

THEATER AND HEALTH EDUCATION: REPRESENTATION IN SELECT PLAYS OF MAHESH DATTANI

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ABSTRACT

Theater plays a crucial role to represent the life and manners of a particular society. It acts as an informal tool for developing consciousness and promoting empowerment through education. Contemporary theater in India is no exception to this. It has the efficacy to build critical awareness among common people in general and women in particular. It critiques the social inequality and opens up the scope for bringing consciousness about gendered violence prevalent in contemporary Indian society. From 1970s onwards, the emergence of urbanization and industrialization had offered various opportunities for people irrespective of gender differences. Yet, it could not suppress the 'other side' of violence in Indian society. Mahesh Dattani, a pioneer in the world of modern Indian English Theater, is highly regarded as a social critic of contemporary urban life and manners. He sincerely presents dysfunctional families, individual dilemmas and societal problems, and gender issues including forbidden issues in his plays. As a conscious dramatist, Dattani reveals childhood maltreatment in his plays which focus on physical and mental illnesses among victims. He tries to sensitize the common people by representing the impact of discrimination on health as it is seen to be fatal in women. The present paper intends to analyze the impact of gender bias on women's health as represented by Mahesh Dattani in his plays – "Tara" and "Thirty days in September." In doing so, it embraces the educational implication of dramas through theater.

Keywords: *Theater, gender bias, childhood maltreatment, trauma, and health education.*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the crucial factors of women empowerment because it motivates them to react to the challenges, to reorganize their stereotypical role and modify their life. Long after the Vedic period the interest in women's education in India was revived during the British period. Famous persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotiba Phule, and Baba Saheb Ambedkar emphasized on formal education as the necessary tool for women's education in India. However women's education got a momentum after the post-

independence era by the implementation of various government initiatives. To offer education to everyone, EFA (Education for All) programme was launched in 2002 by the Government of India after the 86th Constitutional Amendment. It proposed for free and compulsory education from age 6-14 as the fundamental right of every Indian child. But the condition of female education has not improved according to desired level for women.

In this age of globalization formal mode is not the only way to offer education. Recent opinions show that education must not be restricted