

Unveiling The Cultural, Social And Artistic Dimensions From The Lens Of Subaltern Perspectives In The Plays Of Mahesh Dattani And Tennessee Williams: A Comparative Study

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Abstract:

The paper under discussion is focused on examining the subaltern elements, or marginalized groups, in order to understand who is truly oppressed and suppressed in society. The goal is to bring attention to the voices and experiences of these subaltern communities in the plays of Mahesh Dattani and Tennessee Williams. Both the playwrights incorporate themes of marginalization/subalternities in their plays, shedding light on the struggles faced by individuals who are marginalized/subalternized oppressed by societal norms and addressed the issue of gender inequality prevalent in Indian society. Despite coming from different cultural backgrounds, these playwrights effectively explore the experiences of marginalized characters, highlighting their vulnerabilities and the impact of social structures on their lives and how they resist oppression.

Key words: subaltern communities, gender inequality oppression, cultural backgrounds.

Introduction:

Mahesh Dattani and Tennessee Williams are renowned playwrights from different cultural backgrounds whose works have made significant contributions to the world of theatre. The present article aims to provide a comparative study of their plays, highlighting the thematic and stylistic elements that distinguish their works. While Dattani focuses on contemporary Indian society, Williams explores the human condition and societal conflicts in the American south. By examining their plays, one can gain valuable insights into the unique storytelling techniques employed by these two accomplished playwrights.

Mahesh Dattani dramatizes the struggles of the common man's or marginalized individuals seeking respect and identity in society, and his plays are dramatic reflections on the issues and constraints imposed on the masses. Mahesh Dattani writes about the society and environment in which he lives, and the Matrix of Spaces is one of his primary preferences. His personal experience and understanding of the cultural and social environment in which he works and lives are authentically and realistically expressed in his theatrical work. He comments when asked if he feels perturbed by the hardships he experiences while composing his plays. The themes of his plays are quite modern, radical, and avant-garde.

Community rigidity, homosexuality, the challenges faced by HIV-positive individuals, gender discrimination, conflict regarding ritual practice and avant-gardism, child sexual abuse, the patriarchal social system, the limitations of hijara (eunuch), women, child laborers, interpersonal relationships, the workings of moral and personal choices, identity crisis, past revelation, marriage, and career are just a few of the issues and problems he has dramatized in contemporary metropolitan Indian civilization.

Tennessee Williams, one of the most prolific American writers, masterfully examines the subtleties of gender in his main drama. Despite the fact that each of Tennessee Williams's plays is distinct, it is simple to identify a common thread among them. William's primary interest was undoubtedly how society affected foreigners, aliens, and outcasts; nonetheless, this issue weaves throughout his writings and is strongly tied to love and romance, desire and sexuality, the bond between parents and children, and the situation of the contemporary family, aging and the loss of youth and beauty, loneliness, remorse, and mendacity, as well as delusion and reality. His plays deal with issues of human brutality and sexuality, such as madness, rape, incest, cannibalism, nymphomania, and extreme violent deaths. Most of these themes are depicted in his masterpiece *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which is so shocking that critics labelled it "obscene" and "unacceptable" by American morals. This was another significant contribution Williams made to the American and international stage. Williams frequently discussed the tremendous violence in his plays, which he viewed as a natural aspect of human nature. However, he also noted that the brutality in his plays was too specific for American customs and ways of thinking. The characters that Tennessee Williams portrays and his fascination with, are referred to as "the fugitives," "the misfits," and "the outcasts." Dealing with the invisible inner world of people and the psychological pain that results from the pressures placed on maladjusted psyches by a harsh actual world were his main concerns.

The gender norms in Tennessee Williams society insists that men follow a set of rules that include violence, dominance, and power.

As demonstrated by his masterful portrayal of Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, where Blanche ultimately gives in to her fate and declares, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers," the prevalence of such a code effortlessly demands that women be submissive and passive, and those who appear to defy it are punished by patriarchy. Williams' characters live in a culture that values masculinity

above all else. The main opponent of this patriarchal structure in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is Blanche DuBois, who is portrayed by her brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski. But Stanley manages to get beyond this obstacle. Williams' ability to give his flawed female characters comfort in their imperfections and use them as a tool to challenge patriarchy is what makes his work so beautiful. Because of this, Tennessee Williams stands out among the many great American playwrights of the twentieth century for his nuanced exploration of gender complexities and ageless relevance.

Culturally, Mahesh Dattani: Dattani's plays, such as "Final Solutions" and "Tara," delve into the complexities of Indian society, addressing themes of religious conflicts, gender dynamics, and societal expectations. His works often confront deep-rooted prejudices and challenge the status quo prevalent in Indian communities.

Tennessee Williams, on the other hand, is known for his portrayal of the American South, particularly in plays like *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Glass Menagerie*. His works capture the essence of Southern culture, exploring themes of nostalgia, social class, and the fragility of human relationships.

The characterization in Dattani plays are crafted as multi-dimensional characters that reflect the intricacies of Indian society. His characters are often confronted with moral dilemmas and wrestle with their identities, providing insight into the complexities of Indian culture and its social fabric. Williams's characters are known for their vividness and psychological depth. He creates flawed individuals who struggle against societal constraints, grappling with their desires, dreams, and fears. Through his characters, Williams explores the universal themes of loneliness, desire, and the search for meaning.

Dattani's plays frequently explore themes of identity, tradition, and the clash between modernity and traditional values. He sheds light on societal issues such as gender inequality, religious intolerance, and the struggle for personal freedom within a conservative framework. Williams's works touch upon themes such as illusion versus reality, the loss of innocence, and the destructive nature of societal expectations. His plays often present flawed characters trapped in oppressive environments, symbolizing the universal struggle against societal constraints.

The writing style of Dattani is marked by a realistic portrayal of contemporary Indian society. He incorporates colloquial language, local cultural references, and explores the nuances of interpersonal relationships. Dattani's use of humour and satire adds depth and relatability to

his plays. Williams's plays are characterized by poetic language, lyrical dialogues, and symbolic imagery. His use of metaphors and vivid descriptions creates a heightened sense of emotional intensity. Williams's writing style often delves into the realm of the subconscious, evoking deep emotions and psychological insights.

Dattani addresses the issue of gender inequality prevalent in Indian society. His female characters often face discrimination, limited opportunities, and societal expectations that confine them to traditional roles. Plays like "Tara" and "Final Solutions" explore the struggles of women who are marginalized due to societal norms and patriarchy.

Dattani delves religious marginalization into the tensions and conflicts arising from religious differences. His plays examine how religious identity and communal biases marginalize individuals and create divisions within society. "Final Solutions" particularly showcases the marginalization faced by religious minorities and the consequences of religious intolerance.

Dattani's also touches upon sexual Orientation Marginalization of individuals based on their sexual orientation in his plays. He explores the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ characters, highlighting societal prejudices, the struggle for acceptance, and the suppression of their true identities.

On the other side, Williams depicts Social Class Marginalization characters that are marginalized due to their socioeconomic status. His plays, such as "A Streetcar Named Desire" and "The Glass Menagerie," explore the lives of individuals trapped in poverty or struggling to maintain their social standing. The characters face societal judgment, limited opportunities, and a sense of powerlessness due to their marginalized social class.

Williams addresses Mental Health Marginalization of individuals grappling with mental health issues. Characters like Blanche DuBois in "A Streetcar Named Desire" experience the stigma and isolation associated with mental illness. Williams sensitively portrays the impact of societal judgment on their mental well-being and the struggle to find acceptance.

Racial marginalization is not as prominent in Williams's plays as it is in Dattani's, some characters in works like "A Streetcar Named Desire" and "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" face marginalization based on their racial identities. These characters often confront racial prejudices, discrimination, and a lack of opportunities due to their marginalized racial backgrounds. Both Mahesh Dattani and Tennessee Williams skilfully incorporate elements of marginalization in their

plays, exposing the challenges faced by individuals who are marginalized by society. Dattani explores gender, religious, and sexual orientation marginalization within the context of contemporary Indian society, while Williams delves into social class, mental health, and, to a lesser extent, racial marginalization in the American South. Through their works, these playwrights shed light on the struggles, vulnerabilities, and resilience of marginalized individuals, fostering a deeper understanding of societal injustices and the need for empathy and change.

Conclusion:

Despite their cultural differences, Mahesh Dattani and Tennessee Williams share a common ability to explore complex human emotions and societal issues through their plays. While Dattani focuses on contemporary Indian society, Williams explores the intricacies of the American South. Both playwrights present unique perspectives on identity, societal conflicts, and the human condition. Through a comparative study of their works, we gain a deeper appreciation for the diverse narratives and storytelling techniques that enrich the world of theatre.

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