chandan that people would tolerate you in their midst. You will be accepted by everyone, but she will never be! Oh, the agony she is going to go through when she looks at herself when she is eighteen or twenty! The number thirty is inconceivable. And what should we say about the number forty-five? If only the mother can comprehend the struggles that her daughter goes through, then what does it say about the girl's father? (349) There will always be tension between man and woman in every aspect of life's natural instincts. Therefore, there will unquestionably be a clause between them, and it will never come to an end. After Bharathi's grandfather passed away, he left all of his money to Chandan. Bharathi's grandfather did not give a second thought to his disabled grand daughter, who was in desperate need of some financial assistance for existence. What Bharathi

does not say is that despite her knowledge and positivity, the male community has rejected Tara because of her physical disability. This is something that Bharathi does not mention.

One hears virtually the same agonised voice of a mother for her disabled daughter in Tennessee William's novel *The Glass Menagerie*, which is set in the United States in the 1930s. The mother hopes that in spite of Laura's physical flaws, her daughter would grow up to be intelligent and graceful, and that she will eventually marry a respectable man and start a family. She says to her daughter, "Why, you are not handicapped; you merely have a minor imperfection that is scarcely apparent, even!" Develop your charm and vivacity, and that's all you need to do to make up for it! When individuals have little disadvantages like that, they nurture other things to make up for it. (247) In every patriarchal society, a mother's worry for her disabled daughter is the same, regardless matter whether it is the 1930s in the United States or the 1990s in India. The females are considered to be consumer products, and as everyone knows, faulty commodities are never purchased.

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When the term "queer" is used as a synonym for "gay" or "homosexual," it is unable to do credit to the political intervention that it intends to conduct. Instead, it unhappily ends up reflecting the very binary of homosexuality and heterosexuality that it seeks to dismantle. The development of queer theory in Europe in the early years of the 1990s was simultaneously an expansion and a break from homosexual and lesbian studies conducted in the decades before to that time period. The ethos of the queer movement may be described as deconstructive, and it promotes the study of gender and sexuality not from the perspectives established by patriarchal conventions, but from every conceivable aspect. In the context of the study of

sexuality, queer theory's consideration of social spaces, historical traditions, and cultural institutions continues to be one of its most important contributions.

is difficult to comprehend. Sexuality has been described as "a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasure, the incitation to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, and the strengthening of controls and resistances are linked to one another in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power." Sexuality is "a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasure, the incitation to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, and the strengthening of (106). As a result, sexuality is the embodiment of the truth of sex and the joys it offers. In his further elaboration, Foucault expressed his views that relations of sex initiate a "deployment of alliance," which he explained as "a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions" (106).

MOVE YOUR BODY LIKE A MAN

The tragedy that is the human condition is the subject of Dattani's plays. In a similar vein, *Dance Like a Man* is an engrossing play that delves into the modern social situation in India and offers some fascinating insights. The National Panorama in 1998 presented this play with the prize for the Best Picture in English, which was won by this play. "What one likes about them is the manner that he brings in the dynamics of personal and moral decisions while focusing on human interactions," says NeeruTanton (91).

In his piece "Dance a Like Man," Dattani has done an excellent job of presenting a set of familial relationships. The friendship between Amritlal Parekh and Jairaj is the primary focus of the play's construction. Amritlal is a father who had the expectation that all of his children and wives would prostrate themselves before him. This drama focuses mostly on the life of a young dancer named Jairaj, who, while under the influence of his father, loses his job, his passion, his goals, and the reason he was put on this earth. Amritlal does not make an effort to comprehend the thoughts, sentiments, or challenges that his son Jairaj is experiencing when he makes the decision to pursue a career as a dancer. He endeavours to exert dominance over Jairaj and judge him in accordance with certain rigid expectations pertaining to proper masculine behaviour. The father and son give the impression of existing in two different universes for the entirety of the play, with little to no interaction between the two of them.

The action of this play takes place in Chennai, a city in which dance plays an important role in everyday life. The author, Dattani, bases the play around the fundamental idea of a passionate

desire to dance. The intention of Ratna, who is Amritlal's daughter-in-law, is for her daughter Lata to make a name for herself as a dancer. Because of the oppressive patriarchal influence of her father-in-law, Amritlal, she is not happy with herself even if she has trained herself to be a dancer. The contention that exists between different generations serves as the central theme of the play. Amritlal is a representation of the attitudes held by both the elder generation, which is represented by Jairaj and Ratna, and the younger generation. They present a challenge to the elderly gentleman who has a negative judgement of the art form. The societal stigma that males face when it comes to the skill of dancing is brought to the forefront in this drama. This play presents an argument against the notion that gender identity is a burden that not just falls on the shoulders of women but also of males.

In his play "Dance Like a Man," Mahesh Dattani calls attention to the intricacies of relationships that exist under the influence of patriarchal power (1989). Through his depiction of the hardships endured by both male and female characters, he brought to light the negative impact that patriarchy has on Indian culture. In this play, Dattani investigates the dynamics of the relationships between the various members of the family with honesty and sincerity. His depiction of the family members and the predicament they find themselves in is authentic and true to life. This drama revolves around Indian households, each of which has complex ties with the other members of the family. The human interaction, especially as it relates to day-to-day life, is the primary subject of Dattani. He is solely concerned with the Indian families of the top middle class in this region, from whom he himself originates.

At the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival that took place on September 22, 1989 in Chowdah Memorial hall in Bangalore, the first ever performance of Dance Like a Man took place. Mahesh Dattani performed in as well as directed the initial performance of the play. Following that, productions of the play took place at the NCPA Experimental Theatre in Mumbai. The play is still put on in many different cities and countries throughout the globe.

There are some serious undertones in Dance Like a Man, which highlights the genuine and universal problems that may be found across different generations of the same family. In 1995, the coveted Sahitya Kala Parishad Award for Best Play was bestowed upon this work of theatre. In June of 1999, it went on tour to the Bloomsbury Theatre in London. In July of 2000, it went to New York City. Subsequently, it went to Dubai and Colombo.

The drama Dance Like a Man is split into two acts and tells the story of a family that is passionate about the art of dance. However, they are able to persuade human individuals. Their pursuit of popularity, which conflicts with their fundamental responsibilities at home, raises a

number of ethical questions that are addressed via creative means. The piece demonstrates that Dattani possesses an in-depth understanding of Indian traditional dance, particularly Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi. While it's possible that dance is the primary focus of the production, it's also very evident that patriarchal authority is being asserted throughout the piece. The connection that exists between Amritlal Parekh and his son Jairaj is illustrative of this idea. After reading "A Note on the Play by MithranDevanesen," one may form an educated guess on this.

"There is a chair in my home that formerly belonged to my father but has been handed down to me since he went away. It is a tacit agreement amongst all parties involved that the chair in question belongs to me and that no one else may occupy it. As a metaphor for the unwritten laws of power that so many of us have come to accept as part of the Indian joint family, I utilised this chair on the stage for the play's Amritlal Parekh, the authoritarian father, to use, and nobody else sat on it. The younger Jairaj tries to go against this in the play that examines authority and prejudice socially and culturally, and as we sit in the dark watching the story unfold between time periods in the past and time periods in the present, Mahesh Dattani forces us to examine both our own individual and collective consciousness. (CPD 383).

Amritlal Parekh, the play's protagonist, is the authoritarian patriarch of a typical joint family in the drama "Dance Like a Man." He is the force that ultimately controls the power. A formidable barrier that stands between a father and son is power, authority, and the desire to maintain one's position of dominance within the family.

Because of this, the boy was unable to develop any feelings of affection for his father. Even after the passing of his father, he never expresses any sorrow. In the beginning of the play, Lata admits to Viswas that his grandpa was the dominant figure in the family, and she informs Viswas that Jairaj is not the dominant kind. Lata says this to emphasise that she is not Jairaj. That is not the case at all. My grandfather embodied the dominant personality type, but when you compare him to my father, you see that he... (CPD 392)

In addition, the play focuses mostly on dance, and many of the characters have some sort of connection to the performing art. Lata too has a good view over dance and the art, so she tells Viswas about the art of dance. She also tells Viswas that her grandfather is against dance, proving that Amritlalparekh is the full handling body of the family, and questions the liberty about learning the art of dance on behalf of her father. Jairaj and Ratna are the dancing couple who made their daughter into a dancing career, and Lata too has a good view over dance and the art. Jairaj

Viswashave a comedic outlook on the entirety of Lata's family, and they begin to make fun of her family after hearing the dominant bodies like Amritlal and Ratna's comments about Jairaj and Lata VISWAS. What a granddaddy she had! He had to have been a terrifying man. It makes perfect sense why her father is such an oddball. (he clears his throat and adopts a voice that imitates a father's) You've decided that you want to be a dancer, huh? Hah! Hah! Hah! Son, look at everything I've accomplished in life; you'll never amount to anything in this world. Look .Look .Look . (Points at the various pieces of furniture. What exactly do you mean by that? Is there anything more to life but making money? You ungrateful worm that you are! (CPD 396).

Both Jairaj and Ratna froze in their tracks. The debate between Jairaj and Viswas discussing the eldest guy in the drama, the antagonist, the father who Jairaj despised so much for wrecking his life, begins when he returns back to the house and Viswas was there. VISWAS. If I requested a loan from my father, he would not give it to me. JAIRAJ (laughs loudly) (laughs loudly). Nor did my paternal grandfather. He was generous to everyone else but to me. (CPD 405)

PATRIARCHY

The word patriarchy originates from Greek, and its direct translation means "the dominion of the father." The word "father" is "patria" in Greek, while the word "rule" is "arche." The term "patriarchy" refers to a social structure in which males possess primary power, the dominating role, political leadership, moral authority, and social privilege. Patriarchy also refers to the authority that father figures have over their children and other family members. Through his dramatic efforts, Mahesh Dattani has been one of the most influential contributors to the development and refinement of Indian English Drama. He focuses his attention, for the most part, on modern culture and the realities of our rapidly evolving environment. His plays are classic examples of the dramatic genre, and the topics that he explores in them include female identity, religious conflict, communal strife, sexuality, and human relationships.

Not only is the family an essential component of Indian civilization, but it is also the fulcrum around which Indian life revolves. The pride, dignity, and status that Indian families are famed for is well-known. They are regarded as the standard against which Indian culture may be measured. "What is noteworthy about Dattani is the fact that in every human drama of his.... everything is set in the family mould," explain Rachel Bari and M. Ibrehim Khalilullah. Even if the family is a well-respected institution not just by Indians but also by people of various

backgrounds, it nevertheless requires serious investigation and consideration. In contrast to this, Mahesh Dattani's plays provide a very different take on the concept of the nuclear family. None of his households are calm, and the ones that are are notorious for the distance and discontent that exists between the husband and wife, the confusion that exists between the parents and their children, and the disdain that exists between the parents.

The BBC asked me to write "Do the Needful" in 1996, and I did it at their request. It is a radio drama that will be broadcast in England that centres on the idea of a marriage that is not completely unimaginable. It also shows the negative effects of urbanisation, cosmopolitanism, and other things like that, and as a result, it turns out to be an accurate depiction of current Indian society. In "A Note on the Play," Sally Avens makes the following observations: The hero and the heroine, just like in all the finest love stories, wind up getting married in the end, but the path to marital bliss is full of the strangest turns and twists you could ever imagine. His (Dattani's) work, although adopting a standard structure and being easily accessible to an audience, never ceases to surprise and challenge its readers. And despite the fact that the play takes place in India during the time period of arranged marriages, its broader themes are applicable to any culture. It was not difficult for a British audience to identify with a young lady wanting to show her independence and break free from her parents or a homosexual guy who was obliged to live his life inside the standards of a heterosexual culture. Both of these situations are common in British society. (CPD 115)

The action of the play takes place in both Mumbai and Bangalore in equal measure. Meera Bhajans, performed by the well-known Indian classical vocalist M.S. Subbulakshmi, provide the narrative a South Indian flavour. Before we get too deep into the meat of the conversation, let's first talk about the play Do the Needful. Chandrakant Patel and Kusumpen Patel are Alpesh Patel's parents. Alpesh Patel is their son. Lata Gowda is her father Devraj Gowda and her mother Prema Gowda's daughter. Alpesh Patel does not identify as straight. Lata is a heterosexual. Because he is a gay, Alpesh has decided that he does not want to get married to a woman again because his last marriage to a woman ended in divorce. One who goes by the name Salim and lives in Mumbai is the object of Lata's affection. Alpesh has decided that he does not ever want to spend his life with a woman. Concurrently, Lata has stated that she does not wish to wed anybody but Salim. However, in order to satisfy the expectations of their parents, both parties feel that they must be married. Despite the fact that these two parents had their own caste dignity, they were unable to sustain it in their children's marriage because of their children's well-known "immoral" behaviour, which was known to individuals within their

own caste. Keep in mind that something does not qualify as an immora if it is not common knowledge among the members of their own caste.

Through matrimonial advertisements, the Patel family from Mumbai is looking for a suitable spouse for their son Alpesh, who is divorced and only thirty years old. Alpesh is a printer. The Gowda family, originally from Bengaluru, is currently engaged in the very same endeavours. The family of both the guy from Mumbai and the girl from Bengluru come to the conclusion that the boy from Mumbai and the girl from Bengluru will make an excellent match. As a result of this agreement, the two sets of parents have settled on Bengaluru as the location for their first meeting. The purpose of this gathering is to fulfil the obligation of formally presenting their offspring to one another. The two sets of parents get together with their families, and despite the fact that their children aren't interested in marrying each other, the parents continue to work toward their goal of convincing their children to accept their marriage proposal and choice to set up the match.

DEVARAJ GOWDA. (reading aloud from the letter that Patel wrote). "I am returning the image of your daughter, Lata, that you so graciously gave. Thank you." In addition, please find enclosed a picture of Alpesh. If the 21st and 22nd of September are free for you to receive us, we would appreciate it if you could let us know. To accommodate the needs of everyone involved, a face-to-face meeting between us is strongly recommended. With heartfelt regards, Chandrakant patel.' (CPD 120) 57 In the drama, Alpesh is more of a background character than a Subaltern. Alpesh is sexually attracted to men but is being coerced into having sexual encounters with both sexes by none other than his own parents. But after his first attempt at a heterosexual marriage ended in failure, he decided that he wanted to live his life as a homosexual man. Alpesh introduces himself to the audience right at the beginning of the performance. "Does Trilok cost anything?" ...He is well aware of all of my vulnerable areas... (CPD 119) Even if the phrases that have been provided appear to be terms that may ordinarily be used by even a straight person, after getting to know Alpesh, we are able to comprehend why he uses those particular words. He is fully aware that it is not feasible for him to cohabit with a lady at this time in his life. He makes several arguments in an effort to dissuade his parents from agreeing to his marriage to the girl.

ALPESH. What if... I just don't feel like getting married? ALPESH. What went wrong with my most recent marriage... ALPESH. You don't wish for it to take place once more, do you? KUSUMBEN PATEL. Are you trying to intimidate me by saying that it will occur again?

KUSUMBEN PATEL. No. I will not allow that to happen again, and there is no way that it can happen again. If this keeps happening, I might as well just drink some poison and end my life. Even if the discussions that are cited here seem to go on for too long, that by itself might indicate a lot about the genuine situation in the area where Alpesh resides. Because Alpesh is a homosexual, he is well aware of the fact that he cannot live a life that is sexually harmonious with a female partner. Therefore, he revealed it to his mother Kusumpen Patel in a way that was not obvious. As a result of the circumstances that exist in Alpesh's household, his son is unable to express his thoughts and feelings in a manner that is both public and straightforward. Even though he did not want to, he was unable to overtly refuse his mother's request to pick up Swamiji from the airport; nonetheless, he was able to mutter to himself that he did not like to do so. The majority of the conversations that Alpesh has take place in his head and ideas rather than being voiced directly to his parents.

CONCLUSION

A political and social system that has been around for a very long time is called patriarchy. It is based on the idea that the most senior and strong males are innately dominant and superior to everyone else who is judged weak, and that they are bestowed with the authority to control and govern. They utilise many different types of psychological terrorism in addition to physical brutality in order to keep their supremacy. In many Indian families, the father is the one who has power over the family's women, children, and property. This is a fairly typical practise in India. The men' rules and privileges are contingent on the submission of the females and any other weak members of the group. Since the beginning of time, the patriarchal order has served as the guiding principle for societal, legal, political, and economic institutions. According to Bell hooks, we will never be able to deconstruct a system as long as we collectively choose to ignore the ways in which it affects our lives. To maintain patriarchy, male superiority must be maintained at all costs. The most prevalent types of patriarchal violence are those that take place in the home between patriarchal parents and their children. Patriarchal parents are more likely to abuse their power and authority over their children. The purpose of such violence is typically to reinforce a dominator model, in which the authority figure is seen as the ruler over those who lack power and given the right to maintain that rule through practises of subjugation, subordination, and submission. In this model, the authority figure is deemed ruler over those who lack power (24). Every middle-class son and parent in India would be the same as Mahesh

Dattani has placed in his plays, and these plays gave the impression that they were telling the tale of every

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