



INDIAN WRITINGS IN  
ENGLISH AND  
TRANSLATION

# POINTS OF VIEW

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## Gender Discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*

DEBJANI RAY MOULIK\*

In spite of the existence of a vibrant theatre in the indigenous languages of India in the 1980s, there was little professional activity in English-language theatre. Mahesh Dattani is among the few prominent dramatists in India and is responsible for successfully launching Indian theatre in English. In the words of Alyque Padamsee, "At last we have a playwright who gives sixty million English-speaking Indians an identity" (qtd. Dhawan and Pant 31). He has to his credit plays like *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*, *Thirty Days in September* (2001) and more. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1998. He has also been active in the world of cinema, working as an actor, director and screenwriter.

Dattani dramatizes the concerns and constraints of the middle-class Indians, while exposing the evils prevalent in the society. He writes about a wide array of issues that concern people all over the world. His themes are therefore, not conventionally associated with "entertaining" theatre. Dattani's plays have themes that are as diverse as consumerism, communalism, patriarchal tradition, conflict between tradition and modernity, conjoined twins and so on. He has not even left out traditional Carnatic music and Bharatnatyam. Dattani also visits the unexplored soil of homosexuals, child sexual abuse, AIDS and

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