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A Critical Study of Dramatic Works

of

Mahesh Dattani

A Thesis

Submitted to

Saurashtra University, Rajkot

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in English

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work embodied in this thesis entitled ***A Critical Study of Dramatic Works of Mahesh Dattani*** has been carried out by Mr. Bipin R. Parmar under my direct guidance and supervision. I declare that the work done and presented in this thesis is original and independent.

I, further, certify that this work has not been submitted to any other institute or university for the any degree or diploma.

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DECLARATION

I, hereby, declare that the research work presented in this thesis is original and wherever references to the work of others have been made, they have been clearly indicated as such and the source of information is included in the bibliography.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Mahesh Dattani – His life and Works

❖ Drama: Meaning and Definition

A literary art attains cosmic value when it reflects human experience and sensibility faithfully, and also corresponding with the universal socio- moral codes. By virtue of its live performance and potential to facilitate direct communication between the artist and the audience, drama has immersed as a potent literary mode of representation of human sensibility that is universal and is beyond the limitations of time and space. It is the oldest, authentic, and the most appealing form of literature. It has also been acknowledged as an instrument to human entertainment and enlightenment for ages. It has close affinity and affiliation with religion since time immemorial. The Indian tradition maintains that roots of all art are laying in the *Pranav nada*, om. The dance of Lord Shiva is often said to be divine or cosmic play. Our great epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* also attempt to define drama and dramaturgy. The *Mahabharata* defines drama as a mixture of poetry, story, action etc. The great ancient Indian poet and the creator of the *Ramayana*, Valmiki uses the word 'Nat' or 'Narataka'-meaning an actor or a performer.

The word "drama" has its origin in Greek. It is originated from word "dra" meaning "do". In this way, 'doing' or 'action' is column beam of the whole dramatic premise. Aristotle has also acknowledged action as the predominating component of drama. Narrative holds much importance in fiction, but action and dialogue hold paramount significance in drama. Compton- Rickett defines drama 'as an articulate story presented in action.'¹ This lays emphasis on speech and action in drama.

Drama is a representational art, a visible and audible narrative presenting virtual, fictional characters within a virtual, fictional universe. It has come close to the observation of Marjorie Boulton:

A true play is three dimensional. It is literature that walks and talks before our eyes. It is not intended that the eye shall perceive marks on paper and the imagination turn them into sights, sounds and actions; the text of the play is meant to be translated into sights, sounds and actions, which occur literally and physically on the stage. Though in fact, plays are often read in silence, if we are to study drama at all intelligently we must always keep this in mind. ²

It is appropriate to say that the composition of drama is more difficult task than other forms of literature. The playwright has to coordinate various elements like dialogue, music, plot, metaphoric construction, psyches of the characters and audience, paraphernalia and stage craft along with the unity of time. It is observed: "It is a composite art, in which the author, the actor and the stage manager all combines to produce the total effect." ³

Theatre represents human life on the stage with its all facets and dimensions as well as colour and complexities. So, drama or theater has direct connection with human life. The great sage, Bharat Muni, in his great treatise *Natyashashtra* dictates: "Theatre is life. There is no art, no life, no craft, no learning, and no action which cannot be seen in it."⁴ The dramatist attempts to reach audience through the means of stage via performers. Performance, idea, and paraphernalia, make continuity to seek 'wholeness'. The playwright is bound by economy of characterization and depiction of the events or episodes.

There are different kinds of drama. In a broader classification, drama can be put into two categories: Tragic Drama (Tragedy) and Comic Drama (Comedy). From the structural point of view, both sub-genres of drama pass through five evolutionary phases known as pyramid structure of the drama. They are: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Catastrophe or denouement. Thus, the composition and functions of drama is

quite compact than any other forms of literature. The success of drama involves the participation of the three variables: the playwright, performers and playgoers.

❖ **The Origin and Development of English Drama**

In England, the church played an important role in the nourishment and flourishing of the drama. It is very pertinent to say here that the drama appeared in England in the post-Norman conquest period. Before 10th century, there was no drama as such. It arrived in England with the Normans. An elementary form which may be called Tableau existed outside England. The origin and development of miracle and morality play also connected with this tradition. In those days, dramas were enacted in the church mainly based on religious and ethical subjects, written by the clergymen. In the course of time, it shifted from clergyman to common man ultimately reaching on to the streets.

The religious or sacred dramas were known as Miracle or Mystery Plays. These plays were based on the lives of saints or the Christ. The scenes were performed on the mobile stage which was known as pageants. *Ludus de Sancta Kathurian* was the earliest English Miracle play.

English drama attained artistic maturity during the Renaissance. The credit of writing first regular plays goes to Nicholas Udall, who wrote *Ralph Roister Doister* in 1541. It is the first regular comic play or comedy, whereas the credit of writing the first English tragedy goes to Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, who jointly composed English tragedy *Gorbocduc* which was written some time during 1562. Hence, the regular English drama conceived under the classical influence even before the Elizabethan age in which drama attained the highest position among all the literary genres. It is to be noted here that the group of dramatist known as "University Wits" namely Christopher Marlow, John Lyly, George Peele, Thomas Nash, Thomas Kyd, and Thomas Lodge. Thomas Kyd contributed significantly in the rapid development of English drama. His *Spanish Tragedy* was the significant Senecan tragedy that influenced a lot to many dramatists

to apply melodramatic elements. Roman dramatist Seneca swayed greatly upon the tragic writers of England. His use of melodramatic element in the plays tempted to imitate to the English writers. Needless to say, the English drama blossomed fully in the hands of Shakespeare, the uncrowned king of English literature.

❖ **The Origin and Development of Indian Drama**

Drama is the manifestation of religious instinct of human beings in the most of the countries of the world, whether in India or Egypt, China or Britain, it is deeply rooted in religious instinct of the people. In ancient India, dramas were enacted in the temples. It was a kind of religious activity or offering to God on various occasions, events and celebrations. They were based mainly on religious scriptures, myths, legends etc. The good forces were praised and evil forces were punished in them. Since these plays were staged in the temples, they were known as Temple plays.

As regards the birth of Indian drama, it dates back to pre Christian era. The great sage and the architect of Indian drama Bharat Muni appeared approximately in the seventh century A.D. He has very dexterously and interestingly propounded the theory of drama in his great work entitled *Natayashastra*, which is, perhaps, the first complete, concise, and a systematic treatise on drama in India. He said that gods wanted to have a thing of great entertainment with the combine qualities of audio-visual elements, which can be accessed for enjoyment equally to all segments of society. So, they prayed to Lord Brahma who has been regarded as the creator of the universe. Lord Brahma made drama opting nectar of all the four Vedas-*the Rigveda, the Sam Veda, the Yajurveda, and the Atharva Veda*. He took plot, music, acting and *rasas* (sentiments) from these four *vedas* respectively. In this way, he created drama, *the fifth Veda*, which is characterized by the four different qualities of all the four *Vedas*.

Thus, the inception or the birth of Indian classical Sanskrit drama traced back to the Vedic period. The journey of Indian drama commences with Sanskrit plays. It is observed: "Indian tradition, preserved in

the '*Natyashastra*', the oldest of the texts of the theory of the drama, claims for the drama divine origin, and a close connection with the sacred Vedas themselves." ⁵

The drama had been one of the finest expressions of Indian culture for the ages. The inscriptions at the Sitabenga and Jogimara caves in south Bihar are good indicators of the subsistence of a well developed dramatic tradition in India even in third century B.C.

However, it is to be noted here that the established notion of divine origin of Sanskrit drama is objected by some scholars by propounding unconventional hypotheses regarding the origin of drama- say for example Prof. R. V. Jagirdar of Karnataka college, Dharwar has traced its birth to the 'Suta tradition of the *Puranas*'. ⁶

There are two broad division of all Sanskrit literature. *Drishya* and *Sravya*. The word 'Drishya' means something which can be seen or perceived with eyes. So, drama comes under this category. The word 'Sravya' means something which can be heard or listened to. The poetry in all forms comes under this category.

Technically speaking, Sanskrit play develops depending mainly on three constituents or elements. They are: (i) *Vastu* (plot) (ii) *Neta* (hero) and (iii) *Rasa* (sentiments). It should be mentioned here that while defining tragedy in his great work, *Poetics*, Aristotle also stresses much importance on plot. He considers the plot as the 'soul of tragedy'. There can be tragedy without character but no one such without plot.

Kalidas, Asvaghosa, Bhavbhuti, Bhasha, Sudrak among others are the doyen dramatists in the whole range of history of Indian drama. They gave some immortal works of literature. They have been sources of inspiration not only for their successors but also continue to inspire the Indian playwrights even today.

Later on, unfortunately, Sanskrit drama became a court art or royal art as it ceased to be the literary exercise for the experts of Sanskrit. These Sanskrit *pandit* or scholars of Sanskrit had been obtaining due encouragement and incentives from the kings and the queens. The political changes also affected in development and continuity of Sanskrit drama.

In this way, India offered a fertile soil to the drama. It has a very splendid and richer tradition of dramatic literature than any other country or culture. Even before over 2000 years, it had its own systematic and elaborative dramatic theory.

❖ **Vernacular Form of Drama**

Basically, Indian drama nestled into the cradle of classical Sanskrit dramas. However, Indian drama can be classified into two groups (1) Sanskrit drama (2) Prakrit- drama in vernacular language. After the decline of classical Sanskrit drama, Indian dramas registered substantial development in the regional languages of India. Despite the foreign invasions and political changes, they persisted to exist as the potent tool of entertainment and enlightenment. Even today, people love to watch the regional dramas in almost all the states of India. Every folk theatre has its own identical name, for example, performance of the drama is called “*Bhaona*” in Assam. In Bengal, it is known as ‘*jatra*’ which still persists and attracts the people of Bengal. The most interesting thing about *jatra* theatre is that it doesn’t require any fixed platform or stage properties. The word ‘*jatra*’ means a religious precession accompanied by dance, song, music etc. It is one of the earliest forms of drama in vernacular language. The vernacular form of drama is known as *Ramlila* in northern India and ‘*Kathakali*’ in Kerala. ‘*Kathakali*’ is the most representative of the life and mind of Keralite. Marathi stage, which centred on various *rasas*, has no much resemblance with other vernacular dramas in India.

Bhavai is the prakrit-vernacular form of folk tradition of Gujarati drama. It is one of the manifestations of Gujarati regional theatrical performance. It is the most popular folk theatrical tradition of Gujarat. The word

'bhava' has wider connotation and variegated meaning. In dramatic world, *bhavai* means a kind of show or spectacle. The performers of *bhavai* are called *bhavaiya*.

❖ **Indian English Drama: Tradition and Achievement**

India has a prolonged, proud and splendid past of dramatic art. Perhaps, no country can withstand comparison with India in this matter except Greece. Actually, the tradition of Indian English Drama began with the arrival of the Britishers in India. Along with transcription of European models, Sanskrit plays were translated into English.

The development of Indian English Drama had been staggering for over nearly two centuries. It doesn't mean that there were no writers. Right from the beginning of the twentieth century, the plays have been written and staged, but very few of them have met with thumping success on the stage. There were many dramatists who had tried their hands at writing plays. As a matter of fact, most Indian English plays are translated works. Some of them by writers themselves, while some by others. A very few plays are originally written in English. The stunted journey of Indian English play is attributed to many factors. One of them is non-availability of stage-worthy plays. Writing and staging of the plays are two different tasks. In the same way, viewing of the play and reading of the play are quite two different experiences. Reading a play renders more information and less excitement, whereas viewing a play is the most exciting, appealing and memorable thing.

The drama requires great commitment and interest on either side – performers and viewers. Even the dramatist himself also depends on the players who perform his play. Drama, being an audio visual medium of expression, must be staged. And staging drama demands great care and conscious efforts not only on the part of performers but also on the part of viewers. In this connection, M. K. Naik aptly observes:

Drama is a composite art in which the written word
of the playwright attains complete artistic

realization only when it becomes the spoken word of the actor on the stage and through that medium reacts on the mind of that audience. A play, in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience, thus needs a real theatre and a live audience.⁷

Thus, the text of the play is meant for the stage – performance. When an English play is performed, we see Indian character speaking English in all kinds of situations and circumstances. This poses the problem of their liability before us. They speak English to the vendors, servants or their grandparents or elders. The dramatist must have convincing power for all these. There is a mixed reaction to the normal Indian speaking English with a milkman or a newspaper vendor. Again if they use Indian words or English words with Indian accent, there are some who will react against this also. So, there are some challenges before Indian dramatist for the creation of convincing Indian English theatre. It demands sincere and sustained efforts on the part of author and production authority to keep theatre going. Moreover, the lack of living theatre in India is inhibiting factor for ongoing journey of Indian drama in English.

However, Indian English Drama is growing slowly and steadily for carving its niche in the realm of commonwealth literature. Since the pre-independence era, there have been constant efforts to create the plays with due dramatic qualities. Even after decades together, the attempts were not met with handsome result. The most Indian plays, available in English, are the translated works. We have but very few little original works in English. Drama, being composite art, it should be endowed with both qualities – literary and stage.

The origin of Indian drama in English can be traced back to the pre-independence era. Krishna Mohan Banerjee wrote the first Indian English Play entitled *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta*. It appeared in 1831 on the literary horizon.

Thus, the journey of Indian English Drama embarked with the appearance of this play more than a century before the independence era. The play depicts clash and conflict of a sensitive Bengali youth that occurs due to traditionalism and liberal views resulting from the acquisition of foreign education. However, Indian English Drama has never achieved smart success.

It is very essential to mention here that the real journey of Indian Drama in English started with the publication of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's translated play *Is this called Civilization?* The play came on the dramatic firmament of India in 1871. The play originally was written in Bengali and translated by the playwright himself into English. The play depicts the social life and the issues pertaining to that period of it. Ramkinoo Dutt wrote *Manipura Tragedy* in 1891. The dramas written during this era were not numerous in quantity. Moreover, they lacked in refinement and dramatic qualities.

However, under the influence of British Drama, Indian Drama in English beyond certain odds and obstacles began to blossom in the hands of literary wizards like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Harindranath Chatopadhyay, T. P. Kailasam among others in pre-independence period.

Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo are the connoisseurs of art and literature. They have been considered as the first Indian Playwrights of repute in Indian English Drama. They have contributed significantly in the field of Indian Drama in English. As regards Tagore's dramatic out put, *The Post office*, *Chitra*, *Sanyasi* or *The Ascetic*, *Sacrifice*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *The King and The Queen*, *Kacha and Devyani*, *The mother's Prayer*, *Karna and Kunti*, *Somaka and Ritvika*, *Ama and Vinayaka*, *Autumn Festival*, *The Waterfall* or *Muktadhara*, *Red Oleanders*, *The King of the Dark Chamber* among others are celebrated dramatic works credited to Tagore. All these works originally appeared in Bengali. Later on, they were translated into English. They are deeply rooted in Indian soil in terms of themes and ethos as well as Indian thoughts and philosophy. They bear the imprint of his literary

genius. His plays hold much importance from the point of view of sustenance and enhancement of tradition of Indian Drama in English.

Sri Aurobindo, a man of versatile genius, has greatly enriched and enlightened Indian Drama in English by way of writing plays of good quality. He has, to his credit, five complete blank verse and six incomplete plays. He has made proper use of blank verse in his plays. He wrote his drama on the lines of Elizabethan drama. However, the influence of Sanskrit classical dramatists also can be felt in them.

But all five plays are steeped in poetry and romance, recalling the spirit and flavour of the distinctive dramatic type exemplified in different ways by Bhasa, Kalidas and Bhavbhuti, - though, of course, all have Aurobindonian undertones.⁸

Out of the five complete plays, only *The Perseus the Deliverer* appeared during the span of his life. The remaining four *Vasavadutta*, *Rodogune*, *The viziers of Bassora* and *Eric* were published posthumously. *The Witch of Ilni*, *Achab and Esarhaddon*, *The maid and the Mill*, *The Birth of Sin*, *The House of Brut*, and *The Prince of Edur* are his incomplete works. These plays are diverse in themes and traditions. The Play *Rodogune* depicts the story of Cleopatra and disloyalty of her two sons Antiochus and Timocles. *The Perseus the Deliverer*, steeped in Greek myth of Perseus, dramatizes the conflict between old ethic and the new one emphasizing the prevalence of the new values. *Vasavadutta* is closely related to Sanskrit classical drama *Swapna Vasavadattam*, a comedy written by the great Indian dramatist Bhasa, whereas *The Viziers* and *Eric* are the plays rooted in alien background.

It is very necessary to mention here that despite rich themes and verbal texture, the plays of these two literary wizards failed to impact on the stage.

Another great dramatic figure we encounter is Harindranath Chattopadhyay, who had made notable contribution in the realm of Indian English Drama. He had left behind him good dramatic legacy. He wrote seven plays in verse, which appeared under the title of *Poems and Plays* in the year 1927. He drew the material from the lives of the great Indian saints for all the seven plays. These plays are also known as hagiological plays. He began his dramatic voyage with *Abu Hassan* in 1918. He has to his credit prose plays, which arrived on literary scene under the title *Five Plays* (1929). They are deeply dyed with the colour of socialist views and realism. The play *The Window and the Parrots* depicts the lives of the poor people. *Sidharth: Man of Peace* deals with the glory of Buddha's life. The play *The Sentry's Lantern* displays the writer's deep concern for the unreached and unaccessed. It symbolizes the ensuing hope and aspiration for the unprivileged and unreached. It is to be noted here that his plays lacked the dramatic qualities. Hence, they failed to impact the audience. However, the subject matters of the plays are very rich and dignified. They are remarkable for the philosophical flavour.

The dramatic geniuses of these three outstanding Bengali playwrights- Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Chattopadhyaya find due expression in their great works. All these three literary stalwarts have made substantial help for establishing and enhancing the tradition of Indian English drama and adding new dimension to it.

A. S. P. Ayyar is another great playwright in the realm of Indian drama in English. With his six dramas, he has made significant contribution to the field of Indian drama in English. *In the Clutch of Devil* (1929) is his first drama and *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* is the last one. What holds prime significance in his plays is the message, while plot and characterization are of the subsidiary significance. He employs drama as the mode for seizing reality of contemporary life. Briefly, his dramatic output helped to continue the journey of Indian Drama in English.

The next great dramatic figure we come across is T. P. Kailasam who wrote both in English and Kannad. It should be noted here that T. P. Kailasam has been considered as the father of modern Kannad drama. However, his dramatic art blossoms fully in English drama. G. S. Amur appreciates his creative caliber in the following terms:

A talented actor who appeared in the amateur as well as the professional stage, he brought to the writing of drama an intimate knowledge of theatre. It is for this reason that his plays whether in Kannad or English have a uniform technical excellence.⁹

T. P. Kailasm has ardent love for dramatic genre. He has to his credit "*The Burden*" (1933), "*Fulfillment*" (1933) "*The purpose*" (1944) "*Karna*" (1946) and *Keechaka* (1949).

In the beginning, there was no woman dramatist worth considering in the realm of Indian English Drama. However, after many decades of its journey, Bharati Sarabhai appeared on the literary scene of Indian drama in English. She is the first female dramatist of pre-independence era. She wrote two plays – *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952). These plays could meet with good success. The most important thing is that her play *The Well of the People* deals with Gandhian idealism. By that way, it attaches Gandhian flavour to Indian drama in English.

The last great dramatic voice in pre-Independence era is J.M. Lobo Prabhu, who has been credited with about a dozen plays. Among them, only two plays – *Mother of New India: A Play of the Indian Village in Three Acts* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945) were published during Pre-Independence era. The rest of the plays were published under the title *Collected Plays* in 1956. Technically speaking, Lobo Prabhu excels in creating live dialogues and situations, but his art of characterization is not so powerful and convincing.

Besides above cited dramatists of Pre-Independence era, there were some other dramatists who also attempted to plough the field of this literary genre, but they couldn't make notable contribution in the field of Indian drama in English. They were: A.C. Krishnaswami (*Two Twice Born* -1914), S.M. Michel (*Nation Builders*) V.V.S. Iyengar (*Dramatic Divertissements*, a collection of six humourous playlets-1921), Sudhindra Nath Ghose (*Colours of a Great City*), Niranjana Pal (*The Goddess*-1924), R.K. Narayan (*The Watchman of the Lake*), Balwant Gargi (*The Vulture and Other Plays*-1941, *Barrister at Law* -1977), Mirnalini Sarabhai (*Captive Soul*-1945), Nalini Mohan Chatterjee (*Krishna*- 1937), S.C. Bhatt (*Trial Celestial* -1940), K.R. Srinivas Iyengar (*Sumti and Her Spouse, The Storm in a Tea Cup. Battle of the Optional* – 1930), A.S. Raman (*Charity Hospital* 1944), S. Fyzee Rahamen (*Daughter of Ind* -1940) Purushottam Tricumdas (*Sauce for the Goose* 1946), S.D. Ghosal (*Princess Kalyani* 1930) V. Narayanan (*Where God is Not and other Playlets* 1933), D.M. Borgaonkar (*Image Breakers*) among others.

❖ **Indian English Drama in the Post-Independence Era**

The tradition of Indian English Drama has been enriched and augmented further in post-independence epoch. Gradually, it begins to develop as powerful form for the creative expression. The marked difference between Pre-and Post Independence drama is that most of the dramas were written in verse during pre-independence era, whereas the post colonial dramatists showed much inclination to prosaic drama. All the same, the poetic drama continues to exist in the post colonial period. It is attributed:

é Tagore –Aurobindo – Kailasam tradition of poetic drama continues, but with a difference in the hands of Manjeri Isvaran, G.V. Desani, Lakhan Deb and Pritish Nandy.¹⁰

Despite the immense popularity of film and T.V. Serials, English plays were produced on the stage at home and abroad very successfully impacting the audience in an unprecedented manner. G.V. Desani's best known play *Hali* (1950) was performed and won rave review. It was

successfully staged in India and also at the Watergate Theatre in London in 1950. It depicts the theme of love and passion. Prof. Iyengar observes:

A short poetic play, *Hali* is an attempt to project the story of a 'passion': in other words, Hali's confrontation of the powers of creation and destruction, his grapple with life and death, his surrender to the play of this phenomenal world, his communication with love, and his transcendence of the dualities of time and place.¹¹

Lakhan Deb and Gurucharan Das are another two playwrights of some distinction. Their plays were performed on the stage with and without India and got considerable success. Lakhan Deb composed three dramas *Tiger's claw* (1967), *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976) and *Vivekanand* (1972). These plays are written in verse and they deal with historical events. The play *Tiger's Claw* deals with the murder of Bijapur General Afzal Khan by Shivaji, whereas *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* deals with assassination of the father of nation, Mahatma Gandhi. This play reminds us the famous play *Murder in the Cathedral* by T.S. Eliot. He has made ample use of dramatic devices especially chorus and prologue in his plays. His plays are marked with the flawless quality of verse. Gurucharan Das also contributed his humble mite to the development of Indian English Drama. His play *Larins Sahib* is the fine example of decolonization of English language in the post-independence era. His play *Mira* was staged as a ballet in New York and in Bombay very successfully.

Pratap Sharma is another dramatic voice who has contributed considerably in the field of Indian English Drama. He has produced two stage-worthy plays. They are *A Touch of Brightness* (1968), and *The Professor Has a War Cry* (1970). It should be noted here that his plays were great success on stage in abroad, but they could not be performed in India. Sex is the underlying theme of his plays. However, Pratap Sharma 'displays a keen sense of situation and his dialogues are often effective.'¹²

Nissim Ezekiel, a well known poet, also wrote five plays. However, the fact remains that he is not as much ease with dramatic art as with poetic art. His *Three Plays* (1969) consisting *Nalini*, a comedy in three acts, *Marriage Poem*, a tragic-comedy and *The Sleep Walkers*, an Indo-American farce, are the good commentary on the vanity and futility of urban middle class. He has employed ironical fantasy, satire etc. to exhibit hollowness of urban middle class.

Asif Currimbhoy has emerged as the most prominent and prolific playwright in the Post-Independence era. He has rendered substantial contribution to Indian English Drama by publishing more than thirty plays with an eye on stage. His best known plays are: *The Tourist Mecca* (1959), *The Doldrummers* (1962), *Thorns on a Canvas* (1962), *The Restaurant* (1960), *The Dumb Dancer* (1961), *The Captives* (1963), *Goa* (1964), *The Hungry Ones* (1965), *Monsoon* (1965), *An Experiments with Truth* (1969), *Inquilab* (1970), *The Refugee* (1971), *Sonar Bangla* (1972), *The Miracle seed* (1973) and *The Dissident MLA* (1974) among other.

Asif Currimbhoy touches up diverse issues and events in his plays such as social, political, economical, philosophical, historical psychological, religious, cross-cultural etc. His theatrical art, efficiency and profound knowledge of various human fields has immensely enriched and expanded the tradition of Indian English Drama. He has rightly been considered as “*India’s first authentic voice in the theatre*”¹³

Gradually, Indian English drama begins to strengthen its position and started carving its own identity and place in Indian Writing in English. It registers the remarkable growth and also earns glory at national and international level in contemporary era. With the thematic and theatrical innovations, Indian English Drama marks the beginning of distinctive tradition in the realm of world drama. The playwrights find myths, legends, history, folklore etc. very useful and attractive for the thematic investment in their plays. In fact, contemporary playwrights reinvestigate this treasure of knowledge with present socio-culture and political scenario. However, it

should be pinpointed here that contemporary drama mainly depends on translation. The plays, written in vernacular languages, are translated into English. So, the translation works boosted up the Indian dramatic scene. In this context, the contributions of some great playwrights like Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar are highly wonderful and therefore, occasions here special elucidation.

Girish Karnad is one of the outstanding playwrights in the modern India. He has considerably enriched and enlightened the tradition of Indian English drama. During his childhood days in country side of Karnataka, he encountered with some *Natak Mandalies* which made indelible impression on his sensitive mind and subsequently found expressions in his dramatic works. Karnad has composed eight plays. All these plays are originally appeared in Kannad and later on, have been translated into English. He began his dramatic career with the publication of his maiden play *Yayati* in 1961. He is retelling the myth of *the Mahabharata* very skillfully in this play. He works out the motivation that facilitates Yayati's final choice. It is a very unique and original play. Of the eight plays, five plays *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Naga-Madala*, *Tale-Danda* and *The Fire and the Rain* are reincarnated into English. It is very essential to mention here that *Tughlaq* is also converted into some foreign languages especially Hungarian and German.

Girish Karnad has been awarded Bharatiya Natya Sangha for his *Hayavadana*. However, it is his next play *Tughlaq* which earns him name and fame as a major dramatist. He has also received the most prestigious Jnanpith Award for his wonderful contribution in the field of Indian English Drama. Karnad's plays were staged successfully and got international recognition. He is capable of comprehending requisites of stage production of the play. He is adept at converting any event or any situation into aesthetic experience. Girish Karnad delves deep into myths and legends of India and employs them as vehicle of a new vision and interpretation. He gives fine and fresh food to apologetic existence of Indian English drama.

The next great dramatic voice in contemporary era that needs to be discussed is that of Vijay Tendulkar who provides new force and direction to Marathi theatre as well as Indian English theatre. Tendulkar, prolific dramatist of Marathi, begins his career as a free lance writer and emerges as prominent playwright on the literary scene of India. His dramatic corpus is vast, varied and wonderful. He has written twenty eight full length plays and twenty one act plays. He has also authored some children's dramas and a novel. He has, originally, written all his plays in Marathi. Most of his plays are translated into English. Some of his well-known plays are; *The Silence! The Court is in Session*, (1968), *Ghasiram Kotwal* (1972) *Kanyadan* (1982) *Sukhram Binder* (1972), *The Vultures*, *Kamala* (1982) etc. Considering his great service to Indian theatre, he has been honoured by Natak Akademi in 1971.

Another brilliant star in the literary firmament of India is that of Badal Sircar who externalizes the existential attitude of modern life through his dramatic works. He has to his credit, *Solution X*, *Evan Inderjit* (1462), *That other history* (1964), *There is not End* (1971), *Pagla Ghoda*, *Palap*, *Pary Konodin*, *Jadi Aur Ek Baar*, *stale News*, *Procession*.

Badal Sircar is called 'barefoot playwright'. Since theatre is the effective and powerful medium of sharing our views and opinions with the people, Sircar employs theatre as a mode of social change and expresses his views and ideas pertaining to socio-economic issues. What makes him endearing dramatist is his successful attempt to relate theatre to people and develops it to suitable people's theatre which is assisted and developed by people. He aims at delineating ground reality of Indian villages.

He has not only broken the dictionary between the actors and audience but reduced the drama to its barest by dispensing with conventional story, plot, characters and dialogue. ¹⁴

Sircar involves new technique of live communication with play - goers who also actually participate in performance of the play especially

concerning contemporary social issues. He evolves “third theatre’ deriving the good qualities of both the first and second theatre of Calcutta. Sircar, an avant-garde dramatist, has touched diverse themes in his plays such as social, political, exploitation etc. He started his theatrical career with comic plays like *Solution X*. His *Evan Inderjit* has been hailed as a milestone in the modern dramatic world, whereas his play *Stale News* centers on the concept of Third Theatre. It should be noted here that his concept of Third Theatre was considerably influenced by Grotowski’s “*Poor Theatre*”.

Badal Sircar is one of the prominent playwrights of modern India who have revolutionized the conventional concept of theatre and freed theatre from the saddle of droning stuff. Sircar’s “Third Theatre” facilitates the process of ‘being within and experiencing’ with the persona and the event being performed on the stage. His theatre differs from other theatre by bringing actors and the spectators on the same wave length mentally and physically as well.

Another doyen dramatist in the arena of contemporary drama is Mohan Rakesh who is best known for his play *Halfway House* which is a translated work of his Hindi play ‘*Adhe Adhure*’. The play depicts discord and dichotomy of family life. It also explains how parental discord affects on the lives of the children. *One Day in Ashadha* (1958) and *The Great Swans of the Waves* (1902) are also his full length play dealing with the historical past. Nonetheless, the theme of man-woman relationship is also well explored in these plays. Since drama is the most powerful and potent means to explore human experience, Mohan Rakesh has used it for exploring man-woman relationship in a very realistic way. As far as Mohan Rakesh’s dramatic output is concerned, it is not very large one but his contribution to the field of Indian Drama is myriad.

In the present era, the genre of drama has also attracted women dramatists to try their hands in the field of the theatrical art. Among the women dramatists, Manjula Padmanabhan is the great dramatic figure that demands special attention. The other women playwrights who have also

contributed to the development of tradition of Indian English Drama in contemporary era are those of Dina Mehta, P. Sengupta, Mahasweta Devi, Uma Parameswaran and others.

Mahasweta Devi, prolific female playwright, deserves special mention. She has authored a good number of novels and articles. Her writing credentials crosses publication of more than 200 books. She originally wrote in Bengali, but her works have been translated into the major languages of the India and also of the major languages of the world like English, French etc. Her contribution to Indian English Drama is, indeed, great and commendable. In her writings, she delves deep on the problems and issues of the unreached and unjust masses of our society. She registered her protest against the violation of basic human rights to the unprivileged section of the society like women, dalit, children etc.

Mahasweta Devi is the writer with the commitment. Her writings display her social commitment and concern. Mahasweta Devi shows angry look at the societal unjust and inhumane treatment to the underdogs without any rhyme and reason in our hierarchical social construction and structure. Since the drama is the most powerful means to bring change in society, she presents through it the heart rendering problems and constraints of the marginalized Indian masses which, in fact, constitute a large section of our society. In her play '*Water*', she dramatizes the grave problems like gender and caste discrimination, exploitation and violation of basic human rights to lower caste people. Water is the basic need for human existence on earth. The play '*Water*' captures the realistic picture of denial of water to the down trodden and tribal in the countryside of West Bengal.

Uma Parmeswaran is also another great name in field of Indian English Drama. She has made a notable contribution to Indian English Drama. She begins her career as a newspaper reporter and today she is considered as a noted poet, short story writer and dramatist. Presently, she has been working as a professor of English with Winnipeg University. She

also serves as a regional representative, National Council of the Writers' Union of Canada.

Uma Parmeswaran has made sustained and sincere efforts for presenting glorious heritage and culture of India on the global stage. Committed to the task, she has formed a center called Performing Arts & Literatures of India (PALI). She has to her credit plays like *Sons Must Die*, *Meera* (1971), *Sita's Promise*, *Rootless but green are the Boulevard Trees* (1998), *Dear Did* (1989), *My Sister* (1989).

Manjula Padmanabhan is a playwright of high dramatic caliber. She is one of the most powerful female playwrights of contemporary era. She has received the most prestigious Onassis award for her pioneering play "*Harvest*". The problems of alienation and marginalization are the off repeated themes in her plays. She depicts a very dirty decaying world in which mothers are seen bargaining their kids for the 'price of rice'. The play *Harvest*, which puts its playwright on international stage, is a gruesome tale of despondent and dilapidated family living in a *chawl* of metropolitan, Mumbai. Forced by the ill and adverse circumstances, a twenty year young lad namely Om Prakash decides to be an organ donar. Eventually, he is compelled to bargain his own body to a white 'First World buyer'. This incident reminds us the scene in which Dr. Faustus bargains his soul to Mephistopheles, chieftain of evil power.

Manjula Padmanabhan is the distinguished and doyen woman playwright in field of Indian Drama in English. She is the playwright of competent art and craft. Besides Indian English Drama, her contribution in the field of art and fiction is highly commendable. It is attributed:

Very recently Indian English Drama shot into prominence. Younger writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan have infused new life into this branch of writing.¹⁵

Prior to the above discussed women dramatists, there are some other women dramatists like Usha Ganguly, P.Sengupta among others who have also used theatrical art to depict feminine self and psyche, their anguish and agony. In post-independence era, the women writers have started to register their protest against the domestic violence, suppression and subjugation of women as a second rank citizen, physical and mental exploitation of women through theatrical art. Hence, one can call it 'Theater of Protest'. The women dramatists have immense theatrical potentiality to delineate feminine self, psyche and sensibility as well as plight of women in patriarchal social setup. The female playwrights document the realistic scenes of social-economic and psycho-cultural condition of women in our society.

Passing through the different stages of imitations and translations, Indian English Drama has ultimately got an independent identity and status in the last quarter of 20th century in the hands of Mahesh Dattani. It is the distinction of the dramatic vision of Dattani that he took the tradition of Indian English Drama as the faint reflection of European traditions. He adopted different forms of drama as a medium to represent the real depth and vitality of human experience. Therefore, it has become mandatory to contextualize the contribution of Mahesh Dattani in the totality of theatrical tradition.

Mahesh Dattani is the most powerful and potent dramatic voice in the present Indian English dramatic world. He has enriched and embellished tradition of Indian Drama with his experiments and innovations. With the arrival of Mahesh Dattani on the literary scene, the scenario begins to change. His plays are, originally, written in English. He has authored a good number of dramas diverse in themes, techniques and devices. Moreover, his plays have been produced on the stage very successfully.

The plays of Mahesh Dattani are characterized by some theatrical and thematic innovations. He is confluence of art and craft. He has not only intellectual power and prowess to produce a play in text but also has

an ability to get it staged successfully. While commenting on his plays; John Mc Rae calls him “the voice of India” and observes as follows:

They are the plays of today, sometimes as actual as to cause controversy, but at the same time they are the plays which embody many of the classic concern for world drama. ¹⁶

Dattani has an unconventional approach to theatre. He looks at the theatre as the medium to manifest the cause of the unprivileged segments of our society. His plays externalize the problems and pent up feeling of the subalterns in a very authentic and realistic manner. In his plays, Dattani visits untraversed and unexplored soil of homosexuals, HIV positive, eunuchs, physically challenged people etc. By touching up radical themes like gay themes, child sexual abuse, eunuch etc., he has greatly expanded new horizons in Indian English drama.

Mahesh Dattani, the most comprehensive dramatic soul, was born on August 7, 1958 in city of Bangalore in Karnataka, though his parents originally belonged to Porbandar of Gujarat. They have migrated to Bombay for business purpose and eventually settled in Bangalore where he found an opportunity of watching Gujarati and Kannad plays in the company of his parents and sisters. Dattani took his education from Baldwin High School and St. Joseph College of Arts and Science, Bangalore. Recalling his days at Baldwin, he avers that the communication was only done through English. Use of vernacular language was strictly prohibited and frowned upon.

‘vernies’ and the ones who were fluent in English. Snob values were inculcated early on and you generally were made to feel privileged to belong to the school. We were taught English Literature with capital E! ¹⁷

Dattani has a very strong 'passion' for the theatrical art. He longs to present variegated Indian life and sensibility. It is because of these, he sets his eyes on the art of play writing and stage performance. Otherwise, he wanted to spend a normal life, helping run his father's business. Of course, he helped his father in family business for some time. He has an urge to evolve theatrical tradition competent enough to capture spirit and sensibility of soil. He was motivated to join Bangalore Little Theatre during his college days, in early 1980's and started participating in workshops, acting and directing plays. He took training of Western ballet under Molly Andre at Alliance Francaise de Bangalore (1984-87), whereas he took training of *Bharatanatyam* under Chandrabhaga Devi and Krishna Rao, Bangalore (1986-90). He did his graduations in history, economics and political science at St. Joseph College, Bangalore. He did his post-graduation in Marketing and Advertisement Management. So, his academic career has no direct connection with his dramatic voyage.

Mahesh Dattani started his own theatre group named Playpen in 1984. It can be interpreted as the manifestation of his abstract ideas and knowledge of art and dance. This playpen, an important performing art group, is very useful for the artist. His plays are performed at his studio. It also encourages the novice artists to participate in dramatic activities. He attaches his great success to his Playpen. He, in one of his interviews, asserts:

I wouldn't say the only one, but I would say that I have been the most successful for various reasons: I have my own theatre company (Playpen), and I have a theatre background. I'm not writing because I'm a writer (of literature), I'm writing because I have theatre back-ground.¹⁸

Dattani has also been teaching drama courses at the Summer Programme of Portland state University. He also organizes the workshops on theatre course and a host of other theatrical activities at his Playpen studio time and again.

Being the multifaceted literary and dramatic figure, Mahesh Dattani has given a new height and dimension to Indian English Drama. He has rendered great help in bringing out Indian English drama from apologetic existence. Under the patronage of dramatists like Mahesh Dattani, the withering tree of Indian English Drama has started taking its roots and growing rapidly. Besides being the best known dramatist, Dattani is also reputed and accomplished actor, director, scriptwriter and dance teacher. It has been attributed:

Dattani's dramatic art is inspired by the mission to communicate profound meaning through his plays and, therefore, he exhibits keen awareness for the direction and stage performance of his own plays. His sensitive dramatic self is a fine synthesis of a dancer, director, actor, playwright, audience and commentator moving collectively towards a single direction.¹⁹

Apart from play writing business, he has been actively engaged in so many activities related to theatre. He has starred successfully in some noted plays winning accolade for his brilliant and sterling performance. While responding to the questions whether there occurs a conflict between the actor Dattani and director Dattani, He explains in following terms:

The actor, the playwright and the director are all complimentary to each other in a production. It is like gardening; where a whole is made of many parts. So many conditions determine a garden's lushness, its beauty. I write for an actor in the true sense of the word and not to ponder to vanity actors. There is no theatre without an actor or an audience. Everything is geared towards 'rasa' which is why I always direct the first production of any play I write. That enables me to put in more

stage instructions which go on to become a kind of blue print for other directors. That way, there is no conflict.²⁰

Dattani has directed and acted in many plays. He first performs his play at his Playpen, a theatre company. The plays of other artists are also first performed there and necessary modifications are made in them. Since, Dattani is not the student of any art or literature, the questions arise in our mind that what makes him write a play. Actually, some theatre group used to perform Gujarati plays in Bangalore. Young Dattani would enjoy the watching of these plays in the company of his family. The sensitive mind of Dattani receives an indelible impression of theatrical performance. It sustained his interest of watching Gujarati and Kannada plays for a longer period. He admits:

I didn't know the world at my doorstep. I got involved in theatre and for a long time continued to

Gujarati theater in Mumbai, I realized I had to unlearn a lot that I learnt in school. That is when my true education really began.²¹

Thus, his encounter with Gujarati plays is the most significant phenomenon in shaping his mind for theatre business. It is, therefore, we find Gujarati settings in most of his plays. He acknowledges this in the following way.

The playwright Madhu Rye influenced me a great deal in his portrayal of middle class Gujarati hypocrises. Vijay Tendulkar's Silence! The Court is in Session and Sakharam Binder impressed me with their complex portrayal of women characters.²²

Moreover, the aura of stage and audio-visual devices of a play attracted and appealed a lot to the mind and heart of Dattani. To the question what makes him write plays, Dattani responds in the following words.

I participated in the usual school plays and skits but I always yearned to direct performances. I realized that there must be a script for a performance. That's why I started writing - not very serious stuff though, initially. I watched a play whenever I could. Every time there was a group from Bombay or Ahmadabad staging a play in Bangalore, it became a community event that we would all attend. I remember a play I saw as a child at Ravindra Kalakshetra that fascinated me. It used the "play within the play" concept that I'd never seen before and a dramatic finale that took place in the auditorium. The teasing tone, the costume and make-up, the lights -- were all bright and loud yet I was utterly captivated. I later learnt that it was Madhu Rye's *Koi Pun Ek Phool Nu Naam Bolo* (Tell me the name of a flower). He is a sensational playwright. I got the chance to see his other plays, especially *Kumarni Agashe* (Kumar's Terrace), also in Hindi as *Neela Kamra*, in Bombay. Then the Bangalore Little Theatre was formed and I became seriously involved in acting, directing and writing plays. I learnt much from Vijay Padaki in the early years. I started my own theatre studio after a few years.²³

Besides this, the American playwrights Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller have influenced him on the matter of stage craft. Mahesh Dattani has got a very strong urge and affinity for Indianness. He uses Indian dramatic devices, techniques etc. in a very ample measure. He has made

sustained and sincere efforts for making stage befitting to Indian milieu. He uses Indian words very profusely in his English plays. His characters are fond of using Gujarati dialogues. He has used good number of Gujarati, Kannada and Hindi words in his plays.

Dattani is one of few dramatists who write their play originally in English. He doesn't follow western dramatic canons. He has indianized his English plays. With the globalization and arrival of digital technology, the world has become the small global village and English has become the lingua franca of this new global village. He wants to globalize the Indian stage and theatre through his English plays. Of course, he has succeeded in making its presence felt at global level. Moreover, English is a link language or contact language. At national and international level, it unites larger sections of society or civilization. About the use of English, he explains:

You've got to be true to your expressions. English is for me a sort of given. It's my language as it is to a lot of Indians here and abroad.²⁴

Dattani intends to develop theatre which can be understood and enjoyed by multi lingual community of India and abroad. Therefore, he resorts English as a medium of communication of his theatre. English is a 'hybrid language' and spoken unobtrusively in India. Nevertheless, Dattani puts first transmission of message through performance and secondly transmission of message or ideas through language the second. Thus, performance holds more significance than language in theatrical world of Dattani. He makes an honest confession:

My milieu is theatre, you can't operate in isolation. I do want a theatre movement to happen. The major block for that is lack of sound training and professionalism. We have the talent, but theater is more than that, it's a craft of communicating through the language of action.²⁵

Alyque Padmasee played very important role in paving and sharpening his theatrical track and career respectively. He rendered substantial help in presenting his plays in the leading theatres of India and abroad. With his sincere and sustained efforts, Dattani's plays have been performed to public and critical acclaim in the cities like, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and London. Critics have appreciated Dattani's theatrical talent and provide the motivation by way of enabling stage production of his plays. Alyque attributes: "At least we have playwright who gives sixty million English speaking Indians an identity."²⁶

Little Dubey is also a great help to Dattani. Dubey has done painstaking efforts for staging Dattani's plays such as *Dance Like a Man*, *Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Thirty Days in September*. The stage performance of Dattani's plays is done either by Dattani himself or by Dubey.

Briefly, Alyque Padamsee and Dubey are facilitator, manager and motivator of Dattani's theatrical creed. Mahesh Dattani is the vanguard of distinctive and vibrant tradition of Indian English Theatre. He possesses a fine faculty of artistic perception. He has his own specific aims and objectives about theatre. He writes his plays keeping stage production in his mind.

In dramatic world of Mahesh Dattani, there is a synthesis of director and writer. Most of his plays are directed by himself. As a director he is par excellence. His plays have been performed successfully to public and critical acclaim. Most of his radio plays have been aired on BBC radio. Dattani is very prompt and passionate for the stage production of his plays. He performs the play as soon as the writing of the script of the play is over. He puts:

I always direct the first production of any play I write. That enables me to put in more stage instructions, which go on to become a kind of blue print for other directors. That way, there is no conflict, and the other directors can interpret it, as they will.²⁷

As a playwright, he has an extraordinary ability to transform his plays into living performance. He has been endowed with power of perceiving the chemistry of stage. He knows well how to relate his plays to the audience. The function of audience has got much significance in drama. The success of playwright doesn't depend only on writing drama text, but entirely depends on its stage ability. Dattani admits:

Audience need to make the effort. Unlike TV or cinema where the viewer doesn't have to contribute, theatre is collective experience. In fact, at a moment of truth, you will find how people who don't know each other join in from all corners of the darkened hall to applaud and declare their appreciation of that important moment. And that's when you know a play works.²⁸

Thus, theatre offers collective experience. It admits the active participation of audience also. The job of the playwright is quite difficult. The playwright ought to have time, patience and passion for theatre. It is analyzed:

Dealing with compelling issues rooted in his milieu, he has dispelled the perception about English theatre being just gratuitous fizz. His audiences have been large and responsive, both to the spectacle and the language.²⁹

A close look at his plays will reveal to the fact that most of his plays are rooted in urban milieu of India. He has dramatized the problems and issues of the modernized rather urban India in his plays. He justifies his devotion of depicting urban milieu in his dramatic universe in the following way.

I think the old cliché about writing what you know best holds good for any work or for any art (drama or literature). I think one has to be true to one's

own environment. Even if I attempted writing a play about the angst of rural Indian society, it wouldn't ring true, it would be an outsider's view-I could only hope to evoke sympathy, but never to really be a part of that unless I spend a lot of time there. I think there are enough issues and challenges in urban Indian society (the milieu I am a part of) and these automatically from the content of my work.³⁰

His plays are dramatic reflections on the concerns and constraints of the commoners. He dramatizes common man's efforts to have space and respect in society. What matters much in his plays is matrix of space. He writes about the society and surroundings in which he lives. In this way, his dramatic art is the faithful and authentic expression of his first hand experience and knowledge of socio-cultural environment in which he breathes and lives. He responds, to the question whether he is distressed to see the problems that he is dealing in his plays, in the following words:

They invariably do. Social issues move me and I like to examine an idea from different angles. The plays where the content came first are On a Muggy Night and Final Solutions. As for the latter, I was asked to write a play about communal tension, and I said 'what can one write about that other than platitudes? But out of that churning emerged' 'Final Solutions' Sometimes the characters spoke to me first, as in Tara and On a Muggy Night. In Dance Like a Man, the plot emerged out of a flashback structure where the same actors play different generations. Sometimes images make the first impact; then, the set.³¹

Dattani is a forefront playwright in contemporary Indian Drama in English. He has authored more than one and a half dozen plays differing in themes, tone and treatments. The entire dramatic corpus of Mahesh Dattani can be classified into three categories namely Stage Plays, Radio Plays, and Screen Plays.

So far the themes of his plays are concerned; they are, by and large, quite contemporary and modern, radical and unconventional. He has dramatized problems and issues of the modern urban Indian society ranging from communal tension, homosexuality, child sexual abuse, gender discrimination, marriage and career, conflict between tradition and modernity, patriarchal social system, constraints of hijjaras (eunuch), women, children labourer, interpersonal relationship, workings of personal and moral choices, identity crisis, revelation of past, the problems faced by HIV positives.

'Family' is the most important theatrical space in his plays as most of the plays have family as their locale. They are dealing with the stories or tales of various families. *Where There's a Will, Bravely Fought the Queen, Dance Like a Man, Tara* are some of his plays in which the painful tales of various families have gone into the fabric and texture of the plays. The dramatist depicts the battles being fought among the members of same family at home. 'Home is the oft repeated arena of battle in his dramatic universe. The unrest eats up the happy and joyous atmosphere of the family curbing the personal development in them. It is observed:

necessarily embedded within the mechanisms of the middle class Indian family, and this is the context from which he operates.³²

Dattani is the spokesperson of the unprivileged section of our society. He has examined and analyzed the problems of women, children, eunuchs and minorities in his plays. His works offers a fine study from socio-psychological dimensions. He presents socio-political realities of our time. He

has redefined the tradition of Indian English theatre with his innovative art and craft. He avers:

thread. I'm not sure even that I want to go back to
on't need to revisit it. I'm more
interested in pushing it forward. I am pushing, and
I'm pushing the audience.³³

Thus, he considers himself as the 'change element' in the contemporary framework of Indian English Theatre. So it is improper to call him sequel to anybody or consider him component of a continuum – the ongoing journey of Indian Theatre. It doesn't mean that he is something different, but he is doing thing differently for creating effective and ever lasting appeal. He is a true artist who holds mirror to make reality more visible to audience. It has been assumed:

He prepared the stage for a specific realism on the lines of Ibsen and Shaw. For him, man is an integral part of society and consciously or unconsciously the creeping influences of societal set up, determine the fabric of relationship around him.³⁴

For the success of drama, Dattani admits the importance of performance. He derives more pleasure and also a sense of completeness not from playwriting but from directing it on the stage. His theatre personality is the fine synthesis of writer and director. It is because of this, his plays have gained immense popularity at home and abroad. To the question, "What makes you happy?" Dattani replies:

When I'm directing a play, I feel like I'm a complete human being. That makes me happy. And also when I meet people with a passion. It reaffirms all

that I do. I'm enjoying what I'm doing and don't want to do anything else.³⁵

Dattani, with his innovative bent, artistic perception and originality of vision, has altered conventional concept of Indian English Theatre. He has an ability to synchronize the traditional issues with that of post-modernist issues. His plays are very remarkable not only from socio-political but also emotional and psychological point of views. His contribution to the tradition of Indian English Drama is unprecedented and incomparable. Considering this, he has been conferred the most prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his *Final Solutions and Other Plays*. It acknowledges Dattani's contribution to the genre of drama in the following terms:

[Dattani's work], probes, tangled attitudes in contemporary India towards communal

contribution to Indian drama in English.³⁶

Dattani is faithful to his experience and environment. He is one of the most powerful playwrights of contemporary era. His *Where There's a Will* (1988) marks the beginning of his literary career as serious dramatist. It is, first, full length play dealing with mechanics of middle class Gujarati family. The play is a drawing room comedy in which patriarchal male head of the family tries to control his family even after his death through his will. His *Final Solutions*, which bags him Sahitya Academy Award, is a gripping and sensitive play, dealing with communal tension. In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Do the Needful* and *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, Dattani visits virgin soil of homosexuals. *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is also adapted as film entitled *Mango Soufflé*. Both the play and the film describe the issue of the same sex love. Though, there are different locales of both the play and the film, the theme, the characters, the events etc. are same in both the works. The film *Mango Souffle* is a daring attempt to unmask the gay-relationship veiled under the domination of heterosexuals' relationship of society that considers it as a disgusting, unnatural, and undesirable.

Tara is the most touching three-act stage play by Dattani. The play revolves around the theme of favoring the boy and frowning upon the girl with exceptional originality of conception. The playwright presents arguments against the parents' preference for the male child at the cost of girl child. The play holds much significance in the present time especially when the government and other NGO's are holding programmes and rallies for creating awareness among people against female foeticide.

Dance Like a Man is also another celebrated play by Dattani. The play depicts conflict between tradition and modernity. *Thirty Days in September* is based on child's sexual abuse and its impact. *The Seven Steps Around the Fire* probes into the lives of eunuch community. It deals with murder mystery. Kamla, the eunuch, is killed and police is investigating the case preoccupying with the idea that Kamla is slain by Anarkali, the chief of eunuch community. At the end, Uma, a researcher of Sociology and the wife of police officer, unveils the mystery of murder exposing our brutal attitudes towards eunuch community.

The play *Thirty Days in September* dramatizes theme of child sexual abuse within the range of familial relationship, whereas *The Swami and Winston* also deals with the mystery of murder of English lady. Here Uma Rao, again, unveils the curtain from the murder mystery of English lady. The dramatist exposes pseudo and scheming scholars in this play. Like afore said two plays, *Uma and Fairy Queen* is also a detective in nature.

The play *A Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child* is a very interesting and enchanting radio play. The first broadcasting of the play was done on October 29, 2000 on BBC Radio. Mahesh Dattani was commissioned to write plays for BBC Radio on the occasion of six hundredth anniversary of Geoffrey Chaucer. This play was written for this purpose. The play dramatizes the journey of English lady Anna Gosweb to an Indian village after twenty years to meet and help her drought stricken boy friend Jaman. Unfortunately, her friend Jaman dies before she reaches his village. The play *Clearing the*

Rubble is a very brief but touching radio play. It depicts the misery and malady of earth quake affected people of Kutch region in Gujarat.

Morning Raga is his famous screen play. It is based on life of Swarnlatha, a carnatic singer. The play is greatly appreciated for its music as motif. The play presents dexterously emotional turmoil in the lives of the various characters of the play. Dattani observes:

It is about a meeting of two worlds. A story that brings together the modern and the traditional unites the past with the present, Carnatic music with Western music, fate and coincidence with individual choices.³⁷

The play *Ek Alag Mausam* is dramatic achievement of Mahesh Dattani. It deals with the serious issue of human life. The dramatist tries to articulate the voice of the marginalized being HIV positives through this play. Like post-colonial writers, Dattani attempts to seek the space for the HIV positives in the society. He reflects the ethos of the subaltern section of our society. The play depicts post modernistic theme-love story of two HIV positives. The play lays bare their love for life. The play has two layers of ideas; need for the creation of social awareness against HIV and love and understanding for the HIV afflicted.

In this way, Mahesh Dattani makes daring efforts to depict quite unconventional and radical themes in his plays. The complexities of human relationship and predicament of the modern men find due expression in his dramatic works. His dramatic techniques and stagecraft are superb. There are rapid shifts in terms of time and space. He has made use of different images, symbols, devices, techniques etc. to communicate his ideas in a very effective and concrete manner. Dattani's theatrical genius is characterized by diversity, dynamism, and innovative urge. He is an unconventional voice in the theatrical firmament of India. He seeks to present volcanic dimensions of rage and resentment as well as distrust and discontent shrouded inside the psychological domain of human consciousness. Dattani's theatrical creed

asserts that human nature has its own autonomous space. Any act of encroachment to this space, either through conventional ideology or by any other means, will result into agitation and uprising causing chaos and destruction.

There are sixteen plays extant in the two Penguin volumes entitled *Collected Play* and *Collected Plays-Volume II*. All these plays are taken up for the critical exploration and inquiry. They are as follows:

❖ **The Stage Plays**

- Where There's a Will - 1988
- Dance Like a Man - 1989
- Tara - 1990
- Bravely Fought the Queen - 1991
- Final Solutions - 1992-93
- On a Muggy Night in Mumbai - 1998
- Thirty Days in September - 2001

❖ **The Radio Plays**

- Do the Needful - 1997
- Seven Steps Around the Fire - 1998
- The Swami and Winston - 2000
- A Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child – 2000
- Clearing the Rubble – 2000
- Uma and the Fairy Queen - 2003

❖ **The Screen Plays**

- Mango Soufflé - 2002
- Morning Raga - 2004
- Ek Alag Mausam - 2005

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Chapter II

A Critical Study of Mahesh Dattani's Stage Plays

Mahesh Dattani occupies a very distinct and illustrious place in the realm of Indian drama in English. He has manifested his individuality in so many ways. His presentation of problems from real life situations is significant contribution to Indian English Drama. Among modern Indian playwrights, he stands forth with singular distinctness, striking artistic perception, and immense dramatic guts. He is the most serious contemporary dramatist in Indian drama in English. He takes up serious problems prevailing in urban India. He, very successfully, gives voice to the problems and sufferings of the marginalized people of our society. His plays contain some important elements like human pathos, passions, conflict and appeal to human sentiment, which can immediately touch and stir common audience. He puts Indian drama in English to the level of world drama. The present chapter makes an in-depth critical inquiry into the seven stage plays of Mahesh Dattani. They are as under:

- Where There's a Will - 1988
- Dance Like a Man - 1989
- Tara - 1990
- Bravely Fought the Queen - 1991
- Final Solutions - 1992-93
- On a Muggy Night in Mumbai - 1998
- Thirty Days in September - 2001

Where There's a Will is one of the four earliest plays of Mahesh Dattani. The play is a drawing room comedy of a rich businessman, who tries to control his family even after his death through his 'will'. The play is really very interesting and appealing. It generates a lot of laughter and mirth among the spectators. Despite its humorous trait, the play is very introspective and thought-provoking.

The play *Where There's a Will* has many trademark qualities of Dattani's play. Like other plays, the play has Gujarati milieu and successful runs on the stage. The play presents how women in their own homes are marginalized. Though the kitchen or home is described as the kingdom of women, they are no longer ruling over them. Instead, they are pushed on the margins of invisibility. It is attributed:

Where There's a Will has several interesting aspects. Mahesh described it as the exorcism of the patriarchal code. Women- be it daughter-in-law, wife or mistress- are dependent on men and this play shows what happens when they are

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Mahesh Dattani excels in fusing western models with native theatrical tradition. In the same way, his artistic perception is also fine fusion of both- tragic and comic insight. If *Thirty Days in September* is the most solemn play of Dattani, *Where There's a Will* is the most comic in tone and treatment. The play is a satire on the water tight patriarchal code. He satirizes human follies and foibles in a very interesting way. In fact, no character is escaped from the stroke of his satire. Like Ben Johnson's *Every Man in his Humor*, all the characters are delineated with more or less sarcasm. The dramatist intends to bring change in society by hitting at the human faults and follies. It has been rightly observed:

Joy is the essence of life and I have always believed that theatre should exude delight. *Where There's a Will* is such a play. It is not only thought provoking and introspective but also provides an evening of pure entertainment. ²

Where There's a Will does both delight and teach. The play was first performed by Playpen at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore, on 23rd September 1988, as part of the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival. The play is translated into Gujarati and Hindi by Suresh Rajda and Rajendra Mohan

respectively. Hindi show was performed in Tanzil Theatres, Mumbai on 25th December, 1992 under the directorship of Jaspal Sendhu.

The narrative of the play takes places in the lavish house of Hasmukh Mehta, a doyen businessman and staunch follower of patriarchal system. The dramatist has introduced the ghost of Hasmukh Mehta to make watcher of his own actions. The stage is divided into three spaces namely the fancy dinning cum- living room, the bed room belonging to Hasmukh and Sonal Mehta, and the hideously trendy bedroom of their son Ajit, and his wife, Preeti. Hasmukh strictly followed steps of his father in his life. He wants his own son Ajit follow his footsteps in real life. He exercises the patriarchal authority over all the members of his family. He believes in 'absolute power'. The dramatist focuses on fractured interpersonal relationship within the range of familial relationship. Like all modern families, there is a lack of emotional attachment and understanding towards others' views and opinions. The character of Hasmukh Mehta can be analyzed in two ways -through his familial world and business world. He is the boss at the both the spaces. His relationship is plagued with grievances and unrest at home. However, he is enjoying the position of the ablest and the perfect boss at the business house.

Thus, Hasmukh Mehta is embodied with patriarchal canons and tried to control family even after his death through his 'will'. He is both dead and alive, but his business remains unobstructed and unceasing. The play is divided into two acts and these two acts are subdivided each in two parts. The play begins at the lavish house of rich protagonist Hasmukh Mehta.

All the four members of the Mehta family stand in sharp contrast to their counterparts. Hasmukh Mehta is the autocratic head and demands unquestionable obedience from his family members, whereas his wife Sonal is quite subservient and subordinate to her husband. She has no choice of her own. She has learnt how to execute her husband's instructions and orders in toto. In this sense, Hasmukh is anti-thesis to her. The play depicts how women are subjugated and suppressed by their male counterparts in

patriarchal social set up. When the play begins, Ajit is talking on phone and Hasmukh Mehta enters through the main door with his walking staff.

Ajit: (on the phone). Five lakhs. That's all. Give me five lakhs and I'll modernize the whole bloody plant. That's what I tell my dad. I mean, come on, five lakhs is nothing!

Hasmukh: (to the audience) My son, the business man. Just listen to him.
(CP: 455)

Hasmukh is a self made and led a deprived childhood. He is forty five year old man. He is described as Garment Tycoon. He criticizes his son Ajit's ways. He observes categorically; "one of the richest men in this city. All by my own efforts. Forty five years old and I am a success in capital letters. Twenty -three years old and he is on the road to failure, in bold capital letters..." (CP: 464)

Ajit, young man of twenty three years, is the joint managing director of his father's factory. According to Hasmukh, he is wasting money and is on his way to bankruptcy. He makes a very satirical statement that God has just forgotten to open an account for Ajit.

Hasmukh Mehta is projected as very autocratic father. He controls and checks the every movement of this son. He wants his son not as partner or owner of his property, but he wants his own son as a slave. Ajit Mehta is quite meek and occupies little importance at both the spaces. He can be called the filial subaltern. The play dramatizes the politics of patriarchy which doesn't only marginalize the women folk of the family but also other male members of the family. Hasmukh Mehta has over powered identity of his son, Ajit, by exercising absolute control over his home and business affairs. He has no power to use the property of his father in his own way. He is excluded from decision making process in business. His father is highly ego-centric and horribly self-opinioned man who doesn't allow Ajit to use his skill and talents for the business enhancement process. Strangely enough, Hasmukh Mehta has made Ajit the managing director of his companies.

However, he is not supposed to undertake any business errand and affairs at his own. He has to execute his father's orders and command keeping his own say aside.

Ajit: Don't I have any rights at all?

Hasmukh: You have the right to listen to my advice and obey my orders.
(CP: 458)

Like Sonal to Hasmukh, Preeti is counterfoil to her husband Ajit. Preeti is a young, charming and graceful lady. She expects a baby. She is quite calculative and assertive lady. Hasmukh knows her well. Therefore, he says; "That's my daughter-in-law, Preeti, pretty, charming, graceful and sly as a snake." (CP: 56)

The theatre attempts to articulate mores and manners of the society intending to cheer people by lifting them from physical, social and mental problems and afflictions and also offers a piece of advice for leading life in a healthier and happier way. Dattani's plays have Gujarati family as the setting or locale. The present play *Where There's a Will* deals with the mechanics of middle class Gujarati family, showing how patriarchal canons control not only the lives of women of the family but also men of the family.

Since Hasmukh was leading businessman of the city, every newspaper limelighted his death news. His death news appeared in the newspaper under the caption 'Garment Tycoon Dead'.

Hasmukh:

cutting.) 'Garment Tycoon Dead.' That felt good. You never really know how famous you are until you are dead. Of course, it's at the bottom of page seven and it's only six lines. But look at the obituary page. Filled with my photographs. All inserted by different companies. All mine, of course. (Throws the paper away) Now it's all over. My life is over and I have no business

you see, I have made a special will! (Laughs) they are going to hate me for doing this to them! (CP: 479)

Dattani's plays reveal at the end the skeleton in the cupboard. *Where There's a Will* also has the skeleton in the cupboard. The skeleton is his mistress and his will. Soon after his demise, the will was read. It sets forth avenues of varied reaction and revelations, charges and counters charges, surprises and shocks, protestation and acceptance. There is an air of turmoil and upheavals in the family of Hasmukh Mehta caused by his 'will'. It was soon, clear among them that authorization patriarch and garment tycoon will continue to dictate their lives through the terms and conditions inset in 'will'. The will can be viewed as whip and mistress can be viewed as the agent. The 'will' was very complicated and detailed one. As per Hasmukh's instruction, the lawyer summoned them exactly a one week after his death to read out the 'will'. As per the 'will', none of the three Mehta family members has any legal right over the property of Hasmukh Mehta including their present living room.

Hasmukh has formed a charitable trust named Hasmukh Mehta Charitable Trust. He has donated all his property including finances, shares etc. to the trust. As per the will, they get a regular allowance from the trust. The trust will be dissolved when Ajit Mehta turns forty five. Everything remains with the trust till he is not forty five. He can use and utilize property and money after that period.

Further, according to the Will, Ajit has to attend office everyday at nine and he can leave at six p.m. in the evening. No new business project of Ajit will be sanctioned. If Ajit and other fail to abide by the terms and conditions, the trust will donate its funds to various charities as approved by Hasmukh. Thus, Hasmukh Mehta shuns his family making will and further more by making Kiran Jhaveri, as the trustee of the trust. He has kept namely Kiran Jhaveri who was a very shrewd and hard headed marketing executive. She lives in company flat in posh locality. Hasmukh has taken meticulous care and every precautionary step to avoid any challenge to the validity of his will. He had a qualified physician as a witness number one to his

will and attached a certificate stating that signatory was of sound mind etc. The certificate was signed by their family doctor, Jhunjhunwalla, who attends him regularly. So contesting the will was out of question.

Hasmukh's personality displays moods and temperament of business tycoons who throws aside any person not fruitful for the enhancement of their business interest. Hasmukh is obstinate and adamant, gritty and gutsy. As a businessman, he is quite alert and accurate. He promptly grabs opportunity of utilizing other for his business gain and profits.

After sometime, Mrs. Kiran Jhaveri comes to Hasmukh's house to stay with his family members. So, the family is surprised, rather socked. They don't want to let her stay with them. However, they decide to keep her with them after knowing the instructions provided by Hasmukh in his 'will'. Preeti asks her what if they don't keep her with them:

Preeti: What if we refuse to let you stay with us?

Kiran: (Studies Preeti) As the trustee of the Hasmukh Mehta charitable Trust, I have the right to make a statement declaring that since the recipients of the trust, namely you all, are not complying with the rules set down by the deceased, the holdings of the trust will be divided between certain charitable institutions recommended by the founder. Which will mean that you won't ever get to see even a single rupee earned by your father-in-law. Now will you refuse to let me stay here?

Preeti: Welcome home (CP: 494)

Kiran Jhaveri is a very well preserved woman who looks anywhere between thirty and forty years. Her husband was a drunkard, especially fond of imported whisky, Jonnie Walker. He was suspended from the job for this mal-practice. Sacked from the job, he can't afford buying the whisky. So he allowed his wife meeting and seeing Hasmukh. Kiran admits:

Anyway, it all worked out to be quite convenient. I got a
you know. (CP: 491)

Preeti is quite scheming and selfish lady. Soon after the reading of the will, she begins to behave differently. She shows true colour of her personality. She wants to contest will but all in vain. Hasmukh Mehta has made it leak proof. No one can find way out. Moreover, he has made Kiran as the trustee. So, she can put a check her and stops them finding any loophole in the will.

All the three members of the Mehta family have to learn new lessons every day under the Madam Jhavari. She is teaching them at home and office. At home, she is guiding and instructing Sonal and Preeti, whereas she is taking hard task from Ajit at the office. Now, they realize the very complexity and toughness of the situation.

Hasmukh ruled his family when he was alive. After his death, he tried to control his family from his grave through his will. Kiran puts: "Hasmukh was intoxicated with his power. He thought he was invincible. That he could rule from his grave by making this will. (CP: 508)

Actually, Hasmukh didn't trust any of his family members. He reserves his doubts about their ways and intentions. He trusted completely in Kiran Jhaveri, who was working as an executive in his office and has won his confidence. She has got both brain and body. She caters his physical and emotional needs. Hasmukh puts: " I mean, a man in my position to be careful. I needed a safer relationship. Something between a wife and a pick-up. Yes. A mistress! It didn't take me very long to find her. She was right there in my office. An unmarried lady. Not an ordinary typist or even a secretary. A shrewd hard-headed marketing executive. If there was any one in my office who had brains to match mine, it was her. She is now one of the directors of the company. Not entirely due to her shrewd head. She lives now in a company flat in a posh locality. I won't tell you where. Well, it's walking distance from here. Convenient for me. All right, what's wrong with having a

bit on the side? Especially since the main course is always without salt. Okay, okay, less salt.” (CP: 473)

Hasmukh Mehta has all praise for her. She has fine body to cater his sensuous desires and brilliant brain to run his business in an effective manner. No one knows about their affair until he dies. After his death, the inside saga comes to the forefront as it was also desired by him. She could succeed in having his accolades. All others have lost his sympathy and confidence.

Hasmukh criticises her wife by calling her dry and good for nothing. He calls her mud. To Hasmukh, Ajit is not competent enough to run his business. He lacks the nitty-quitty of the business world. Only person who possesses the guts, the shrewdness and proper spirit to reign supreme in industry is Kiran Jhaveri, who is quite commanding and courting as well as daring and diplomatic lady.

It seems that initially he succeeds in his intentions. Gradually, he realizes that his desire to control over his death is collapsing slowly. He has appointed Kiran to set his family order and check them leading lives in their own fancies. Moreover, Kiran makes certain revelations about his personality. Kiran tells Sonal, “He depended on me for everything. He thought he was the decision maker. But I was. He wanted me to run his life. Like his father had. (Pause) Hasmukh didn’t really want a mistress. He wanted a father. He saw in me a woman who would father him! (Laughs. Hasmukh cringes at her laughter.) Men never really grow up!” (CP: 510)

She added that she felt pity for his attempts at ruling over his family after his death, through his will. His desire ruling over the family results from the fact that his family was ruled over by his father. He was just a good boy to his father throughout his life. That’s why he couldn’t tolerate Ajit objecting to him. He wants Ajit to him as he was to his father. His life was overshadowed by his father’s and wants Ajit’s to be overshadowed by his life.

The play focuses on emptiness and uselessness of strict adherence to patriarchal code. One of the major thematic threads that dissect from the play is the conflicting relationship between father and son. It depicts the clash between conservative notions and contemporary generation. Both father and son have their own view points regarding life and business. The father strictly believes that he has right notions regarding son's life, whereas son rejects the idea of complete command over his life. At the very beginning of the play, Ajit expresses his displeasure regarding his father's idea. He is quite young and innovative. He wants to give touch of modernity to his plant. He needs five lakh rupees. Hasmukh doesn't trust his son's ways of world and his ability of dealing with business affairs. He considers him "zero" in business and practical affairs, whereas Ajit feels that his father is hard-liner and stubborn fellow. He doesn't respect anybody's say in decision making process. Hasmukh thinks that his son is very novice and silly in the world of business. He makes mockery of his son and shows his displeasure towards his attitude.

Later in the play, Kiran Jhaveri appreciates Ajit's invincible spirit for telling truth on the face of his father. Ajit is not a blind follower of his father Hasmukh's footsteps as Hasmukh did to his father. However, Ajit doesn't raise much voice against the autocratic regime of his father. He just disapproves his father's views and ideology. Kiran appreciate his revolutionary spirit in this manner. "He may not be the greatest rebel on earth, but at least he is free of his father's beliefs. He resists. In a small way, but at least it's a start. That is enough to prove that Ajit has won and Hasmukh has lost." (CP: 510)

Ajit asserts his individualistic identity. He protests against parental hegemony. In this sense, father-son relationship is a post colonial dichotomy of contemporary society. He is content at the idea that he is defiant. He has challenged the dictatorship of his father.

Ajit: All right. I can't fight him now. He has won. He has won because he's dead. But when he was alive, I did protest. In my own way.

(laughs) Yes, I'm happy I did that. Yes, I did fight back. I did do 'peep peep' to him! That was my victory. (CP: 501)

Thus, the play dramatises the discord and disharmony between the father-son relationships. Father and son are shown at constant fight. There is a nerve-war between them. The play depicts the forced harmony among the members of the same family. In this sense, the play may be deemed as the postcolonial protest against the colonizations of self and identity.

Sonal Mehta is the most tragic-comic character in the play. She lacks self confidence and discretion. She is a parasite creature in the play. Her life is dominated by others. In the play, she constantly depends on her sister Minal in every matter of her life. Her character lends a humorous touch to the play. Tragedy of her life is that most characters in the play blame her by one or another way. After the arrival of Kiran in her house, her condition becomes more pathetic and now she has to depend upon the mistress of her husband. However, she found a good friend in her soon. Sonal has learnt so many new lessons and also new things about her husband through Kiran. Therefore, she tells Kiran. "How little I knew him. If I had understood him when he was alive, I would have died laughing." (CP: 510)

Thus, a sea change occurs in her nature and thinking at the end. Her attitude towards her sister and other is totally changed. The play ends her denying any help from her sister Minal.

Kiran: (to Sonal) Your sister just said some of the rudest things to me.

Sonal: Oh, did she? Give me the phone. (On the phone) Hello? Yes, Minal, this is Sonal!
don't another maharaj, not from you at least! ...I just don't, that's all... Well, as far as I'm concerned you can go jump into a bottomless pit! (Slams the phone down and turns towards Kiran) (CP: 516)

Dattani's plays peep into the past and find out the reality. His peeping into past is not myth-seeking attempt, but he dives into the past for bringing out the reality lying in the darkness, at the dark bottom of the past. The realization of past error helps the character understanding present in a better way. It has got modern relevance. It is because of this; his plays are seen and enjoyed again and again.

The play *Where There's a Will* shows that there is no significant improvement in the plight of the women as though there is spread of education and progress of mankind in almost all the human sectors. It seems that male pride or ego is the root cause of the present plight of the women in our society. Earlier, it was strongly believed that empowerment of women can be done through imparting proper education and employment. The play seeks to present that education and economical empowerment has failed to improve the quality of women's lives in our society. This is quite explicit through the conversation between Kiran and Sonal. Kiran is well educated and employed in the office of Hasmukh Mehta, who later on, raises her to the position of directorship. Sonal is not fortunate enough to have proper access to education. So, she considers Kiran a fortunate lady. This is how Kiran falsifies Sonal's notion by narrating her unhappy past.

Sonal: You are so lucky. You are educated, so you know all this.

Kiran: Wrong. I learnt my lessons from being so close to life. I learnt my lessons from watching my mother tolerating my father when he came home every day with bottles of rum wrapped up in newspapers... (CP: 508)

It is quite identical that women are suffering on account of no fault of their own. Nor are they suffering due to lack of education and employment. They are the victims of man's vain pride and false ego. They are striving to avoid onslaught of male chauvinism. It is observed:

Interweaving his narrative around the scheming and plotting of the family members who apparently

have been put in a fix by a dead man's will, Dattani explores the dichotomy between the male/female roles within the archetype of the family headed by a man and what happens when a woman takes over.³

Dattani is considered as the spokesperson of the marginalized people. His plays display his deep concern for gendered subaltern i.e. the marginalization of women. The present play presents two kinds of images of the women. Firstly, there is a woman who suffers throughout her life. Sonal Mehta has been victimized and exploited by the patriarchal social system. She is silent sufferer. Secondly, there are women who contend with patriarchal unjust authority for their right and equities. Kiran Jhaveri, and Preeti are bold, assertive and at times, defiance. They don't let patriarchal authority rule over their lives. Of course, both these women are shrewd and money minded. They are scheming and cunning. However, they have guts to contest with what is not right from their point of views.

Dattani's dramatic art frequents between the centre and the margin. In this play, Kiran occupies periphery. She is living at the outskirts rather in the darkness. Soon after the demise of Hasmukh, she appears to the front and takes over the Mehta Group of Industries through the will made by Hasmukh. She has become the symbol of Hasmukh's passion and power, amour and authority.

Dattani reflects on the issue of gender roles and their miserable plights. Even in modern times, women are being treated as sex object and exploited physically and mentally. Feminine 'self' has not been restored yet. The dramatist is worried at the continuation of sorry state of women from one generation to another one. The wrath and anguish of the dramatist can be perceived through the following utterances of Kiran.

Kiran: Ins't it strange how repetitive life is? My brothers. They have turned out to be like their father, going home with bottles of rum wrapped up in news papers. Beating up their wives. And I-I too

am like my mother. I married a drunkard and I listened to his swearing. And I too have learnt to suffer silently. Oh! Where will all this end? Will the scars our parents lay on us remain forever? (CP: 508)

Dattani foregrounds the people thrown to the periphery for giving vent to their pent up fillings. Such characters interact directly with psyches of the audience and thereby make audience self-critical of their own thoughts and ideas.

Dattani extensively exorcises patriarchal code through his dramatic art. Hasmukh Mehta wants unquestionable obedience and unchallengeable authority at home and at the office respectively. Therefore, he doesn't allow growing the 'self' of his son, Ajit who defies the autocratic father, but he fails to articulate his own space. He doesn't cow tow to patriarchal authority. Nor does he revolt against him significantly. He just tries to assert his identity before his father.

The introduction of supernatural element is a very humourous and interesting one. The most amazing thing is that the ghost of Hasmukh Mehta watches his own actions after his death. So, the play has two Hasmukhs- the dead and the alive. It is observed:

What interested me particularly was its philosophical twist. To be the watcher of one's self is to make intelligent changes in this life. *In Where There's a Will*, has control over his family through his money and forgoes an opportunity to improve his interpersonal relationship. As do most of us. Consequently, when he became the watcher of his actions, he perceives that his desire for control has led him to be the victim of his own machinations unlike Kiran who uses power play to essentially improve her relationships.⁴

Where There's a Will dramatizes the social realism in a very comical and satirical way. The play is replete with laughter and mirth. The tone of sarcasm and humour runs throughout the play. Dattani's creative genius handles sobriety and humour side by side very successfully. The familial interaction is often very comical and satirical.

One of the most notable things is that the names of all the characters signify certain virtues and ideas, but none of the characters act according to the virtue or merit symbolized by their names. For example, Hasmukh meaning a smiling face. Hasmukh never provides his family members the opportunity to smile. In the same way, Ajit means unconquerable. Ajit can't win free heart accolades from Hasmukh.

The ghost of Hasmukh generates a lot of laughter and mirth in the drama. It observes and analyzes posthumous activities and events taking place in his own house. When alive, he has managed to dictate the rules and regulations for controlling the members of his family by preparing a will. He has invested powers and authority in Kiran Jhaveri to carry out the business and household affairs as per terms and conditions specified by him, but the ghost is disappointed when it sees that Kiran is using power so invested in her for strengthening her own interpersonal relationships with the members of Hasmukh Mehta's family. This is how the ghost of Hasmukh expresses its displeasure. "You are here to set my family in order. Don't forget your job." (CP: 508)

The play is both funny and philosophical. The dramatist mingles them in a very innovative and meaningful way. It has been analyzed:

invisible presence of Hasmukh especially after his appearance as Ghost, his mate observations and the free display of the inner feelings of different characters against the authority of Hasmukh, is a unique device for self assessment for the characters.⁵

The play ends with Sonal's assertion of confidence in Kiran denoting the newly developed bondage of mutual understanding and trust between the wife and the mistress.

Dattani exploits the death of Hasmukh as a dramatic device - the soul of Hasmukh surveying and commenting on the ongoing affairs, the ensuing responses – all these definitely have comic overtones but simultaneously these are also imbued with philosophical import.⁶

When alive, Hasmukh was suffering from certain diseases like high blood pressure, high cholesterol etc. The ghost's remark about this is quite comical: "There's nobody home. Ah! (Rises and stretches) It feels good to be dead. No more kidney problems, no backaches, no irregular heartbeats,
" (CP: 479)

The play exposes the illusion of perfect and complete control over the family for a longer period. Here the question arises in our mind why a man aspires too much for authority and power. Does it signify any value of life? Apparently- it doesn't attach any meaning to human existence. Nor does it help in improving quality of human life. Dattani is convinced that it is an attempt to make oneself secure and survive. So, man's drive for the domination arises out of his own apprehension of insecurity.

Though *Where There's a Will* is described as a drawing room comedy, it functions better than a tragedy in its effect and appeal on the minds and hearts of the audience. The play has thematic richness, brilliant dialogue delivery, touch of humor and satire, suitable dramatic structure. It is assumed:

Satire, irony, gallows, humor and other mutations of comic spirit will be the guiding force of our theatre in the coming years and tragedy has little

to offer to rebellious generation obsessed by the danger of mega deaths.⁷

The dramatist mainly reflects on the issues of gender discrimination and evil of patriarch along with host of other issues like father-son, husband-wife relationship, evil of capitalism in the post colonial purview. Hasmukh blames his wife for his own extra-marital relationship. Hasmukh observes:

enjoyed sex. Twenty five years of marriage and I haven't enjoyed sex with her. So what does a man do? I started eating out. Well, I had the money. I could afford to eat in fancy places. And what about my sex life? Well, I could afford that too. Those expensive ladies of the night in the five star hotels! (Smiles at some pleasant

Something between a wife and a pick-up. Yes. A mistress! It didn't take me
(CP: 473)

Hasmukh Mehta has no respect and love for his wife Sonal. She is to him good for nothing. In fact, she is a chaste and obedient wife, but what Hasmukh expects from wife is something disgusting one. As he says; "Then I should be very happy man. I've got a loving wife who has been faithful to me like any dog would be." (CP: 473)

His word throws ample lights on the fact that Hasmukh's notion of faithful wife is as good as faithful dog that acts as per provided training without using her own discretion. Actually, Sonal is innocent and ignorant woman who doesn't know about his sexual lust and his enjoyment with night women. She is devoted and descent wife, but her husband is perverted and a rude creature. At the end, Sonal and Kiran join hands to eradicate the evil of sexual colonialism. They are endowed with the ability to assess and subsequently shaking off the unjust shackle of patriarchy.

As a matter of fact, all trouble comes out of Hasmukh's false notions of joy and happiness of life. He considers domination as the only and final system which can bring joy and happiness in the family. Ironically he fails to understand that domination kills joy of human heart and soul. Domination

flourishes killing others' self and identity. It is, in fact, biggest hurdle in building up the premise of happiness. It is rightly observed: "The garb of authority maintained by Hasmukh was method to save his own inner self from clashes of the outside world."⁸

The play has philosophical twist and a happy end. The play explores the deteriorated inter-personal relationship among members of the same family. The viewers witness father v/s son, husband v/s wife. All are shown at war and running after money. The play stands as an outstanding for showing the protagonists as the watcher of his own action. He realizes that he has been made victim of his own mechanism. He vested in Kiran with powers; to fulfill his desire for his posthumous control over family, but she exercises these powers to improve her relationship. The ghost of Hasmukh witnesses that he has been dismissed as a shadow of his father, a man to be pitied on, a man without his own dreams and desire, vision etc.

The play *Dance Like a Man*, a stage play in two acts, is one of the most wonderful dramatic creations of Mahesh Dattani. The stage performance of the play has earned a critical acclaim in India and abroad. In this play, Dattani explores pathos of human predicament in the subtlest way. It embodies a brilliant study of human relationships as well as human weaknesses. The play depicts the clash between issues such as marriage, career and the place of a woman in patriarchal social set up. It deals with the lives of the people who feel exhausted and frustrated on account of the hostile surroundings and unfavourable circumstances. The story is unfolded in time past and time present.

The play was first performed at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore on 22 September 1989 as a part of the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival. Later on, it was staged at the NCPA Experimental Theatre, Mumbai on 14 February, 1990 under the directorship of Mahesh Dattani. It was also enacted by Prime Time in 1995 under the directorship of little Dubey. Still this production company continues to tour occasionally.

The stage has multilevel sets. The place is a dimly-lit room in an old fashioned house in the heart of the city. Behind the entrance of this room, there is a modern looking rear panel which helps in revealing a garden and a dance practice hall at upstage left. The furniture arranged in the room is at least forty years old. The garden and living room symbolizes the past and present with the help of flashback device and split scenes device. The play presents the flux of conscience dealing with past and present scenarios.

The first act begins with conversation between Lata and Viswas and ends with Jairaj's revolt against his father. Jairaj and Ratna leave the house of Amritlal Parekh to get rid of rules and regulations imposed upon them by him. The second act begins with Amritlal censuring Jairaj and Ratna who are standing patiently. The time is 1940s - two days later Jairaj and Ratna left home and evidently they have comeback, defeated.

The play *Dance Like a Man*, a saga of domestic conflict, revolves around the lives of 62 years old *Bharatnatayam* dancer, Jairaj Parekh and his wife, Ratna, who is also a *Bharatnatayam* dancer. They are living, with their only daughter Lata, in the old fashioned but a big house, which is situated in the heart of the city. Lata is an aspiring and promising young dancer. She finds herself in love with a young man named Viswas and has decided to marry him provided her parents accept Viswas as their son-in-law.

All the action of the play takes place at the present living room of Jairaj Parekh. Since the play oscillates between time past and time present, the present living room often changes into a rose garden, which denotes past events and presents, Amritlal Parekh, father of Jairaj, as the head of the patriarchal family system. The living room is associated with present showing Jairaj and Ratna in their sixties and rose garden indicates past showing Jairaj and Ratna as a young couple. With the change of spot light, the scene keeps on changing. Dattani has managed economical arrangement of the actors. All the performers are assigned double role. In all, there are four performers. Out of the four, three perform the dual roles. Young boy performer plays the role

of young Jairaj and Viswas, Lata's fiancé and young lady performer plays the role of young Ratna as well as Lata. Only the old woman performer is assigned a single role i.e. role of older Ratna. The older Jairaj also plays role of his father Dattani is quite aware of the dynamics of theatre and proper usage of available resources. Economy of actors imparts a rare touch to the play.

The spotlight keeps on picking past and present scenario. Shift in the consciousness, split scenes technique etc. are employed in the drama to connect the past with the present. By skillful combination of cinematographic and narrative device, Dattani makes theatre more suitable for Indian milieu. When the play begins; Vishwas has arrived at Jairaj's house for seeking approval from Lata's parents about his marriage with Lata. Jairaj and Ratna have gone out to see the health of their musician, C. V. Srinivas, who has tripped and broken his arm. In the beginning, there is a lovely conversation between Viswas and Lata.

Like Lata, Vishwas is also the only son of his parents. Unlike Lata, Viswas has no heart for art and dance. His father runs *mitthai* shop on the commercial street in the town and owns half of the building on the road. He is one of the moneyed persons of the town. Viswas helps his father in the family business of selling sweets.

From their conversation, we also come to know that before marriage, Jairaj and Ratna also were good friends and stayed in the same *mohalla*. Jairaj has a very big dance hall in his house. In her childhood, Lata enjoyed watching her parents practicing dance in the hall. After the marriage, she also expects Vishwas allow her to practice at this hall.

The play encapsulates their present tension and past struggle as well as their present efforts and past discontentment. They reflect upon their past struggle, success and failures as the dancers. This unveils seeming harmony between the two and puts forth a marriage discord and domestic conflict that forms the substance of the play. The opening scene of the play

provides important information about all the people of the play and their social and family background. Thus, it functions as an exposition of the play.

After sometime, Jairaj and Ratna appear on the stage. The arrival of Jairaj and Ratna changes a very happy atmosphere of the play into a sad one. They are highly perturbed about Lata's performance. Lata is to perform at a high profile dance festival and their *mridangist* is unfit to accompany her at the performance. Their extreme worry and concerns about Lata's performance at high profile dance party sets aside the matrimonial conversation for which they have gathered.

They have gathered to talk about Lata's marriage with Viswas. They do not talk about marriage, but they are talking about the performance. Jairaj and Ratna pick up quarrel time and again. They criticize and blame each other revealing their past struggle as dancers. So, Viswas advises them not to throw mud at each other. Ratna develops much tension and feels headache. She is frustrated and recalls her father-in-law, Amritlal Parekh, who didn't like his son's career as a dancer. In spite of a seeming harmony, it soon becomes clear that there is a little joy and satisfaction in their married life. Viswas makes to leave the house because of quarrel between Jairaj and Ratna. So, Jairaj insists him to stay and have discussion over his marriage with Lata. He also expresses his regret for not showing proper hospitality. Viswas informs him about his family background and business. Jairaj also informs Viswas about his father who had also made money from buildings. Jairaj's father was one of the richest persons in the town. He spent his money helping others, but he didn't invest his money for his son's hobby or desire. Jairaj condemns his father for helping others.

After knowing Viswas' family background and business especially his willingness to allow Lata dance after marriage, Jairaj and Ratna agree upon the marriage between Lata and Viswas. After the departure of Viswas, Jairaj and Ratna, again, reflect upon their past struggle as dancers. They have to satisfy themselves with the realization of being average dancers. So they, now, hope to have good performance of Lata.

Dattani has used time shift technique in the play. Amritlal Parekh was a man of liberal ideology, but he didn't like his son's obsession with dance. So, he strongly objected his son's obsession of dance and his association with other dancers. He also checked the movements of Ratna. Many a time, there had been quarrel between father and son. The father is traditional and the son is modern in his ways of life. The father symbolizes traditional values, whereas the son symbolizes modern outlook. The father and the son are shown constantly at war.

The play is a bitter commentary upon a patriarchal family system. The playwright shows us how the autocratic father tries to check the movements and manners of his son and his daughter-in-law, although the father is considered as a man of progressive ideas and liberal views. The play dramatizes the conflict between the age and the youth through the characters of the old father and the young son. The family ties and marriage discord are highlighted through series of conflicts among the members of a single family. Amritlal Parekh upholds the traditional values, whereas his son, Jairaj, seeks to overthrow it through his course of action.

Jairaj: I can't even have a decent rehearsal in this house.

Amritlal: You can't have a decent rehearsal in this house? I can't have some peace and quiet in my house! It's bad enough having had to convert the library into a practice hall for you. (CP: 414)

Despite being a social reformer, Amritlala doesn't like his daughter-in-law Ratna's association with a '*devdasi*' and learning art of dance at her house as he fears of being spoiled his family reputation. The play highlights the stigma that clings to the life of a '*devdasi*', the dancer of the temple.

Amritlal: We are building ashrams for these unfortunate women! Educating them, reforming them...

Jairaj: Reform! Don't talk about reform. If you really wanted any kind of reform in our society, you would let them practice their art. (CP: 416)

Amritlal thinks that supporting and allowing them to practice their art is an indirect encouragement for open prostitution, but Jairaj has high regard and respects for them and their art.

Jairaj: Send them back to their temples! Give them awards for preserving art. (CP: 416)

Amritlal holds a very different view and believes that the most of them have nothing to do with their art and engaged in trading of blood and flesh. So they are not suitable for temples.

Amritlal: I will not have our temples turned into brothels!

Jairaj: And I will not have any art run down by a handful of stubborn narrow minded individuals with fancy pretentious ideals. (CP: 416)

Amritlal also tries to control the movement and manners of Ratna. In this way, the clash between the tradition and the modernity is heightened through the conflict between Amritlal and Ratna. Amritlal knows that Ratna is going to visit a *devdasi* instead of going to temple.

Amritlal: You know very well where, because that's where you go every Monday!(Ratna does not respond.) It was fortunate for me that it was Patel who saw you going there. I can trust him to keep his mouth shut. He called me, out of concern for our family name.

Ratna: I haven't done anything to spoil the family name. (CP: 419)

Further,

Ratna: Yes. My husband knows where I go and have his permission.

Amritlal: Your husband happens to be my son. And you are both under my care. It is my permission that you should ask for (CP: 420)

Ratna is determined to learn the art of *abhinaya* from Chennai amma, who is oldest living exponent of the Mysore school and is the only link they have with the old school. Moreover, she is of seventy-five and dying. Hence, it was important for both Chennai amma and Ratna to impart and to receive knowledge of art. Ratna asserts: "You can't stop me from learning art!" (CP: 421) Amritlal strongly objects Ratna's dancing in old lady's courtyard as he says: "And people peer over her walls to see my daughter-in-law dancing in her courtyard." (CP: 420) Ratna calls her dancing as divine activity. As she puts: "Yes, Dancing the divine dance of Shiva and Parvati." (CP: 420)

Thus, the play also focuses on the plight of '*devadasis*'. In fact, all the forms of dance and drama are connected with religious ceremonies and rituals. The drama has its roots in temples and church. Here *Bharatnatyam* has close connection with temples. *Devadasis* performed the dance of *bharatnatyam* in the temple. They were paid for their services by the temple authorities. Gradually, the evil of sexual exploitation did enter here and spoiled the image of *devadasis*. Since they were poor, they were exploited to gratify the sexual desires of the priests and other rich people. In this way, a stigma was associated with their lives and their profession, *bharatnatyam*. Further, this form was greatly discouraged on the pretext that it was too erotic. However, it began to reappear in the pre-independence period with the efforts and interest of some genuine lovers of this art form. To the question: could you tell me more about your other plays? By Rana Uniyal, Dattani replies;

Well, the other play which I think I could talk about is *Dance Like a Man* which is because we talked about my Bharatnatyam background. It is about Bharatnatyam dancers. Again in their old age, when they are in their 60s and they are looking back on to their struggling days, when they had their ideals and in the 50s where there was a

stigma attached to the dance forms; that it is a dance form of the Devdasis. It's a prostitute's dance and people from respectable families didn't perform or practice that dance form. It is doubly difficult for the man. You know, what business does a man have learning a prostitutes's dance. So it brings about gender roles, what is expected of gender as well. And also the tensions between the couple and how, they solve, how they felt that they used their relationship to develop their careers, dances and how they reconcile to the fact that the time wasn't right for them. ⁹

With the shift of consciousness in the past, Amritlal Parekh appears on the scene. He has no heart or love for art. He speaks about art very contemptuously. He forbids Jairaj mixing with other dancers especially imitating the manners of his *Guruji*. He asks Jairaj not to invite his *Guruji* at their house because he strongly dislikes ways and manners of the *Guruji*.

Amritlal: He will not come here tomorrow. I will send him a personal letter of regret.

Jairaj: (to Amritlal). As long as we are under your care Moves towards the bedroom.) (CP: 423)

Jairaj and Ratna leave the house as the protest against traditional notions and restrictions imposed upon them by Amritlal. Jairaj becomes highly excited and agitated. He doesn't want to stay even a minute further and resolves to never set a foot in the house again.

Jairaj: We don't need anything fancy. (Turns around and speaks defiantly) As from now we are no longer under your care. And will never be again. Never. (Exits followed by a bewildered Ratna.) (CP: 424).

In this way, Jairaj and Ratna go away from their house. The clash between the father and the son symbolizes the clash between tradition and modernity. It is a battle between traditional and conservative father and a son with modern outlook. They go away, throwing old restrictions to the wind. His determination and tenacity to adhere to what he wishes to do compel him to leave the house.

play that examines authority and prejudice socially and culturally and as we sit in the dark watching the story unfold between time past and time present, Mahesh Dattani forces us to examine our own individual and collective consciousness.¹⁰

Jairaj makes himself free from the clutches of autocratic father and also from the unwritten laws of family conduct. This is the climax of the play. The spectators witness their retreat and feel a sense of pity and sympathy for them, as they come back after two days. They might have realized that the house of their autocratic father is better than the world that exists outside. This suggests that they have been exposed to the hostile surroundings that make them feel frustrated and exhausted. Actually, the hostile surrounding is the very root cause of the frustration. Modernity tastes the fruit of defeat. The youthful rebellion started against the rigid and stubborn age is subdued. Jairaj yields to his old father's whims and fancy compromising with his revolutionary spirit. There is a notable change in Jairaj's mind. Highly spirited and rebellious Jairaj turns into a very submissive and polite person. The spectators, sitting in the dark, watch the transformation of assertive and adamant Ratna into submissive and subservient lady. She has become gentle, reliant and polite. Jairaj also passes through a process of transformation, which signifies for him a change from rebel to subservient. They kow tow to unwritten laws of family conduct and also accepts the rules and code of conduct provided by the autocratic father.

Of course, a change also occurs in the mind of Amritlal Parekh. He doesn't make them feel ashamed of their defeat. He allows his son to dance and asks him to take up dance as a profession not as a hobby and also becomes ready to provide money. However, he doesn't consider dance a right place for investing money. More so, he allocates his library hall to be used as practice hall for the dance.

The clash between tradition and modernity is also suggested through the marriage between Viswas and Lata. As Vishwas says: "My Father almost died when I told him I'm marrying outside the caste. Wait till he hears this." (CP: 389) Of course, the dramatist just makes a hint at it. He doesn't stop to elaborate it.

The play also throws some light on the tragic death of their baby, left to the care of an *ayah*. It would not be improper to say that their excessive concern for dance diverts them from their care for the baby. Many a time, Jairaj and Ratna would come late at night and the baby was taken care of by *ayah* at such nights. Being busy with dance, they couldn't take proper care of the baby. Their excessive involvement in dance becomes an indirect cause of the death of the baby, Shankar.

Jairaj and Ratna managed Sheshadri as a musician at the dance party and did every possible effort for the success of their daughter. Actually Ratna did painstaking efforts for Lata's best performance. Lata performed as per their expectation and won acclaim from one and all. She becomes the most famous dancer. She dwells at the summit of success. Jairaj and Ratna are very happy for having had Lata's best performance. She received rave reviews and recognition even beyond her expectations. The art of dance has placed her above all. She is described as the 'Shining Star'. The success of Lata generates discussion and debate among the members of the family. The art has its merits and demerits. It gives name and fame. It also begets jealousy and grievance among the members of the family. Lata's performance was appreciated by chief minister. Now they want Lata perform at national festival in Canada and also expect the same success therein. All

the leading critics gave reviews about her performance, So, Ratna thinks that her hard work is rewarded. This makes Jairaj jealous of her. Ratna receives call from Dr. Gowda. She talks,

reason to be thrilled. And if a person no less than the president

Lata finished her *tillana*

Jairaj (looks up from his paper). He was in a hurry to go to the toilet. (CP: 428)

Dattani's works display the theme of frustrations ensuing from the conservative and conventional as well as unfriendly surroundings. He develops our perception of marriage discord through a several devices. The play also shows psychological conflict resulting from a strong desire for being national celebrities. The play has been designed in such a way that it leaves no room for misconception in our visual conception of a scene. This is important because *Dance Like a Man* alternates between past and present events.

With all his brilliant qualities, ripe scholarship and clear visualizing power and with his artistic perception, Dattani's *Dance Like A Man* leaves in reader's minds a very vivid and long lasting impression. He constructs his plots from his own materials.

Dattani's language is simple, lucid and realistic. His characters, sometimes, use words from regional languages. The words like *nritya*, *abhinaya*, *abhitiaya* etc. are used. By using, words from regional language, which is known as pidgin, he proves himself to be a realist. Native words, terminology of *Bharatnatyam* and *English* expressions are mixed in a very natural way.

From a retrospect of what has been said, it may safely be deducted that Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* embodies the theme of clash

between the tradition and the modernity along with issues of gender, marriage and career in a very interesting and artistic manner and display some wonderful qualities of its author which makes Dattani writer of world stature.

The theme of clash between tradition and modernity has already been assessed by a number of authors, but Dattani has provided a variety and vividness to this theme. *Dance Like a Man* has been hailed as wonderful and engrossing play. The play displays its deep concern for family harmony and approach for a social reformation, which makes it a unique piece of art. The play ends with a compromising tone. They survive by making compromise with their revolutionary and rebellious spirit. The play ends with following memorable words:

“We were only human. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God.” (CP: 447)

Jairaj and Ratna realized the futility and limitations as human beings. They realize that they lack the grace and brilliance because they are human beings. They also realize their past mistakes and limitations. They dance together with a remarkable change of heart and develop better understanding. There is an overwhelming passion and ambition for the dance in Jairaj and Ratna throughout the play though they didn't achieve the laurels as dancers. The final words lend a unique touch to the play. It brings reconciliation of the conflict and resentment they underwent throughout the lives. It is observed:

It is state of the elevation of human consciousness that wraps the distinction of male and female into a state of 'wholeness', corresponding with the rhythm of life. In his self discovery, Jairaj discovers the divine essence of human self that is neither male nor female. ¹¹

In the play, there is fine juxtaposition between past and present, individual self and collective self. Here the dramatist appears to be attempting

midway between theatrical and narrative device. The play depicts man's desire and perpetual conflict resulting from man's longing and ways of destiny. What constitutes the theatrical structure of the play is constant conflict between the individual self with society, conventions and traditions of the family. The shifts and movements of the play are very corresponding with the technique of stream of consciousness. This device helps the dramatist to present the grotesque and fragmental pictures of life. Little Dubey observes in the following way:

It is beautifully crafted the way it moves back and forth in time, its use of one actor to play more than one role which really tests the actors talent, makes it as unique as does the strong characterization and the 'seamless' movement in time.¹²

Literature suggests; it doesn't state. A good work of art has rich suggestive feature. The play *Dance Like a Man* has psycho-philosophical implications and suggestions. The message is encoded in the page by the dramatist, but it is decoded by the stage production of the play. The vivacity of dialogues and performance enables the dramatist unfold his story in an effective and appealing manner. It is observed:

The play *Dance Like a Man* begins with a socio cultural spectrum, passes through psycho-cultural dynamics and culminates in psycho-philosophical suggestiveness and here lies the strength and distinction of Dattani's art.¹³

Identity crisis is oft repeated idea in the plays of Dattani. In the present play, he dramatizes the identity crisis in the life of Jairaj Parekh, a dancer. It is identical that he has to shape and reshape his personality in accordance with the ideas and expectations of other people. Amritlal Parekh, his father, is very conservative and rigid person. He has his own notions and ideology, which he imposes upon Jairaj who protests, but Jairaj fails and yields to the desires and dreams of his father and also of his wife. In fact, he

knows what he wants to be, but his father wants him to shape his personality in his own way. He thinks that Jairaj is not growing as a man. So, Amritlal wants Jairaj, as adult, and asks Ratna to help him in the process.

Amritlal: Help me make him an adult. Help me to help him. Grow up.

Ratna: How?

Pause.

Amritlal: It is hard for me to explain. I leave it to you. Help me and I'll never prevent you from dancing. I know it will take time but it must be done.

Ratna: I will try. (CP: 427)

The play also discusses theme of the established and accepted mores and manners of the society. The dramatist has shown Jairaj as a *bharatnatyam* dancer, his father's objection to this, and his wife's league with her father-in-law for saving her own freedom, for continuing her own practices as a dancer.

The character of Ratna is quite different from Jairaj who suffers the most in the drama and feels isolated in drama. Ratna joins hands with Amritlal for growing Jairaj for nurturing her motives. She embeds her own dreams and desires in Lata. She identifies herself with Lata and derives satisfaction. After reading rare review of Lata in a newspaper, she says;

Ratna, (shouting) I heard. Rave reviews! The star of the festival critics. My hard work has paid off, hasn't it? Hasn't it? (Takes the papers and makes for the bedroom) (CP: 439)

The patriarchal hegemony and post colonial dichotomy is highlighted through the clash between Jairaj & Amritlal. Individual identities and choices are denied under the power of patriarchy and also of wealth. Amritlal claims himself as the man of liberal minded ideology, but he is not

man of progressive ideology in true sense of term. That's why Jairaj tells truth on his face;

Jairaj: Don't pretend. It suited your image- that of a liberal minded person -to have a daughter-in-law from outside your community. (CP: 415)

Many of Dattani's plays explore the idea of liberal mindedness. He has exposed so called liberal minded people in his plays. Mithran Devanesen inquires:

Are we the liberal-minded persons we would like to believe that we are or do we blindly kowtow to unwritten laws of family conduct that is the easier path to take? ¹⁴

Family name and social recognition are the chief concerns for Amritlal Parekh, but for Jairaj, they are the obstacle in carving his self-identity. He yields but doesn't kill his own desire. He craves for self identity and self esteem. Colonial sensibility and social commitment doesn't give way to his self-desire and dreams.

Jairaj suffers in two ways. Firstly, patriarchal power suppresses his desires and dreams. Secondly, social prejudice also causes turmoil and suffering in the life of Jairaj. So, his self is divided and pride is wounded. He is anguished and depressed. Critically speaking, the play is a tragedy of human soul. Jairaj's soul falls to pieces. He is constantly shown at war. The shift in past shows his clash with his father and in present, he is struggling to adjust with his wife. He expresses his grievances against his father and wife. In the later part of the play, he outbursts his grievances towards his wife in the following terms.

Jairaj: I want you to give me back my self-esteem!

Ratna: When did I ever take it?

Jairaj: Bit by bit. You took it when you insisted on top billing in all our programmes. You took it when you made me dance my weakest items. You took it when you arranged the lighting so that I was literally dancing in your shadow. And when you called me names in front of other people. Names I feel ashamed to repeat even in private. And you call me disgusting.(CP:443)

The play focuses on the successes and failures of the three generations in the play – Amritlal Parekh, Jairaj and Ratna, and Lata. The play highlighted socio-cultural as well as socio psychological conflicts. Post colonial analysis of the play reveals that one has to fight back to the social prejudice and traditions. Otherwise one will undergo perpetual suffering and subjugation. In the words of A. Nicoll,

Many modern tragedies depend not on certain personalities presented in isolated surroundings, but on individuals placed in the midst of social powers from which they derive their joys and sorrows. ¹⁵

There are anxiety and tension prevailing in the minds of characters. The characters are not cheerful and in joyous mood except Viswas who is helping his father in family business. Out of the four living characters, the three Jairaj, Ratna and Lata are the artists, *bharatnatyam* dancers. They are caught up in anxiety and tensions. The close study of the play reveals that they are facing competition in the field. The two things which create an air of tension and suspense are rivalry among the artists and hostility of the society towards business of art and dance. They are seen struggling to build their career under the competitive scenario and hostile surroundings. Like his many other plays, Dattani also introduces theme of gender identity in this play. The play describes the actions and reactions against the act of trespassing the prescribed and accepted gender roles. Jairaj jumps over to *bharatnatyam* dance which is generally, performed by

women. Rejecting his father's objection to this dance form, Jairaj takes a different path landing himself in great difficulty.

Dance is a mode of aesthetic expression among the people residing in Chennai. The setting of the play is Chennai, the abode of dancers.

In a city like Chennai, where everyone knows a dancer or has a dancer in the family, *Dance Like a Man* was bound to strike a familiar chord. The challenge to both my actors and myself as director was not just to bring the issues the play raises to the fore but also to bridge Dattani's verbal ingenuity with a strong visual element.¹⁶

The play shows how patriarchal social set up deprives the other members of the families from being a celebrity as a dancer. Ratna couldn't be a famous dancer under the patriarchal powers exercised by her father-in-law. Dattani seems to assert that individual talent can never flourish under the domination of patriarchal family system. Ratna thwarts in her dream of being a celebrity. After the death of Amritlal Parekh, her daughter Lata has become an excellent star of *bharatnatyam*.

Dattani's theatrical art is characterized by a fine combination of 'feeling and form'. It is because of this trademark dramatic quality Dattani emerges as the dramatist of international repute. In the play *Dance Like a Man*, he also muses over an issue: what constitutes a man? The father Amritlal Parekh wants his son Jairaj to grow as an adult, a normal man. He, therefore, objects to his son's involvement in *bharatnatyam* and his intention of growing long hair. On the contrary to this, the son wants to carve his own identity; he wants to shape his personality according to his own fancy and desires. The society has its own norms abiding to all the members of society, but the post-colonial Indian young generation objects to the accepted norms and chooses the course of action at their own inviting conflict and struggle. The present play depicts this postcolonial conflict in a very effective manner.

The play shows how social prejudices and conditions hinder the individuals' choices and deprive them from the path of possible growth and development. Through the example of *devadasi*, Chenni Amma, Dattani tries to explain how biased society fails to respond to the call of humanity and acknowledgement of the true art.

Dattani doesn't promote direct didacticism through theatre. He adopts theatre as the medium of reflection of what one observes. He puts: "Theatre to me is a reflection of what you observe. To do anything more would be to become didactic and then it ceases to be theatre."¹⁷

Hence, Dattani intends not to sermonize; not to enter into the page of the play. He has superb art and craft which help him handling his observation in a more realistic and impartial way.

It is common knowledge to put that there are two things common to all his plays: the family unit and urban milieu. He is quite familiar with urban environment. Family is the epicenter in his drama. Most of the upheavals and shocks occur within the range of familial relationship. Clash between tradition and modernity, divorce, problem of career and marriage, child sexual abuse, prostitution, extra marital relationship, problems of hijras, even communal tension are connected and covered within the range of family landscape. In the play *Dance Like a Man*, Dattani examines interpersonal human relationship within the range of familial territory.

location within the dynamics of a preexisting structure of the contemporary urban Indian family which then turns into the site of the ensuing

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Dance Like a Man, a master piece of Dattani, deals with the host of issues like problem of marriage and career, conflict between the tradition and modernity, patriarchal domination, plight of *devdasi*, gender roles etc.

In India, literature of all languages have penned down the pathetic plight of women. And thereby have raised voices against this inhumane treatment to women. Indian writing in English is no exception to this. One thing should be noted here that feminism has got mixed responses from all over the world. Feminism has given birth to two opposite attitudes namely pro-feministic and anti-feministic attitude. The writers who possess favorable attitude towards feminism are called pro-feminist and those who oppose this attitude are designated as anti-feministic. Mahesh Dattani belongs to the former category i.e. the writer with the pro-feministic attitude.

So far Mahesh Dattani's perception of women is concerned, it is quite unconventional. In fact, he has no specific agenda of feminism to pass on viewers. He tries to discover different facets of feminine psyche. His works depict the constant battle between the feminine psyche and patriarchal order. To the question, asked by Laxmi Subramanyam, Dattani replies:

They are humans. They want something. They face obstacles. They will do anything in their power to get it. All eyes focus on in the powerlessness of

sensibility for political correctness either. My only defense is to say that I am not biased against woman. ¹⁹

Tara is the most touching three-act stage play by Dattani. It presents a tale of Siamese twins namely Tara and Chandan. The play oscillates between the past and the present events. Most of the plays of Dattani have family and home as the locale. So is the case with *Tara*. The play *Tara*, directed by Dattani himself, was first performed as *Twinkle Tara* at the Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore, on 23rd October, 1990 by Playpen Performing Arts Group, which is established by Dattani. It was performed under the directorship of Alyque Padamsee. It was, later on, staged as *Tara* at Sophia Bhabha Hall by Theatre Group. Bombay, on 9th November, 1991.

Multilevel sets, split scenes, flashback device, double roles etc. are the noted theatrical techniques of Mahesh Dattani. In this play, the stage is consisted of multilevel sets. The lowest level occupies a major portion of the stage. It represents the house of the Patels. The next level represents the bed sitter of the older Chandan in a suburb of London. This is the only realistic level. At the higher level, Dr. Thakkar remains seated in the chair throughout the play. He is not watcher of the action of the play, but his association is shown by his sheer God like presence. Dan has a triangular task to perform. He is the narrator, organizer of the action and also participant character in the play. Among the three levels, Dan's level is only the realistic level. The action moves out from his memory. It can be said that it is the remix version of past event happened at Patel household. The play has a very constructive nature of narrative as usual in his plays, breaking and restarting action.

Dan is the second name of Chandan. He has changed his name Chandan to Dan to free himself from the burden of injustice done to Tara, his sister. He goes to London and tries his hand at writing. He cuts off his relation with others. He tries to live in the new world. The idea that he is responsible for pathetic position of Tara constantly haunts his inner consciousness. She is another half of him. She is the separated self of him. Sense of guilt grips his conscience. Erin Mee aptly puts, "Tara and Chandan are two sides of the same self." (CP: 320)

At the beginning of the play, the spot light picks up Dan (older Chandan) at his writing table. He is typing furiously. He stops and looks up and speaks directly to the audience.

Dan:

seedy suburb of London, thousands of miles from home hasn't put enough distance between us. (Holds up his glass.) My battery charger helps on some occasions. But now I want them to comeback. To masticate my memories in my mind and spit out the result to the (CP: 323-24)

Dan is writing a play in two acts- *Twinkle Tara*, but he can't write except publication details. He wrote a short story entitled *Random Raj* dealing with the theme of British Raj. The publishers have turned it down as they didn't find it worth publishing. The play begins without any music, but slowly music fades in and Chandan and Tara walk onto the stage level. They both have a limp, but on different legs. Bharati offers more milk to Tara as she has lost half a pound weight in one week.

He is writing a drama on Tara. There is an exchange of hot words between Bharati and her husband over the issue of love and care of their children. Patel blames on Bharati that she is turning children against him. He is giving love and affection in equal amount to both the children. His wife wants to prove that she loves Tara more than him. The second act ends with collapse of Tara's health and Patel's asking for sugar. At the end, Dan reads his script:

(reads aloud) Bharati sobs. Patel brings in the revived Tara. Patel picks up the phone and dials the hospital. The act ends with the explosive opening of Brahms' 'First concerto'. (CP: 354)

Tara and Chandan are Siamese twins. Though they are twins, they don't resemble same. They are separated after the three months of their birth. Actually, they were conjoined from the chest and were having three legs. The chances of survival of the third leg were more with of Tara. However, it was given to Chandan, avoiding medical report, which reflects gender discrimination. In fact, the decision to give third leg to Chandan was taken by Mrs. Bharati Patel and her politically powerful father. Mr. Patel had no hand in this injustice. The surgery was done in Bombay. Thus, Tara is the victim of sex discrimination in patriarchal society. It is an unpleasant fact that a woman's life is always structured and governed by patriarchy since time immemorial. Dattani seems to assert that the power of wealth often joins hands with power of patriarchy for the subjugation and oppression of the women in our society. Tara's grandfather uses his political and money power to convince the doctor for giving third leg to Chandan instead of Tara.

Critically, trinity of patriarchy, capitalism, and political power join forces together against the existence of a girl. It has been attributed:

Tara centers on the emotional separation that grows between two conjoined twins following the discovery that their physical separation was manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favour the boy (Chandan) over the girl (Tara). Tara, a feisty girl who isn't given the opportunities given to her brother (although she may be smarter) eventually wastes away and dies. Chandan escapes to London, changes his name to Dan, and attempts to repress the guilt he feels over his sister's death by living without a personal history.²⁰

The play is highly theatrical. Spotlight picks up Bharati and Tara. Bharati is showing her deep love and affection for Tara.

Bharati: Tara! My beautiful baby! You are my most beautiful baby! I love you very much!

Tara: (enjoying this affection) Yes, mummy. I know that (CP: 355)

Even by the end of the play, Dan couldn't materialize anything on his drama. Still there are his name, address and date nothing else. He admits that nothing has changed except date. He says; "The material is there. But the craft is yet to come. Like the amazing Dr. Thakkar, I must take something from Tara-and give it to myself. Make capital of my trauma, my
" (CP: 379)

The play *Tara* provides bitter commentary upon gender discrimination and forces of social apathy towards injustice done to even a girl babe under the cloak of gender dichotomy. So it is not just a story about gender identity nor is it a story of medical phenomenon. It presents how women are marginalized to the extent of distorting her self. The play is, in

broader sense, a gruesome tale of injustice done to a woman by the patriarchal society. Despite the civilization and development in the human field, we are same at the root of our mind. The play shows how the devil of gender discrimination kills all other bond of familial relationship and how socio-cultural myths and conventions control and construct the course of the human life. Bharati's love for Tara is pure and unceasing, but her maternal love is marginalized as a woman and her subleternity compels her to sacrifice her maternal love to cope up with social expectations. The patriarchal code pushes mother-daughter relationship on the periphery. Adrienne Rich aptly observes:

Though motherhood is the experience of women, the institution of motherhood is under male control and the physical situation of becoming a mother is disciplined by males. This glorious motherhood is imposed on women, conditions her entire life.²¹

In this play, Dattani highlights the complex situation in which conjoined twins are trapped by Nature. The manipulation, made by the patriarchal society, creates the situation more complex and intricate. It brings forth the very unhappy and absurd situation for a girl, Tara. It is attributed:

Dattani establishes that mother and daughter relationship is ultimately subordinated to the directives of patriarchy. It makes obvious that women's lives are organized and manipulated by the patriarchy in all ages, all culture and all countries by establishing values, roles, gender perception and prescribe unequal means to achieve the 'wholeness' for women.²²

The play revolves around the theme of favoring the boy and frowning upon the girl with exceptional originality of conception. Mahesh Dattani, in one of his interviews with Laxmi Subramanyam, says:

I see *Tara* as a play about the male self and female self. The male self is being preferred in all cultures. The play is about the separation of self and the resultant angst.²³

Dan is the interviewer at this juncture of action. Dr. Takhar holds forth proudly on his God-like intervention in the lives of Tara and Chandan. He does it directly addressing to the audience. Dan receives a phone call from his father who is at present in India. Through this call, he comes to know about the sad demise of his mother, Bharati. This enables us to perceive his mental and emotional turmoil. He does great efforts to keep distance between him and India and the past as possible. Nevertheless, the past is within, just as the present. *Tara* is an exploration of the dark secrets of human consciousness that creates tension and emotional turmoil in the present. Pressure of the past is the characteristic feature of Dattani's play. We find various revelations in his plays. Dattani unearths what lies beneath surface, what had happened in the past days, and how it affects the present action. So, the audience comes across with unexpected intrication.

Tara is revelatory in nature. Dan feels the pressure of the past. He is weighed down with the pressurable tension resulting from past deeds. They are of his mother and grandfather. At the time of the gruesome decision of giving third leg to Chandan, the doctors opined that chances of survival of leg were more with Tara than Chandan. Gender hierarchisation comes in the way of science. Bharati and her politically powerful father without taking Mr. Patel in confidence decided to give the third leg to Chandan. The doctor was persuaded by giving some acres of land in Bangalore by Bharati's MLA father. As Patel explains "A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl." (CP: 378)

The leg with Chandan could survive only for two days, while it could have survived forever with Tara. It doesn't mean that Mr. Patel is devoid of fault. He is also a party to gender discrimination. He appears to be more concerned about the future of Chandan than Tara.

Bharati's excessive love for Tara results from her past guilt. She feels the pangs of her past guilt. She, allied with her father, did great injustice to Tara. Now she wants to give more and more love and comforts to Tara. It is because of this that she wants to give her own kidney to Tara when there is another donator available. She wants to give part of herself and craves satisfaction out of this. She shows her concern to the extent that she and only she loves Tara. Nobody else! But Patel disapproves her idea of giving her kidney to Tara. So, she pretends that it will involve expenses. Mr. Patel disapproves her view saying that her father's wealth has always been her strength against him.

Bharati: (pleadingly) Why won't you let me do it?

Patel: (controlling) Need I tell you? Because I do not want you to have the satisfaction of doing it.

Bharati: I will do it!

Patel: You will have to obey me. It's my turn now.

Bharati: I want to give her a part of me! (CP: 344)

Bharati tries to assert her moral superiority over her husband. She struggles hard to carve out her space in the family. Bharati's final decision of giving her kidney to Tara may be seen as an act of expiation. Bharati said that her deceased father is responsible for the inhuman act of denying third leg to Tara. After her father's death, Bharati's condition grows worse. She tries to make up through taking excessive care and immense exposure of her love for Tara and great concern for her future. This is also the result of her past grave blunder. She is quite conscious of her past wrong deed and feels full pressure of her guilt. Her efforts to compensate loss, caused to Tara by her, causes conflict with her husband and this ultimately leads her to the mental breakdown. Thus, Bharati keeps striving to construct her maternal love until she undergoes mental breakdown.

Bharati is being hospitalized. Tara wants to see her personally, but her father doesn't allow her to do so. Hence, she begins to hate him thinking Bharati wants to tell her something concerning her father. Hence, Mr. Patel discloses the truth before Tara and Chandan.

the girl. Your grandfather and your mother had a private meeting with Dr. Thakkar. I wasn't asked to come. That same evening, your mother told me of her decision. Everything will be done as planned. Except- I couldn't believe what she told me- that they

n't take them very long to realize what a grave mistake they made. The leg was –I was meaning to tell you both when you were (CP: 378)

It is necessary to pinpoint that we find a kind of change in Bharati's view especially about patriarchal notion. She feels disillusioned. What about Patel? He still nurtures the patriarchal ideology. He bothers much about Chandan's future career. He doesn't seem too much bother about Tara's future career. Besides gender discrimination, the play offers a study of psycho-philosophical dimension integrated in the text. The play ends with Dan's apology:

wish. I wish that a long forgotten person would forgive me. Wherever she is. (CP: 380)

Dan receives acute pain and develops psychological trauma. The play also can be deemed as the tragedy of human self. Dan realizes wretchedness and misery of his existence which is the outcome of the crime done to Tara .His soul is aching. It has come closer to the observation of Beena Agarwal:

The pathetic confession of Dan by the end of the play “forgives me Tara, forgive me, for making it my tragedy” is the manifestation of Dattani’s own anguish at the exploitation of an innocent girl.²⁴

There is an unprecedented development in the field of science and technology. It has blessed mankind with speed, pleasure and perfection. If we look at the other side of coin, we shall come to know that it is also used to cause suffering and pain in the lives of many people. After all, it is the man who operates the machine for his own motives and desires. The play *Tara* shows us how technologically enhanced equipments are used to subjugate the woman. Dattani establishes that it is not machine, but human motives that matter much. Dattani holds red torch against pitfalls of advancement of science and technology.

Dattani takes a rational look at theatrical tradition of home and abroad. Considering his necessity, he fuses western theatrical devices with the native one. He freely uses words and sentences of Indian languages like Gujarati, Hindi and Kannada in his dramas. Since his mother tongue is Gujarati, he is fond of using Gujarati words and sentences. In *Tara*, he uses code mixing device. Roopa speaks Gujarati words frequently. As she says: “Prema! Prema-a (No response.)Prema-a! Oh, hello, aunty. (In broken Gujarati) Kem Chcho? Majhjha ma...?” (CP: 327)

Mahesh Dattani shows how the women are gasping under the evil clutch of patriarchy and gender bias. To build premise of strong and unshakable nation, sound construction of family is very necessary as it is like the brick in the premise of the nation. Moreover, family is our first society. If this first community or society exists on falsehood of prejudice and conventions, the nation, the larger society, cannot survive longer, cannot flourish and progress. It is observed:

Mahesh Dattani frequently takes as his subject the complicated dynamics of the modern urban family. His characters struggle for some kind of

freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender, and repressed desire. Their dramas are played out on multi-level sets where interior and exterior become one, and geographical locations are collapsed – in short, his settings are as fragmented as the families who inhabit them.²⁵

The play also indicates that the patriarchal social set up also deprives women from gaining economical stability. Along with the tragic tale of gender discrimination, an unpleasant document of material discrimination against the woman folk is also woven in the fabric of the text of the play. Since, Bharati was the only child of her father; he has bequeathed Tara and Chandan with house in Bangalore. However, Tara is excluded from the bequest of money by the grandfather. Chandan inherits a lot of money.

The theme of separation also prevails in various forms. There are mainly two kinds of separation. One separation is of Tara and Chandan through surgery of unjustly giving third leg to Chandan. The second is Mr. Patel's boycott by his family. Mr. Patel, a Gujarati, has married Bharati, a Kannadiga. So, his family has cut off relationship with him. The root cause of both these separations lies in social prejudices and conventions. Through his plays, Dattani encourages the demolition of false prejudice and conventions which beset the lives of human beings with pain and misery. It is observed:

Woven into the play are the issues of class and community, and the clash between traditional and modern life styles and values.²⁶

Dattani dramatizes the angst of the urban family. There is a sense of unrest among the members of Patel family in the play. Tara and Chandan are subjected to physical deformity, whereas Mrs. Bharati Patel is suffering from the disease of hysteria. There is no familial concord between husband and wife. Some unrevealed mysteries cast their dark shadows upon their lives. It has been assumed:

This is thus a play about the injustices done in the name of construction of gender identities – this hierarchisation and demarcation of roles does as much harm to men as to women. Dan carries as much harm of the unfair burden this imposes as Tara.²⁷

Bravely Fought the Queen is a famous stage play dealing with confined domestic space of the women and their seeking consolation in their own ways. It depicts the theme of emptiness of lives caught up in the swirl of capitalism. Fissured into the three acts, the play showcases certain ugly and harsh reality of our so called normal life. Dattani is adept at fusing form and influence for creating a 'space'. Michael Walling observes:

His plays fuse the physical and special awareness of the Indian theatre with the textual rigour of western models like Ibsen and Tennessee

Britain both have an urgent need for a cultural expression of the contemporary; they require public spaces in which the mingling of eastern western influences can take place. Through his fusion of forms and influences, Mahesh creates such a space. This is in itself a political and social statement of astonishing force.²⁸

The play *Bravely Fought the Queen* was first performed at the Sophia Bhava Hall, Mumbai on 2nd August, 1991. The play was, subsequently, produced by Border Crossing, UK, in 1996. Michael Walling and Mahesh Dattani directed the stage production of the play. In the plays of Dattani multi-level stage plays a vital role. It helps in connecting the past with present and also contains certain symbols which indicate inner workings of the minds of the characters.

Every act is named as per the gender of the characters present therein. The act one is named as "The Women". It speaks volume of women. It presents the emptiness and trauma in the lives of women of the Trivedi house hold and others. The act two is entitled as "The Men". The two things that remains unchanged in the act two are- Baa's room and well stocked bar. Jiten and Nitin runs advertising agency. There are two large desks with executive chairs for Trivedi Brothers and a smaller desk for Shridhar who is working in their office. There is a comfortable couch next to Jiten's desk. They are working for ReVa Tee campaign.

The third act is named as "Free for All". The setting is same as in act one. *Thumri* also continues to play in the third act as in act one. The title of the third act is very symbolic and suggestive. There is a free flow of emotions and passion, anger and hatred, blaming and counter blaming. The women express, assert, and move freely in this act. Dattani presents a kind of familial court in which contention and counter contention takes place till the truth is revealed. The Trivedi brothers are dismissed as the scheming and gay, violent and unfaithful. The dramatist disproves the idea of varied spaces for man and woman showing them human beings equal in all respects.

At the opening of the play, Lalitha comes to Dolly's house as suggested by latter's husband. Dolly has awful memory. She has forgotten whose wife Lalitha was. She met her at the parties. But she didn't remember that her husband's name is Sridhar who works for Dolly's husband and handles ReVa Tee account. After sometime, we come to know about 'Baa', Dolly's mother in-law and mother of Jiten and Nitin. Her room is upstairs. She calls Dolly by pressing the bell again and again. Her character creates some kind of tension and an air of authority in the house. There is also reference regarding Dolly's daughter Daksha who never appears physically in the play. Her presence is felt throughout the play. It reminds us the past cruelty of Jiten with his wife Dolly.

Thereafter, Alka enters into Dolly's house. She is both sister and sister-in-law to Dolly as both have married in the same family - the Trivedis.

Dolly has married to Jiten Trivedi and her sister Alka has married to Jiten's brother Nitin. Alka is few years younger to her sister. Trivedi brothers have twin houses side by side-one for each brother in a posh suburb of Bangalore. Thus, both sisters live right next door. Dolly's daughter Daksha is a school going girl. She goes to a school in Ooty.

In a sense, play deals with the theme of hypocrisy. The close look at the house will reveal that living room is face and kitchen and Baa's bedroom etc. are the back or inwards reality. The spectators are curious to peep inside the kitchen and inner rooms where real incidents take place. The playing of *thumri* of Naina Devi pervades right from the beginning to the end of the play. It has also got very symbolic significance. Naina Devi was a great queen, but she loved to sing *thumri* which was practiced by the whore. She had strong urge for singing love songs and resistant will. She followed her urge and passion without caring for the social criticism. With the support of her husband, she sang in the face of patriarchal dominating society. She was mistaken as for a *twain*. Eventually, she is recognized as the queen of *thumri*. Dolly also wants to be dressed in whore at the ball like Naina Devi, a paradigm of heroism. The title of the play is used in an ironic way showing domestic struggle of the women of the Trivedi family. There is a popular poem in Hindi about Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi, a valorous queen. She fought against the Britishers. Through this inset story, the dramatist focuses women's craving for love and freedom and the struggle they underwent in the play.

Lalitha:

Alka: (interested) 'Jhansi Ki Rani'

Lalitha: Yes, but how did it go? (Remembers and recites) We'd heard her praises sung so often.

So bravely fought the Rani of Jhansi.

Alka :

(CP: 295-96)

So, Lalitha suggests Dolly to dress up herself as the Rani of Jhansi, a brave queen. But Alka is more inclined at this suggestion and wants to join dressing herself as a brave queen.

Baa, who has the stroke, is in her late sixties. She is bed-ridden. She wears white sari. Her husband was very violent person. She had been ill-treated by him. The memory of violent husband is still alive. Two things are harassing to Alka and Dolly.-the bell and Baa's loud mouth.

The play seeks to present women's exploitation by the male. Alka is ill treated by her husband and by her own brother, Praful. She pours out her rage and resentment in the following terms:

...I can't forget what they did to me! Our brother is a cheat! He lied about our father to them. And he lied to me! He lied to me
(CP: 256)

Alka narrates past painful treatment meted out to her by Praful. Once, Alka came home on scooter of a neighbor's son. Annoyed by this, Praful dragged her into the kitchen without saying a word. He pushed her face in front of burning stove and burnt her hair. Despite his brutality, Dolly considers Praful as a very ideal person. It is learnt that Praful and Nitin were close friends since college days. Nitin also treated her badly by driving out of house for some time.

There is a mystery regarding an old woman. There are many references of coming old woman again and again. Whenever she comes, they talk to wake up the watchman; the watchman is so sleepy that he wakes only when he hears horns of his *sahib's* car.

The play also highlights romantic story of Dolly and Kanhaiya, a teenager. Alka, in the presence of Lalitha, narrates the love-scene between Dolly and Kanhaiya in association with Naina Devi's *thumri*. It is quite shocking and humorous that Dolly is also interested in listening to the narration of her romance with Kanhaiya. She feels joy and embarrassment at

the same time. Actually, interpolated tale of Kanhaiya, alluring cook who might or might not present also functions as the potent symbol which denotes disappointment emptiness and trauma in the women of the Trivedi household. Alka and Lalitha have drunk excessively. Alka keeps on speaking under the influence of intoxication. How women behave when they are alone and guarded. Act one ends in tension able calling of Baa for Dolly and Dolly's joyous calling for Kanhaiya.

Act-II (The Men) presents men's business and world outside. The Trivedi brothers are having financial agency and Shridhar is working with them. There is a discussion on market survey for ReVa Tee advertisement made by Shridhar. The model is alright, but they have failed to understand women's desire. Reva Tee advertisement is pregnant with meaning. It is very suggestive and symbolic. The failure of ReVa Tee advertisement symbolizes that the men have failed to understand and recognize the feminine self and equity as human being. Dissatisfied with result of the ReVa Tee survey, Shridhar wants to make another presentation, but Jiten opposes the idea, calling it a great campaign. He says that they are of the women's opinions. They have little weight in the marketing world as they don't have buying power.

Jiten: Screw the survey! You know who you should have tested it out on? Men!

Shridhar: Men!

Jiten: Yes! Men would want to buy it for their women! That's our market. Men would want their women dressed up like that. And they have the buying power. Yes! So there's no point in asking a group of screwed-up women what they think of it. They'll pretend to feel offended and say, 'oh, we are always being treated like sex objects'. (CP: 276)

Thus, Jiten doesn't respect views and opinions of women considering them as secondary human being or merely subordinate to their male counter parts.

The play is portrait of sexual, moral, and financial depreciation in the lives of the Trivedi brothers residing in a posh suburb of Bangalore. The play also shows how addiction of prostitution to the husband empties joy and happiness of conjugal relationship between husband and wife. Jiten and Shridhar are the pleasure seekers in prostitutions. They bring the outside women even at their office for gratifying the carnival desires. The comfortable couch is kept for this filthy purpose. As a result of this, their wives feel boredom and unhappiness in their marital lives. The play presents the shifting Indian values and dramatizes conflict between traditional and contemporary cultures.

The third act brings all men and women face to face. They are confronted and exposed to reality. In the third act, Jiten and Nitin come home to find Alka all wet and muddy as she has just danced in the rain and injured herself. Both are shocked to see her in an indecent look. Jiten stares at Alka and tells Nitin to ask her what she was doing outside in the rain.

Jiten: Ask her what she was doing outside in the rain.

Alka: I don't know! I don't know what I was doing outside. Aren't there times when you don't know what you are doing? (To Nitin) What's the harm in that? Huh? (No response) Tell me. What's the harm? (CP: 299-300)

Baa is now, aged and invalid. But the past ill memory of her husband is still fresh with her. She was brutally beaten up by her husband. He was a demon like person in both appearance and intention. Baa tells Lalitha: "Ten years old and he is afraid of the dark. Afraid to sleep in the dark. Afraid of his father - who is as black as night!" (CP: 272)

Further, Baa narrates the brutal behavior of her husband.

Baa: You hit me? I only speak the truth and you hit me? Go on. Hit me again. The children should see what a demon you are. Aah! Jitu! Nitin! Are you watching? See your father! (Jerks her face as if she's been slapped.) No! No! Not on the face! What will the

aaaah! (Covers her face weakly as her scream turns silent and the light on her fades out). (CP: 278)

Jiten is like his father, violent and drunkard. He is very violent with his wife Dolly as his father was with his wife, Baa. He hit badly even when Dolly was pregnant.

Dolly: And you hit me! Jitu, you beat me up! I was carrying Daksha and you beat me up! (CP:311)

But Jiten blames Baa. He bit her as Baa's provocation. She denied Daksha was their blood. She called Dolly a whore and Jitu believed her words. Baa puts blame on Praful. He lied to her. Dolly gives expression to her pent up pain and anguish at the end of the play to Jiten.

Dolly: Fifteen years ago. Hardly married for a year. Praful comes to visit us. The same day, your mother receives a letter from her cousin in Ahmedabad what fate! It had to be the same day! And it had to be the crucial month for me! What was in that letter? Our whole history. Including the portion which Praful hadn't told you about. (CP: 311)

Neither of the brothers is willing to admit the guilt. They blame other. Jiten blames Baa. Baa blames Praful and other and Nitin blames upon Praful.

Jiten: (sobbing) No! No! (Points to Baa's room) She made me do it! She did it!

Dolly: No! Oh no! I will not let you get away easily! They were your hands hitting me! Your feet kicking me! It's in your blood! It's in your blood to do bad! (CP: 312)

The play also exposes the male chauvinism and woman as the colonized subordinate section of male dominant Indian society. Baa and Dolly are the worst victims of the conventional and cruel attitude of their husbands. They are meted with injustice and ill treatment at the hands of their male counter parts. In Dattani's play, battle is fought in the house. In this play, the house of Trivedi brothers seems to be the arena. In fact, female character of affluent homes raises their voices against the suppression and subjugation through patriarchal social system. The play also depicts the issue of homosexuality in a very bold manner. The play also throws light on the suffering of the wife due to her husband turning out to be a guy. Alka's anguish and agony is aggravated when she comes to know that Nitin, her husband, has homosexual relationship with her own brother, Praful. She has become the victim of her own brother's gay relationship. Her brother was having homosexual relationship with Nitin. Hence, he gets her sister married with his partner to continue his relationship in a smoother and longer way.

Alka retorts and pours her anger against her brother for making her scapegoat. Her wrath and anger is well expressed in the following outburst.

Alka: Our saint of a brother used to warn us against men like you. (Points to Jiten) And what does he do? The saint gives his sister to the sinister and disappears! (Makes a motion of wiping her hands) Finished. Matter over. Or is it? The saint has another sister who is (slaps her own face) bad, bad, bad. He beats her till she gets better. And he has this friend. A best friend! The sinister's brother turns out to be his best friend. Not such a coincidence. (CP: 300)

The play *Bravely Fought the Queen* encompasses issue of gayism along with the main theme of exploitation of educated women in urban

society. On account of dry marital life, Alka has become a boozier. She has drunk heavily and lied on the sofa. Looking at her huddled figure, at the end of the play Nitin admits;

responded. Oh! But how ashamed he me feel after! He made me cry each time! That was a game he played. And I-I was

whom? ... He told me that you knew. That he about me. And that it didn't matter to you. You only wanted the

-I am sorry. It wasn't my fault. (Moves to her and slowly covers her face with the blanket) But now, you will have to sleep. You mustn't wake
(CP: 314-15)

Thus, the play ends with Nitin's confessional soliloquy. He is anxious to meet dark auto driver. Dattani detects virgin issues and presents through his theatrical mechanism in an innovative fashion. The transexuality can be viewed in two ways. (i) Excluded (ii) not integrated. Gayism/ lesbian are not integrated in the maincourse of our life. The eunuch is excluded from the man's stream of our society.

The Trivedi brothers, Jiten and Nitin inflict pain and suffering upon their wives in two different ways. Jiten kicked Dolly in her belly during her pregnancy period and Nitin by avoiding his wife for his gayness. One more important thing about the Dattani's plays is that his construction of love for the children comes from the past guilt. It is the pressure of past - mistake or crime that leads them to construct more and more love for kids so as to compensate their past loss. 'Baa', Praful, and Jiten did injustice to Daksha. Their excessive love for Daksha results from their past quilt. As Dolly says: "At the hospital, you told them I fell down stairs! Daksha was born-two months premature. With the cord around her neck! (Pause). I saw her and I knew ! I knew instantly! Your mother loved her more than was natural. Praful loved

her. More than was natural. You love her. You love her more than Baa or Praful! Because you feel the most guilt!" (CP: 312)

Mahesh Dattani excels in art and craft as well as symbolic exuberances and imagery. The symbol is a powerful means of communication. In literary work, symbol has great value in the texture of work. The play is pregnant with lightly suggestive and effective symbols and imagery. Dattani has made ample use of symbols i.e. bonsai plant. He has woven it into the fabric of play. Lalitha has got obsession of growing bonsai. It is very suggestive of her internal world. The plant is slim and tiny. It may get dried up if not timely watered and nurtured. It indicates that man should understand emotions and feeling of the woman. They should nurture their existence with love and respect. Otherwise, it brings dryness and emptiness in the life. She keeps on trimming and fencing of the plant. It denotes the restrictions imposed on the women in our society. Lalitha's husband Surindhar keeps bonsai plant at his office. The plant is not healthy and attractive. It symbolizes the distorted images of the married lines of the Trivedi brother. Apart from this, the face mask, Baa's bell and wheelchair, the *thumri* etc. are the imageries used for expressing some thoughts and idea in the play. The play *Bravely Fought the Queen* is moulded by craft of imagery or symbolism. The play repletes with rich symbols, imagery, rhythm, sound etc. The extensive use of bonsai plant reminds us the image of 'broken tree' which pervades throughout the play *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller.

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Dattani explores the marginalization of women and also their attempt to articulate their voices against the patriarchal politics that subjugates the women and makes them worth for nothing. The play can be considered as the dramatist's protest against exploitation of women in terms of emotional and finance within the periphery of the familial relationship. The play also highlights other evils like money-lending, prostitution, domestic violence, consumerism etc. Though, the women of the play differ in their mood and musing, they are unhappy and disappointed at their 'claustrophobic' spaces. It is because of this depression and disappointment they are drifted towards different things for eliminating

dark-shadow of their frustration. Alka is addicted to wine and Dolly develops romantic notion for Kanhaiya. Lalitha's over involvement in growing bonsai plant results from her frustrated mental state.

At the end, the women of the play become assertive and attempt to create their own spaces against the confined domestic space offered to them. Of course, they articulate their own spaces in different ways to discard their deplorable condition. Eventually, all men are unmasked and their real faces are brought before the audience. They have no other means of depending themselves except escapism. There is revolutionary change in the character of Dolly. Dolly of the first part of the play is quite submissive, meek and shy, but she emerges as an assertive and potent character who breaks through silence and burst out her anger against the ill-treatment and injustice done to her at the end. Alka also makes shocking rather disgusting revelation of hidden motives of her brother Praful who got her married with Nitin for continuing his gay relationship with Nitin.

By exploiting layer upon layer of performance, of unreality, Mahesh allowed his actress a route to emotion in its rawest form; the pain, the anguish in the blood-knot of the family which is his constant theme.²⁹

Dramatist highlights the collision between conventional mindset and modern culture resulting into newer landscape. The play depicts the emotional, financial and sexual complexities of Indian urban family. The women of the play are exploited in a multiple ways. It should be noted that they are not passive sufferers. They do suffer, but when it goes beyond endurance; they fight back to free themselves from the burden of subalternity. They take weapon in their hands to show that they are not only subordinate to their male counterparts. Alka is the fine example of this. She is the queen who bravely fought against the system of colonization i.e. patriarchal system just as Queen Lakshmibai fought valorously against the colonizers of the county. i.e. Britishers.

Mahesh Dattani, an internationally acclaimed author, is one of the first Indian dramatists in English to negotiate so successfully with audience at home and in abroad. His plays are written in urban backdrop and convey the authentic voice of modern urban India. He is one of the few brilliant stars in the constellation of Indian English theatrical firmament.

Dattani bags the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his wonderful work *Final Solutions and Other Plays*. *Final Solutions*, a stage play in three acts, is a thrilling story of gripping communalism. The time of the action is late 1940's the period when the India got freedom and partition of the country on the basis of religion into India and Pakistan. Like in all other plays, Dattani has used segmented stage in this play and family as a battlefield of action. In Dattani's plays, incident takes place in the streets and it brings horror home. Alyque Padamsee considers *Final Solutions* as the play about transferred resentments. He puts:

As I see it, this is a play about transferred resentments. About looking for a scapegoat to hit out at when we feel let down, humiliated. Talking out your own anger on your wife, children or servants is an old Indian custom.³⁰

The first stage production of the play took place at Guru Nanak Bhavan, Bangalore, on 10 July 1993. Later on, it was performed at Tara Theatre Mumbai on 11 December, 1993. It was directed by Alyque Padamsee. *Final Solutions* is a very celebrated work of art. Hence, it is also converted into Hindi by Shahid Anwar and directed by Arvind Gaur for Asmita Theatre in 1998.

The stage is dominated horse-shoe or crescent-shaped ramp, with the ends sloping to stage level. Most of the action of the Mob/Chorus takes place on the ramp. Within the confines of the ramp is a structure suggesting the house of the Gandhis with just wooden blocks for furniture and an upstage is a detailed kitchen and pooja rooms.

On another level, there is a room with a roll top desk and an oil lamp converted to an electric one, suggesting that the period is the late 1940s. During this period, Hardika was a young girl known as Daksha. Hardika should be positioned and lit in such a way that the entire action of the play is seen through her eyes. Daksha is referred to young girl of fifteen who writes her thoughts in diary. Hardika is referred to as the grandmother. Though Daksha and Hardika is the same person, they sometimes are seen working at the same level and same time.

When the play opens, Daksha is reading out what she has just written in her diary. Hardika is seated, motionless, on the same level. Daksha marries to Hari even before her 15th birthday. Her father had fought for freedom. She calls her mother-in-law as Gaju and father-in-law as Wagh for their certain personal traits. The introduction of Daksha's character is very meaningful innovative attempt. Dattani creates her character for revitalizing the past especially through her diary. Dattani very tactfully provides her separate space and identity with a view to connecting the past with present. She analyses the past with present and provides her commentary.

Home is arena in the plays of Dattani. With the rise of action, the drama reaches to the Gandhi's house. The actual action takes place outside the house, but it brings tension and terror inside the house. One can say that social tension or trouble assumes the form of domestic tension. Chased by the fanatic Hindu mob, Javed and Bobby sought refuge at Ramnik Gandhi's house who is a man of liberal ideology. This incident sets forth thrilling actions of the play. Dattani presents the whole drama of the communal disharmony inside the Ramnik Gandhi's house at Amargaon. He is the practicer of the democratic and liberal views. There was the communal trouble in the town. The communal riots break out due to the attack on *rath yatra*. The mobs are on the streets with weapons and burning fire. The communal flame engulfs the entire peace of the town. There is a chaos and confusion. Nobody knows what has exactly happened. Everybody is scared and panicky. The rumours of killing *Pujari*, bombing the Muslim girls' hostel etc are at full speed. The dark night has enveloped the town with its fury and tension.

The mob in the play is symbolic of our own hatred and paranoia. Each member of the mob is an individual yet they meld into one seething whole as soon as politicians play on their fears and anxieties.³¹

The play depicts juxtaposition joy of freedom and horrors of communal riots. Under the intoxication of religion, people became thirsty for the blood of their own country people. Killing, stabbing, setting fire, looting, rapping etc. were the common scenes during these period. Many were slaughtered and many more wounded. Thousands of people migrated from India to Pakistan and vice-versa. Even after the decades of the freedom, condition has not changed in terms of the religious prejudice and communal tension. “

lurking inside ourselves.”³²

The play is bifurcated into three acts for the presentation of the events in a systematic way. Structurally, they can be considered as the exposition, climax and denouement or solution. The first act introduces the situation and people involved in it showing communal riots as the background of the play. There is a gradual development of action leading to the climax in the second act. The third act is very important from both structurally and philosophically. The dramatist presents cross examination Javed and Bobby for arriving at final solution of the communal hatred.

The first act serves as an exposition and sets forth action. All the personages are introduced in the first act. Ramnik Gandhi is the head of the family. His wife Aruna is a very religious natured lady. She is very punctual and takes meticulous care in daily rituals. Their daughter, Smita, is studying in college. She is holding different views regarding life, faith, religion etc. She symbolizes the liberal and humanitarian ideology. Hardika is the oldest character in the play. She feels that her son, Ramnik, is blinded by his ideals. The present communal trouble reminds Hardika of the past one in which her

father died. Her father was beaten on the streets of Hussainabad and died there during the post freedom communal trouble.

The play begins with Daksha's diary reading to the audience and Hardika is seen seated rather motionless at the same level. She reads her diary. Daksha. (Reads from her diary) 'Dear Diary today is the first time I have dared to put my thoughts on your pages. (Thinks for a while) Today? How will people know when "today" was a hundred years from now? (Picks up pen and scribbles.) 31 March, 1948 (CP: 165-66)

Through her reading, we come to know that she wanted to be a singer like voice queen Noor Jehan. She reads further, "All my dreams have 's family is

(CP: 166) Daksha is a girl wife married to Hari before fifteen. She came to her new house at her fifteenth birthday after the ten month of her marriage. Her dreams were shattered as her in-laws heard her humming a love song to Hari one night and in the morning; they told Hari not to allow her to sing film songs. Thus, hers in laws forbade her to sing songs after her marriage. While recalling scarred memories of the communal riots after independence, Daksha writes; "Like last year, in August, a most

"(CP: 166)

Actually, people were very eagerly and enthusiastically waiting for the freedom. Everyone was awake for midnight just as the school goes wait for the last bell of the last class before vacation. But people rushed out screaming, shouting and fighting instead of enjoying and celebrating the declaration of freedom of the country and end of British regime.

Daksha's father fought for freedom. He was happy as eventually India got freedom and rid of the Britishers. Daksha's father said that before leaving India, Britishers let loose the dogs. But she didn't understand it at that time. Her ancestral house was in Hussainabad. The house was attacked and her entire collection of records of Shamshad Begum, Noor Jehan, Suraiya were broken to pieces. Hardika opens her diary after forty years and writes a

dozen pages more. She observes “that things have not changed that much.”
(CP: 167)

Dattani makes sensible theatrical tools befitting to the theme of his play. He is also innovative in both theme and stage craft. In this play, he exploits the old device of chorus in an interesting and innovative manner. There are two choruses each consists of five persons –one of Hindu and second being Muslim. The chorus enables us to know the inner thoughts and feelings of the Majority and the Minority. What is inside psyches of the people of both communities towards each other is revealed in a unique and interesting manner. The mob/chorus comprises of five men and ten masks on sticks. The players of mob/ chorus wear a mask by holding the stick in front of him. There are five Hindus masks and five Muslim masks. The individuality of the chorus is revealed through chorus 1, chorus 2, etc. The players of the chorus wear Hindu masks. The social discord is expressed through their expressions.

Chorus1: The procession has passed through these lanes

Every year,

For forty years!

Chorus 2, 3: How dare they?

Chorus 1, 2, 3: For forty years our chariot has moved though their
mohallas.

Chorus 4,5: Why did they?

Why did they today?

Chorus 1: How dare they?

Chorus 2,3: They broke our rath.

They broke our chariot and felled our Gods!

Chorus 1,2,3: This is our land!
How dare they? (CP: 168)

There is concord and discord among the members of chorus.
They agree sometime and disagree other time.

Chorus 1: It is in their blood!

Chorus 2, 3: It is in their blood to destroy!

Chorus 4: Why should they?

Chorus 5: It could have been an accident.

Chorus 2: The stone that hit our God was no accident!

Chorus 3: The knife that slit the poojari's stomach was no accident!

Chorus 4, 5: Why should they? It could have been an accident. (CP:
168)

In this way, the members of the chorus continue to question and counter question. There is a split in their view. Chorus 4 and 5 hold the same view and Chorus 1, 2, 3 shares the common view. They build their parts to a crescendo ending on the word 'accident'. A little later, they have on Muslim masks. So they become Muslim chous/mob.

Chorus1: Their chariot fell in our street!

Chorus2: Their God now prostrates before us!

Chorus 3: So they blame it on us?

Chorus 1: Was the chariot built by us?

Chorus 2, 3: Blame the builder of those fancy thrones.

Chorus 4: A manufacturing defect!

Chorus 5: Doesn't their God have a warranty?

A slow drumbeat. The chorus gathers.

Chorus All. We are neither idol-makers nor idol breakers!

Breaks away.

Chorus 5: But they blamed it on us!

Chorus All. Why did they? Why did they? Why?

Chorus 5: (emotionally).Why?

Pause.

Chorus 3: They say we razed their temples yesterday.

Chorus 2: That we broke their chariot today.

Chorus 1: That we'll bomb their streets tomorrow.

Chorus All: Why would we? Why? Why? Why would we?

Chorus 5: (emotionally) Why would we?

Chorus 1,2,3 and 4 spit

Chorus: All EXCEPT 5. Let them send us back.

They turn to exit

Chorus 5: (meekly) where? (CP: 171)

In this way, they keep on speaking various utterances. At the end of this appearance, chorus 5 puts a very meek but a subtle question of where to go. The harmony and discord is explored through chorus.

Following the attack on *rath yatra*, the authority has imposed curfew and it is still on. So there is no exact idea about the happening and people died in it. Smita's Muslim friend Tasneem is studying in college and

stays at Muslim girls' hostel which is reported to be bombed, but no injury is known. Smita and Ramnik Gandhi talked on phone to Tasneem's family at Jeevnagar and assured of no problem to Tasneem in the hostel.

Ramnik Gandhi:

each other. You see, my daughter is Taneem's classmate

that is why we called-to tell you that. Colleges are closed and curfew hasn't been lifted, so we assumed you might be worried about (CP: 170)

This riot reminds Hardika the past incident-attack on her house in the absence of her father. But this time scene is different. Unlike in Hussainabad, this time two Muslim boys took shelter at her house. They were chased and beaten by Hindu fantasist. Hardika sees wretched pride in their eyes. She is panicky as it would destroy her family again.

Aruna: Our Krishna will protect us.

Hardika: (Sharply) Be careful, I said! (Almost to herself) The dogs have been let loose. (exits) (CP: 174)

Faith in Lord Krishna expressed differently by Hardika and Aruna. The latter has much rather deep and unshakable faith in Lord Krishna and vice versa. As the lights fade on the ramp, two Mulsim boys named Javed and Bobby appeared and conformed to Hindu Mob. They enquired their names, business in the town etc. knowing them outstation Muslims. Mob. /chorus encircles them and two of the mob grab them from behind and snatch the watch of one of the young men. They were pushed and pulled, they were beaten severely. The mob search their pockets and wallets and find a bus ticket, a knotted handkerchief, a tiny prayer cap. The mob is enraged knowing their identity and say that they are of mouse to them.

Chorus All: You pray to a god, you do not know! You pray to a nothing. You do not know his form. And you seek to destroy our gods! Drive them out! Kill the sons of swine! Kill the sons of swine! (CP: 178)

Thus, the chorus gives a chase and strikes them behind the two men run crying in pain and reached to the door of Ramnik Gandhi's house seeking shelter inside his house. They cry 'Help us! Save us! For God's sake, somebody save us!' (CP: 179) Javed is finally beaten black and blue. These boys are begging for protecting them from the mad mob. They enter the house and Ramnik quickly shuts the door behind him. Now on words, entire drama takes place inside the Gandhi's house. They introduce themselves as Javed and Bobby-two minority youths. Dattani attempts to explore the root causes of communal trouble. Reena Mitra observes:

Dattani's *Final Solutions*, first staged in Bangalore in 1993, focuses on the problem communal disharmony between the Hindus and Muslims in India, especially during the period of the post partition riots. The analysis of the cause of friction between the two communities offered by Dattani carries conviction; as it is endorsed by a study of human psychology offering valid explanations of the proclivities and susceptibilities of individuals under circumstantial pressure. The psychosis that prevails among the Hindus as well as the Muslims in India after the events of partition of the country causes a chain of neurotic reactions to even the most inconsequential

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After, Javed and Bobby-two minority youths have sheltered in Ramnik Gandhi's house. The Gandhis have an animated discussion with the two young men.

On the outside of the Gandhi house, the chorus is yelling and asking for the two men. The chorus can be heard crying out, 'Throw them out!', 'We'll kill them!' etc. (CP: 80)

Despite mad and frenzy crowd outside, he plays as a civilized host.

Chorus All: Throw them out! Give them to us. (CP: 180)

The chorus is pounding with their sticks on floor.

Chorus All: Why won't you open the door?

Javed: (pleadingly to Ramnik). Please don't! We beg of you.

Chorus All: Open up! Or we'll break your door!

Ramnik: No! (CP: 181)

The Chorus has turned furious upon Ramnik for not handing over these two young boys. They call Ramnik a 'traitor'.

Ramnik: I stand in front of the door. If you break the door, you will kill me.

Chorus: All. What? You protect them? Then you are a traitor! Traitor!

Sound of glass breaking. Aruna rushes to the image of Krishna.

Ramnik: Go away! Leave us alone!

Chorus All: Traitor! Traitor!

Ramnik: There is nothing you can take from here without killing me first!

Chorus All: Traitor! You are not one of us! We'll kill you too! (CP: 181-82)

Despite the death knocking at his door, Ramnik displays a good deal of spirit of courage and patience. He is determined not to open the door and gives them in the hands of the fanatic mob to be killed. His wife also

Smita:

They bring him and many more to the city to create riots.
(CP: 195)

Bobby informs Smita that he had won him over. Smita is horrified at this truth. The word traitor is barely heard. It suggests that the angry mob is dispersing. The second act ends with the exposure of Javed's real being. So he pounds his forehead with his fist out of frustration. The act three begins with the Muslim chorus. They sit with their legs folded under them in a prayer position.

Chorus 1: Should we be swallowed up? Till they cannot recognize us?
Should we meld into anonymity so they can not hound us? Lose
ourselves in a shapeless mass? Should we? Can we? (CP: 196)

The play also presents the problem how minority can be acceptable. Racial discrimination is quite visible in the manner Aruna and Hardika treat these two young boys. Aruna places two glasses of water before them. After they have drunk water, she holds the glasses with her thumbs and index fingers, on the sides which have not been touched by their lips. She takes them away and keeps them separate from the other glasses. Moreover, Ramnik is surprised to know that Javed is seeing his sister when he doesn't live with his parents. As Javed replies to Ramnik Javed: (with malice). "We do love our own blood. Unlike you who treat your own like shit which can't be touched." (CP: 190). Javed criticizes caste discrimination existing in the Hindu community. He says that the caste-Hindus do not even touch the lower caste people.

As stated in the beginning, Dattani deals with the post modernistic issues. The conflict between tradition and modernity is well exemplified through the conflict between mother and daughter—Aruna and Smita. Aruna wants Smita to follow her ideology. Aruna shudders at the idea that her daughter doesn't have respect for her religion, *sanskar*, etc.

Aruna: You said it stifles you?

Smita: What?

Aruna: Does being a Hindu stifle you?

Smita: No, living with one does.

Aruna: I never felt like that. I have always taken pride in my religion. I
(CP: 211)

Aruna tries to impose her belief and ideology upon Smita. Smita has her clear cut viewpoint. So Aruna feels threatened and insecure. The clash between Aruna and Smita adds additional tension in Gandhi family. Aruna's guilt is perceived when she comes to know that she has stifled her daughter with her conventional beliefs and religious rituals. Smita, at some extent, also feels guilty of disclosing truth confined to her by Tasneem about Javed. She feels regrettance for revealing secret before her family members.

There was a little bit relationship between Smita and Bobby. Now Bobby is going to marry Tasneem. So, Javed wants to know whether there is still anything between Smita and Bobby. If so, Smita shouldn't sacrifice for her friend Tasneem. Smita explains that there is nothing now between them. As a matter of fact, it was a very little emotional moment between them. Smita explains, "It was just one evening. A conversation that got a little personal. Nothing more." (CP: 217)

Smita is a girl of liberal views and ideology. She doesn't believe any false myth or discrimination. Therefore, she allows Javed to fill God's water. She is convinced that his touch to pot of water will not bring any curse upon her family. Despite the communal and familial tension and trouble, there is the water splashing scene. It is a great beauty and joy of the play. Smita suddenly splashes water on Javed's face and Bobby and herself.

Smita: Wake up! Wake up! It's morning. (Splashes more water.) There!
There! (CP: 218)

In this way, splashes water on each other. It helps them to forget the prevailing tension and turmoil. Later on, Smita says in a joking mood.” May be we should all run away from home like Javed. For five minutes every day. So we can quickly gulp in some fresh air and go back in”. (Moves down the ramp) (CP: 219)

It is quite explicit that the national identity mingles with religious identity. The country was divided in the name of religion. It fosters the false notions of comingling religious and national identities. This is how Hardika inquires of the boys.

Javed: We could leave now.

Hardika: Wait! (Pause) Have you ever thought of going to Pakistan?

Bobby: (with control) No.

Javed: (sarcastically). I prefer Dubai. (CP: 221)

It is evident that religion has got personal significance. It doesn't generate trouble. But trouble comes out of prejudice towards others faith and religion. The *Final Solution* lies in acknowledging the similarity and respecting the difference. The non-recognition of similarities and identification of diversity in others causes distrust and hatred. It is the root cause of communal hatred or religious fanaticism. The fundamentalists are blinded by prejudice and therefore can't see the real truth. Their actions are irrational and unguarded by right spirit of true faith. Bobby emerges as the hero of the play. His entering in Aruna's pooja room is one of the most theatrically effective moments. After removing his footwear, he enters in her pooja room and picks up the image of Krishna.

Aruna: Don't come here.

Bobby: That we also believe.

All members of the Mob/Chorus have both Hindu and Muslim masks, one in each hand and they pound the floor thrice.

Aruna: Stop! (Bobby is near the pooja room) Stop him!

Bobby suddenly picks up image of Krishna which is tiny enough to sit in his palm.

Put that back! Oh God! No!

Throughout the following scene, Aruna's cries are drowned by the Mob/Chorus.

Bobby: (extends his hands and shows the image to every one) See! See! I am touching God!

Chorus All: (pounds thrice). We are not idol breakers!

Bobby: Your God! My flesh is holding Him! Look, Javed! And He doesn't mind! (CP: 224)

Further,

Chorus All: Don't break our pride!

Bobby: Look how He rests in my hands! He knows I cannot harm Him. He knows His strength! I don't believe in Him but He believes in me. He smiles! He smiles at our trivial pride and our trivial shame. (CP: 224)

The play depicts chaos in the country resulting from friction between the Hindus and the Muslims offering no final solutions for the eradication of communal disharmony among the members of the both communities. In fact, the dramatist analyzes the causes and effect of communal hatred and disgust raising some questions. Alyque Padamsee aptly puts:

Can we shake off our prejudices or are they in our psyche like our genes? Will we ever be free or over –

whites against blacks, Hindu against Muslims? Are they any final solutions? ³⁴

Dattani muses over the issue psychologically and philosophically. He attempts to find out the seed cause of the communal hatred that has devastated the land. Like a scientist, he believes in theory of cause and effect. He makes analytical inquiry into the problem for searching out the truth. He is the seeker of social and psychological truth. The problem is grounded in the loss of human values and ethical standard. It occurs first in human consciousness and then in human behavior. So we need to understand human mind and psyche from where the trouble is originated. Dattani upholds that prejudice and blind faith nurtures the issue of communal hatred. It is the outcome of the human altitude and aptitude. He provide theory of forget and tolerate for fighting back demon of communal turmoil and tension. As Bobby says;

Bobby: The tragedy is that there is too much that is sacred. But if we understand and believe in one another, nothing can be destroyed. (Puts on his footwear and looks at Hardika). And if you are willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate. (CP: 225)

Dattani uses the pressure of past that makes an individual behave in a more intimate and understanding way. In this play also, most of the characters are guilt-ridden. The theme of pressure of past guilt is interwoven with the main theme of the communal hatred. The character of Ramnik feels the burden of guilt. Actually, he carries the guilt of the crime done by his father and grandfather. Other characters share this pressure for a short while, but Ramnik is constantly sharing guilt conscious. The younger generation disapproves the prejudice so they weigh down under the burden of false pride and prejudice. It is note worthy here that Dattani's dramatic sense and stage craft ability has spared Hardika from bearing the burden of guilt throughout the life. The truth which is unknown to her is revealed at the end by Ramnik.

Hardika: What are you talking about?

Ramnik: (looks at her with pity) It's their shop. It's the same burnt-up shop we bought from them, at half its value. (pause) And we burnt it. Your husband. My father. And his father. They had it

Hardika: (crushed) Why didn't you tell me? All these years.

Ramnik: You have to live with this shame only for a few years now. (CP: 226)

Thus, she is dramatically excluded from living with shame and guilt all these years. It is his guilty consciousness that prompts him to act as a civilized host when the angry crowd is outside. Santwana Haldar rightly observes;

Ramnik's guilt consciousness is thus perfectly used for dramatic purpose by Dattani. It is his guilt consciousness that prompts him to do something for the two young men who have fallen prey to the anger of the Hindu fanatics. He behaves as liberal because he cannot forget the sin of his father and grandfather. The structure of the play is based on this guilt consciousness which is introduced as a major theme.³⁵

At the end of drama, Daksha/Hardika confronts reality and her resentment is cured. Arun is disillusioned realizing meaninglessness of her beliefs and rituals. There is a shift in the prejudiced behaviour of Hardika at the end. She asks: “

(CP: 226)

Mahesh Dattani excels in stage craft and art. His theatre is true to life. In *Final Solutions*, he deals with the most complex and intricate issue of communal hatred and racial pride and prejudice towards other community. He

has employed flashback techniques in this drama. So he invests multilevel sets.

I've used time and space in different ways in my plays. I think all the tools of theatre are available to a playwright and you just use them the way your sensibility allows you to use them.³⁶

The language of the play is the spoken language. Dattani uses code-mixing device in his plays. In this play, he has made a number of Indian words such as *pooja room, mohallah, rath, poojari, chokra teasing the girls, pooja-paath, pallav, mehendi, baap re!, hookah, galli, paan, haram ki aulad, matka, sethani, topi, , karma, supari, gaddar, dupatta, mere own khoon ne mujhe maar daala. Daadi, attars* etc.

The play succeeds in making us self-critical about our myths and notions of our faith and rituals. Everybody has his / her religious faith and creed. Mutual faith and respects can remove communal disharmony and discord. The members of the both communities should shake off the pride and ego. Trusting and understanding thoughts and feelings is the possible way to fight back communal hatred and flame. Prejudice and bias against the other community is harmful. The dramatist also dismisses the idea of sending the Muslim community to Pakistan as foolish one. It is not the solution nor is it possible. Dattani has woven some other themes along with the main theme of communal turmoil. They are liberal ideology, guilt consciousness, transferred resentment, articulating one's own voice and anger etc. *Final Solutions* can be called the protest against subjugation of fanaticism, blind faith, patriarchal code, women, etc.

Dattani has made symbolic use of chorus with mask. Interestingly the mask keeps changing on, but the players of chorus remain the same. All human beings are alike. The mask is appearance; humanity is reality, supreme truth. The players put on alternatively Hindu-Muslim masks and become the Hindu Muslim mob. It suggests that communal identity is

outer form of the individual, and human identity is the permanent and transcendental to all. When men are under masks, they question the identity of others and give chase to the other. It can be said that mask is like opium. Under the impact of it, man behaves irrationally and causes chaos and destruction in society. In other words, communal hatred is caused under the intoxication of prejudice and blind faith.

Dattani has depicted double role of Daksha very purposefully. The young Daksha is quite unbiased and innocent. There is no hatred in her heart towards Muslim community. She is befriended to members of Muslim community. Old Hardika is quite biased especially with Muslim community. She was unhappy with her husband and in-laws attitude towards Muslim community. But now she feels that they were right in their behavior. She received the cruel and barbaric stroke of communal riots in Husainabad. She writes how her house was attacked and her father was slain by the Muslim fanatics. Daksha received physical punishment and mental torture for mixing and eating with Muslim family. She was shocked and grieved. But later on, she realized that Muslim has the wretched pride and ill will against the Hindu. Critically speaking, Dattani presents two view points of the same person in terms of communal attitude. However, at the end, she again realizes that she was falsely prejudiced against Muslim community especially Zarine's family. Ramnik told her that her husband and his father got their shop burnt to get it less price in the name of communal trouble. At the close of play, she is disillusioned and her false notions are removed. Her attitude and feelings are purged.

Hardika is the synthesis of past and present. The expression of anger occurs as self defensive mechanism not as manifestation of belligerence. Dattani shows how people are falsely prejudiced against the people belonging to other community and react negatively. The dramatist depicts psychological journey of Hardika's mind through her double role. When asked by Ranu Oniyal about *Final Solutions*. Dattani replies,

It is basically, dramatically, about two Muslim boys running away from a mob that is out to kill them and they seek shelter in a Hindu household, seemingly liberal minded and their presence through the night triggers off memories for the matriarch, the older woman, the grandmother.³⁷

Like chorus, diary is the significant tool to connect the past with present. It helps us what happened forty years back during partition. It is a communication device for talking with spectators. It provides Daksha full freedom of criticizing and making mockery of her in-laws' family. Dattani replies:

Absolutely and what Daksha has is her diary and through the device of the diary, she begins a dialogue with the audience and that is the only space that is offered to Daksha because she can make fun of her in-laws, she could talk very honestly about her feelings, about her friendship with the Muslim girls etc. directly to the audience and that space is denied to her with the other members of her household including her husband and these are memories that she retained even in her old age and these memories are triggered off and feelings of prejudice that had developed over the years are brought out in present day situation. So Daksha becomes a symbol of our historical vision, our sense of history, how prejudice is formed and how we deal with the situation today.³⁸

In the play, Dattani pleads for the cause of entire humanity irrespective of their creed and religion. He places humanism above all. He

establishes that human pride and greed leads to the communal disturbance in Indian Society. Beena Agrawal puts:

Dattani establishes that the love of humanity eliminates the dark shadows of prejudice; the solution lies not in external world but within man's own consciousness.³⁹

Dattani is ebbed with uncompromising innovative spirit and unceasing desire for bold theatrical experiments, which has opened up new avenues of presentations of invisible issues on the stage. *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is one of bold theatrical experiments on the theme of homosexuality by Dattani. It is understood that the set rules of society doesn't allow an individual to create his 'own designs' and 'own space' unless conforming to them.

And the themes of on a Muggy Night deserve to touch the whole of society and to be touched by it. It is not simply the first play in Indian theatre to handle openly gay themes of love, partnership, trust and betrayal. It is a play how society creates patterns of behavior and how easy it is for individuals to fall victim to the expectations society creates.⁴⁰

The modern society has under gone metamorphosis. As a result of this, human experiences have become wide and varied. Dattani invests such noble human experiences in theatrical presentation. Dattani admits:

It is to do with perceptions. I don't mean to say that this is a definite view of life. But several of images that we carry around in our minds are politically generated images and we accept them to be true. However, I don't think so and my characters are simply personifications of my perceptions.⁴¹

The play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* was first performed at the Tata Theatre, Mumbai on 23rd November, 1998. The play has succeeded in evoking interest and curiosity among the audience. Later on, the play was adopted into a screen play which was produced by Sanjeev Shah. The play depicts strong passion, betrayal, frustration, conflicts in the lives of the homosexuals. The play is the dramatist's bold attempt to look into the inner recesses of those who are excluded and forced to live lives with anxiety and insecurities in a solitude environment. There are multi sets on stage. Actually, the stage bifurcated into three acting areas. The first area is a small flat, beautifully done up 'ethnic chic' fashion, located in the up market area of Marine Drive, though not quite Pali Hill. The second area is completely non-realistic set comprising three levels. This area is black and expansive and characters therein are immediately suspended in a 'Shoonya' where they are forced to confront their inner thoughts and feelings. Below this, there is Kamlesh's bedroom which is realistic but hidden behind a gauze wall, giving it some mystery and secrecy. The play begins with conversation between Kamlesh and the guard. Kamlesh has invited his friends to treat his depression without informing the reason. So he sends the guard for purchasing refreshment. Instead of using English version, Dattani resorts to transliteration of Hindi utterances.

Kamlesh: (Takes out some more money from his wallet) Mere kuch dost
ane wale hain. Tum unko aane dena. Tum to pehchante ho sub
ko. (CP: 50)

Prakash and Kamlesh were deeply in love with each other. The separation between Prakash and Kamlesh causes immense pain and distress in the heart and mind of Kamlesh. Thereafter, he comes in contact with Sharad and develops homoric relationship with him. However, Kamlesh can't adjust himself with Sharad as he is hunted by the memories of Prakash who is now known as Ed and intends to marry Kiran, divorcee sister of Kamlesh. Ranjit is visiting from UK, working with HIV counselors. Bunny is a TV artist. Bunny is doing role of husband/ father in *Yeh Hai Hamara Parivaar*.

The play is full of suspense and revelations. Every act functions as individual text with rising action leading to the climax. At the end of the play, all the characters are brought to the light as per their right mental colour and confusion. The dramatic technique of Dattani helps them in their self discoveries, self-assertion, self-expression, self-evolutions of their personalities wrapped in various garbs and garments.

Unity in diversity is the eye catching characteristic of India - a country of wide and varied cultural, ethnic, religious and language groups. Despite its diversity, there is oneness that binds them in a single group. In the same way; there is a uniform urge in terms of art, music etc. Dattani observes:

I am certain that my plays are true reflection of my time, place and socio economic background. I am hugely excited and curious to know what the future holds for me and my art in the new millennium in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally. ⁴²

The play appears as the challenge to the accepted and established notions of love and marriage of our society. If sex is associated with biological perception, love is associated with the chemistry of human mind. Society has developed its mechanism for controlling sexual expression of human beings aiming at procreation. One can satisfy his / her sexual desires with the person belong to the opposite sex. But one can't do the same with the person belonging to the same sex. But every person his / her individual self to do things in his/her own way. So, they deviate from the path paved by the society and take recourse to unconventional way. Dattani, being keen observer of this, depicts individual's choice of fulfilling the desire of love and sex in his/her own way.

Much of 'mainstream' society, Dattani believes, lives in a state of 'forced harmony', out of sense of helplessness, or out of a lack of alternatives. Simply for lack of choice, they conform to

stereotypes like 'homosexuals' that in some sense leads to a kind of ghettoisation within society, little spaces to which the marginalized are pushed. ⁴³

Dattani's plays foreground such characters and instill them with courage to speak before the public. By doing so, he intends to negotiate the issue with the society.

Of the characters, Sharad and Deepali are comfortable with their sexuality, and have different ways of being gay. Sharad is camp, flaunting; Deepali more restrained, perhaps more stable. Kamlesh is anguished, and Ed the most obvious victim of his own insecurities. Bunny, the TV actor, is a rather more traditional Indian gay man - married. (he would say happily) while publicly denying his own nature, and Ranjit has taken an easy way out by moving to Europe where he can, 'be himself' more openly. ⁴⁴

Dattani dramatizes dynamics of individuals' ways of gratifying carnival desire with a little humourist approach. Dattani provides free air of expressions to the homosexuals.

Sharad:

Kamlesh: I wanted to love you, I tried for a whole year.

Sharad: But you couldn't

Kamlesh: I do love you.

Sharad: Oh! Spare me the lies!

You could never love anyone because you are still in love with Prakash! (CP: 56)

Thus, Kamlesh's love for Prakash is quite strong and unceasing. It shocks us that gays also have strong bond of love and affection like heterosexuals. Prakash has deserted Kamlesh and decided to be heterosexual. Now he is known as Ed. Arrival of Kiran adds more tension in the atmosphere. She doesn't know past relationship between his brother Kamlesh and her fiancé Prakash. She feels sorry for her brother's conflicts and suffering. Nobody knows that Ed and Prakash is the same person barring Kamlesh. When Kiran speaks his full name as Edwin Prakash Methew, everybody is taken aback to know that Prakash is now flirting with Kiran. So they feel that they should inform Kiran about the past affiliation between Prakash and Kamlesh. However Kamlesh denies revealing this secret before her. The first act ends exposing real identity of Ed/Prakash. It sets forth actions of the play in new directions. One can say that play passes from one climax to another.

Sharad: Are you mad? You must be mad!

Deepali: You must tell her!

Kamlesh: You promised! All of you! It doesn't exist.

Sharad: You tricked us! You tricked us to it!

Kamlesh: No.

It should be noted that gay/lesbian relationship is also possessive and demanding. They also demand dedication and faithfulness to their relationship and can't bear breach of trust and confidence. Kamlesh undergoes acute pain and suffering because of Prakash's betrayal. He doesn't want to come into the way of happiness of his sister Kiran. Therefore, he doesn't want to reveal truth before her sister. Moreover, his sister has past bad experience of her first marriage. She barely survives out of that pain and suffering.

The play maps the gray areas of society which forbids love and sex relationship between two people of same genders. The play focuses on

conflicts and desires of the gay/lesbian relationship in our country. It is revealed that this soil is not comfortable with gay/lesbian relationship. So there are two ways before them- either they can hide themselves into heterosexual garb or they leave the county for the west. Bunny and Ranjit are the fine example of this.

Kamlesh has become nostalgic regarding his erstwhile love affair with Prakash and has plunged into sorrow and misery. He told a lie to Sharad that he has torn all photographs. Actually, he has kept one secretly. All the photographs were not torn but sent to Prakash keeping one with him. Now he brings out that photograph containing images of Kamlesh and Prakash holding each other tightly. He wants to overcome from this sad state. Therefore, he requested his friends to show him the proper remedy of his illness.

Kamlesh is caught up into the frustration and anger resulting from the separation from Prakash. He is forlorn and frightened. He had also approached the psychiatrist to cope up with illness and anguish. But nothing could help him coming out of it. He ventilates his feelings in the following way.

Kamlesh: I knew I needed medication. I chose the psychiatrist out of the yellow pages. He pretended to understand. Until he began to tell me about aversion therapy. For a while, I believed him. Because the medication helped me cope with my depression better. Until he said I would never be happy as a gay man. It is impossible to change society, he said, but it may be possible for you to reorient yourself. (CP: 69)

On the contrary, Bunny is a gay in disguise. He is married and well set. He thinks that Kamlesh is unnecessarily bothering all these. Therefore, he advises Kamlesh to get married with a woman and continue to his feeling as a gay.

Bunny: Since you want us to help you let me give you some advice. You are looking in the wrong places to forget your Prakash. Get married. (CP: 70)

What is very fascinating about the play is bold and frank treatment to gay theme given by Dattani. Depiction of gay theme calls for guts and courage on the part of the dramatist. Dattani handles this post modernistic issue in a very daring way. He puts the whole issue in a very dynamic way. He has instilled courage and the spirit into the minds of his characters that they can openly reveal their gay identity. They don't bother for the society's aversion and reaction.

Kamlesh: Let them talk! If two men want to love one another, what's the harm? (CP: 91)

They are so absorbed with their conviction and commitment that they even dare to leave country for keeping their gay relation and identity intact and safe.

Ranjit: Call me what you will. My English lover and I have been together for twelve years now. You lot will never be able to find a lover in this wretched country! (CP: 71)

Deepali is the most beautifully drawn character in the play. She asserts, "I am all for the gay men's cause. Men deserve only men!" (CP: 60) She is also very bold and enticing lesbian person. She is quite faithful and content with her lesbian relationship. She is enraged to know various moods and opinions of homosexuals. Therefore she says "Tina and I can tell all of you to go jump!" (CP: 71)

Actions of the play are energized with the process of exorcizing Kamlesh's mind from the Prakash's thoughts. Everybody suggests his/her opinion regarding freeing Kamlesh from depression. Sharad shows the photograph. Everybody is eager to have a look. Sharad describes the picture as, "Cheek to cheek, pelvis to pelvis naked" (CP: 71-72) Kamlesh forbids him

of showing it other. Ultimately all have had a look at it. Kamlesh gets hold of portrait and stands by the window. Sharad suggests to have a little ritual. Ranjit also supports his view of doing ritual.

Sharad: Why not? The whole heterosexual world is run by rituals? That wedding down stair will go on for days! (CP: 72)

The dramatist tries to show how gay people behave and act under the pressure of traditional culture consciousness which forbids them indulging in it. The scene in which Kamlesh performs rituals to get rid of Kamlesh's memory by destroying photograph is highly dramatic and amusing too. The scene also lay bares the internal and psychological vacillation of Kamlesh's mind. He is greatly encouraged by his friends to destroy the portrait- the last sign of his past relationship with Prakash. However, he hesitates to do it. As this juncture of action, the arrival of Kiran aggravates his mental conflicts and diverts the action. Now Prakash is a lover of his sister Kiran. So he feels acute pain and dilemma. Kiran is eager to introduce her fiancé Ed and her desire to share her views with others is exceedingly thrilling and sensational. Very few dramatists like Dattani can invest and explore such scene which creates emotional tension and turmoil in the mind of the character. Dattani has both dramatic guts and ability to handle such complex situation which places him in the row of playwrights of international repute like Shakespeare, Osborn and so on. It shocks every one that Kamlesh has approved and encouraged the relationship between Kiran and Prakash. He has sacrificed his feelings for his sister.

Everybody is puzzled as how to reveal truth before Kiran. Deepali is very keen to disclose the truth to Kiran by showing the photograph of Kamlesh and Prakash. Bunny objects her idea saying that she is creating trouble where there is no trouble. Deepali is firm in her view.

Deepali: She must know the truth! She thinks she is marrying someone who loves her very much. (CP: 84)

Bunny pleads that he loves his wife and cares for her very much. She is quite content and boasts about his work to all their neighbors. He is giving much more happiness than another heterosexual man. His children and his wife love him very much. But Deepali thinks that he cannot love his wife with the same intensity with which he can love a man. Kamlesh is also unwilling to disclose the truth. He says that Prakash has changed to become heterosexual.

Kamlesh: He goes to church every week now. They put him on to a psychiatrist. He believes his love for me was the work of the devil. Now the devil has left him.

Sharad: Now the devil has put him on to your sister. I'll tell you what. Show her the photograph. Let her know who the devil is. (CP: 85)

The third act begins with the lights fade in on the living room of Kamlesh. The homosexuals express their displeasure to the raucous tunes and lusty cries of the *baraat*. Ranjit shuts the window to faint the hooting and whistling of the wedding party. The dramatist depicts the twin issues of gender and alternate sexuality in this play.

The gay matter in *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is most pervasive, and while the treatment is radical the denouement is abrasive. Two contrastive scenarios are conceived to offset each other. In one, Ed, the gay man breaks down after assaulting his male partner Kamlesh following the disclosure of their relation from a just recovered tell tale clandestine photograph and in the other the air of celebration prevails sound of bursting fire crackers and lusty yells is heard from the wedding below. This contrastive juxtaposition is a clever dramatic device of Dattani to focus on the infructuous

The dramatist discusses the issue of conversion of homosexual to heterosexual with socio-psychological ground. The play raises a question. Can a gay be a 'strait'? The play also discusses on the issue of marriage – both conventional and unconventional between the gays. Through the character of Kiran, the dramatist presents bad consequences of conventional marriage. Then the question arises is who is happy? Bunny is a gay. He has married a woman and has children. He thinks that his wife and children are quite happy and love him. Moreover, all the characters present over there are gays. So they don't understand the importance and necessity of conventional marriage. Of course, Ed has changed from gay to straight. So he sees the wedding in the different way.

Ed: Look around you. Look outside. (Goes to the window and flings it open.) Look at that wedding crowd! There are real men and women out there! You have to see them to know what I mean. But you don't want to. You don't want to look at the world own little bubble. (CP: 99)

While mapping the space for the homosexual, Dattani also throws some light on the heterosexuals especially who undergo bitter experience of marriage. Kiran is tortured and troubled by her earlier husband and how she falls into the scheme of her lover Ed. She is subjected to mental anguish and pain after knowing past relationship between her lover and brother. Her future course of action is quite uncertain and unpredictable.

The homosexuals of the play can also be compartmentalized into three categories. Some homo/lesbians are trying to be straight and some of them are bi-sexual, whereas some others are content with their present identity as a 'pure gay'. Deepali is one such character who is quite satisfied as a gay person.

The dramatist problematizes the whole issue of gay relationship and analyzes the world of gay people expecting public participation on the problem under discussion. The play presents the deception and betrayal

prevailing in the world of the gays. The dramatist unveils deceptions and trick covered into hypocrisy.

For the fault is not just the characters' – it is everyone's, in a society which not only condones but encourages hypocrisy, which demands deceit and negation, rather than allowing self-expression, responsibility and dignity.⁴⁶

It is pertinent to note that despite gays, they are bold and self-expressive. They also realize the importance of heterosexual man and the power they exercise. They consider them real man-woman.

The homosexual wants to be powerful and commanding like the man-real man of society. They want to belong to the world of real man and woman. That is why Sharad wants to be straight. Different characters have different views about the world of real man-woman. At the end of the play, all the characters have made themselves very clear.

Each act builds to a climax of revelations and self discoveries. By the end of the play, Ed is seen as the most pathetic and self deluding of all the characters but Kamlesh too deceives himself and exploits others. (The guard, for example). The photo of Ed and Kamlesh together becomes emblematic (again a typical Dattani touch) of all that was good in their love, but which has now turned or been turned against that love. The instructive wedding music becomes the accompaniment to a dance of death indoors – and the audience must go through the classic cathartic emotions of terror and pity as the characters' masks fall, their emotions unravel and their lives

The secret of Kamlesh-Prakash gay love is exposed providing a great shock to Kiran. Once again, Kiran's life is filled with misery and malady. She is compelled to leave Ed forever. She is infuriated and anguished upon her brother Kamlesh who deceives her by not telling the truth. All the same, she is to repose trust in him. The end of the play is self-revelatory and self-expressive as well as self-evaluative facilitating the process of self-discovery. They have to know what they have achieved and where they have failed in life.

In this play, Dattani examines the psychology of persons who are by nature, 'gays' or 'bi-sexual' and the desire on the part of some of them to turn heterosexual. This may seem to be an unusual theme in the Indian context. But in real life such characters do exist. Hence, Dattani has re-created

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Dattani takes a plunge into the inner recesses of the characters, who desire to be the gay. It appears that the gays are puzzled about their identity in society. If they fulfill longing of being a gay, it will damage their identities and recognition in society which disapprove gay relationship and promotes marriage between heterosexual. Their sexuality is endangered and engulfed by the rules and regulation of the society. They kowtow before the unwritten laws of society. Torn between longing and identity, characters try to find out other alternatives. The clash results from their contradictory nature with culture of society in which they belong to.

There is a binary opposition between their nature and the culture of their society. This dichotomy between nature and culture obstructs their love and poisons their minds. The note of revolt against the society is unmistakable. In the page of globalization, nature triumphs over culture.⁴⁹

Dattani is very dexterous in symbolic presentation. There are two worlds in the play- the world of heterosexual and world of homosexuals. They are separated by the window of the Kamlesh's room. The opening and shutting down of window is very symbolic. The heterosexual are enjoying in light where as homos are forced to confine in the darkness. They see the world of heterosexuals through the window. Mrs. Merchant's affair and *barat* are visible when window is opened. It means that they are sharing light where as the homos are sharing the darkness. That's why Kamlesh doesn't like to keep window open. He also doesn't like Sharad's looking out through window. Being asked homosexuality or lesbianism, Dattani replies:

It is natural although it is not the norm in any of the species. Like being left-handed in a predominantly right-handed world.⁵⁰

In this way, Dattani is convinced that gay relationship is not something that is called abnormal or disgusting. It occupies little space, but it does exist in a normal way. It is common knowledge to put that there are so many people in our society who are pursuing sexual pleasure with the partners of their same sex. It doesn't create much hustle and bustle in society. But here, the play depicts the issue of love marriage between same sex persons and breach of the relationship. So it generates turbulence and tension.

The play also provides fine platform for the discussion on general belief or concept of 'man'. The play ends with Sharad singing a song 'What makes A Man A Man?' (CP: 111). He goes offstage singing "I ask
(CP: 111) This is the stroke of Dattani's dramatic technique. He dramatically mingles the issue of self-identity with the issue of gay love and same sex-marriage. It lends an extra load and pressure to the play and also philosophizes the whole discussion.

Dattani is true dramatic genius who voids the variation between the paper script and performance creating the voice of the subordinate

colonized sections of our society. He has an awareness and also ability to look into the invisible or taboo issue wrapped in web of hypocrisy and tradition.

The gay are torn between social tradition and individual's choice of sexual pleasure. He has prepared stage considering mental spaces of the characters of the play. His innovative stage technique is so effective that his encoded text message ceases to be self-reflective.

His use of stage craft is extremely intricate and it makes the text echoing multiple connotations. For dramatic representation is neither a matter of the description nor of presentation but it is a matter of evocation. It is only with appropriate performance that the experience becomes vital and

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Our society has exclusively promoted heterosexual relationship as the prime mode of sexual expression, as it is only means of survival human race on the earth. So gay relationship has been greatly discouraged and looked upon as an act of contempt and disgust since time immemorial.

Dattani's plays come as a challenge to our conservative Indian society. It strikes at the root of concept of continuity of civilization through the promotion of idea of centrality of heterosexual relationship in society, where the gays are subjected to exclusion and contempt. The play presents struggle and repulsions of the gays against the backdrop of the culture which bans on gay relationship. Longing for social approval and freedom is lurking in the hearts of the most of the characters. Non corresponding nature of the character with society is the under prevailing heat of the muggy night. The dramatist shows societal self and individual self at conflict. Here heat signifies the conflict prevailing in the minds of the characters. It is observed:

For the Indian male, fear of losing his identity could be the prime reason for clinging onto regressive role- playing.⁵²

Refusal of social approval and conversion into a strait is at the centre of their discussion and deliberation. While commenting on the *Mango Soufflé*, film adaption of the play *Muggy Night in Mumbai*, Dattani puts:

There are grey areas in people's relationship with others too, and through my film, I have brought them to notice.⁵³

The characters are sick and depressed but they are not crippled ethically. They are struggling to cater their own needs and necessity. The social rules and regulations are in their way of fulfillment of their desires. It is observed:

In both these plays, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *Do Needful*, the dramatist while expressing his sympathy for gays who are not morally degraded but mentally sick, expose their struggle with their own inner selves. The possibility of the shared spaces common to women and homosexual is put to active use here with the identities of its protagonists. The common oppressor is the patriarchal structure that refuses to allow any space for the growth of individual beyond a set pattern of gender determine⁵⁴

The characters suffer due to accepted norms of sexual expression. Heterosexuality is a rule and homosexuality is deemed to be an act of trespassing or ethical pervasion. The resistance against this value generates conflicts leading to emotional crisis in the lives of characters. It is explained,

on a more personal level, however, the term 'gay' also brought with it and in creakingly wide spread reference to sexuality as a quality or property of the self: A person 'has' a sexuality, gay or otherwise, which can be reflexibly grasped, interrogated and developed.⁵⁵

Dattani's dramatic genius is so innovative and radical that he can depict excluded and forbidden issues very successfully. He observes that there are certain issues which die in the minds of the persons. The gay desire is lying in the human psyche and is very essential to deal with in a proper way.

The play *Thirty Days in September*, cleft into three acts, is a tragic tale of a child's sexual abuse. The play was first performed at the Prithvi Theatre, Mumbai on 31st May, 2001. The play was commissioned by RAHI, a support group for women survivors of incest. Little Dubey observes;

Thirty Days in September has touched hearts and consciences everywhere. Sensitive and powerful without ever offending sensibilities, it manages to bring home the horror and the pain within the framework of a very identifiable mother-daughter relationship.⁵⁶

Dynamic and innovative theatrical art of Dattani captures the stark reality of life. He is famous for presenting taboo issues like homosexuality, child's sexual abuse, mal treatment to the eunuch, prostitution etc. In the present play, Dattani reflects on the problem of sexual molestation of the child and far reaching impact thereof.

Dattani has used segmented stage. The stage is divided into four acting areas. All the action moves without any set changes between scenes. The play begins with Mala's talking to the imagined counsellor in the single seater opposite to her. She doesn't talk to the audience. Her

conversation is being taped, but she is not aware of it. Mala Khatri is a young girl protagonist of the play. She is victimized through sexual colonialism. She tolerates sexual molestation silently during her childhood period. She realizes the pain and agony of this after coming into adolescent period. She feels that her existence is caught into hostile surrounding. It is a disgusting tale of incest-illicit sexual relationship between the nearest kindred. Mala is molested by her nearest relative. She feels that human relationship is a betrayal and weighs down under the pressure of such horrible realization. Mala becomes the victim of sensuous desires of her uncle Vinay who traps Mala into sexual web for gratifying his filthy passion and lust for sexuality. What is more shocking and heart -rending to Mala is that her own mother, Shanta who observes silence against injustice done to her.

Mala's mind is haunted by the past memories of her molestation. Child sexual Abuse (CSA) is an umbrella term which covers any sexual activity with the child by an adult. It is observed that incest creates the worst horror and prolonged psychological trauma. Sometimes it leads to further victimization when the child grows adult. Mala's case is like this. Sometime, we feel that fault lies with Mala who attracts other men and invite them for sexual gratifications. She acts as a girl of loose character, but the perversion in her present behavior is caused by her molestation during childhood. She understands reasons working behind her mental disorder and hostility towards socio-cultural context. Therefore, she tells Deepak that he can't just understand her as he is unaware of her wounded psyche propensity for such sexual colonialism in future. Both Mala and her mother Shanta are gasping under the uncompromising guilt. Shanta has sought consolation in singing '*Mere to Giridhar Gopal, Doosro na koi, Mere to Giridhar Gopal...*' (CP11: 9)

The most of Dattani' plays are located in urban milieu. The present play is also located in upper middle class family in Delhi. Dattani explores very cleverly the invisible issue of child sexual abuse. He puts:

I would see the setting of Thirty Days is upper middle class. I choose this setting because I did

not want them to dismiss sexual abuse as something that does not happen to people like them.⁵⁷

The most of the actions of the play are performed in the living room of Shanta and Mala's home in suburb of Delhi. It occupies the central portion of stage. The dominant feature is a large picture of Shri Krishna. Moreover, a life sized doll of seven years old girl is placed on the chair in the background. With lights fade on her, Mala is seen seated at the counselor's desk. She is disconnected from the society and is more at peace with herself. She has taken a journey and has arrived somewhere, psychologically. It is visible in her bodily gestures. The play begins with confessional tone. It is self realization of the sin born out of incest -her molestation by her uncle Vinay. The play opens with Mala's furious but painful assertions:

nothing to hide. Not for me. After all, it is he who must hide. He should change his name, not me. It is he who must avoid being recognized. In people's homes, at parties, hopefully even on the streets. He should look other way when someone spots him anywhere on this planet. And I can make that

thinking about it almost as if it were a pleasant memory.) I wish he were here now, so I could see his face when I tell him I have nothing to hide. Because I know
(CPII: 8)

Mala is frustrated and grieved after the realization of the awfulness of the thing. She feels acute pain and trauma that her life is ruined and she stands nowhere. She carries the burden of the incest. She was falsely persuaded and tempted to do it by her uncle.

Mala, as a child, unaware the consequences of the relation, was seduced and molested. She might or might not enjoy it, but she acutely experiences now the horror and hideousness of the thing. She derives self consolation that she was innocent and ignorant. She didn't know anything. It

wasn't her fault. She should not feel shame and guilt. She blames her demon uncle Vinay who preyed her into that sinister behavior. It is observed:

In dealing with the dynamics of human relationship within the range of theatre, Dattani expresses his concern for taboo relationship, discrimination of the values on the basis of gender, prejudices, uncertain liaisons and the disgust for sexual colonialism.⁵⁸

Mala analyzes the whole events and the way it proceeds. She hates herself and calls herself characterless person. Gradually, her wrath and anger diverts towards her mother. The reality is that she is quilt ridden. She feels anguish and agony at the idea of her illicit affairs. She is convinced that it could have been averted if her mother cared for her. This is the real cause behind acute anguish and agony of Mala's mind. Dattani seems to assert that betrayal within the framework of the familial relationship generates unbearable anguish and frustration. Shanta's betrayal causes the worst horror in Mala's life. As Mala painfully puts:

I don't know. I can't explain it. The only person who can, who could have prevented all this is my mother. Sometimes I wish she would just tell me to stop. She could have prevented a lot
(CPII: 18)

Shanta turns to the portrait of Shri Krishna whenever she doesn't want to respond the question asked by Mala. So, in a fit of anger, Mala gives a threat of throwing that picture out of the house.

There is some sort of relation between Deepak, a young boy of a colonel named Bhatia, and Mala. The boy is ready to marry Mala, but she avoids marrying him. Shanta also wants her marriage with Deepak. Moreover, Shanta has known his family. She is anxious to get Mala settled as early as possible. The main motive behind her marriage is to enable Mala to forget all that have happened. However, Mala is not keen to marry him. She is highly

enraged and angered upon her mother. Mala expresses her anger and wrath towards her mother in the following way.

Mala

because that's what I got whenever I came to you, hurt and crying. Instead of listening to what I had to say, you stuffed me

and I won't ever let you forget that! (CPII: 24)

Shanta tries to escape from the reality- the molestation of her daughter by her uncle Vinay. After reading rape case in news paper, she told her what had happened to her. Her mother, instead of taking it seriously, changed the topic. Mala blames her saying that she has never listened to her problem and pain. Even today, Shanta asks Mala to forget it as a nightmare.

Shanta:

Mala: I am not talking about a bad dream! I am talking about the time when uncle Vinay would molest me. When I was seven. Then eight. Nine. Ten. Every vacation when we went to visit him or when he came to stay with us. You were busy in either the Pooja room or the Kitchen. I would go to papa and cry. Before I could even tell him why I was crying he would tell me to go to you. You always fed me and- and you never said it but I knew what you were saying to me without words. That I should eat well and go to sleep and the pain will go away. And, and-oh God! It did go away. But it comes back. It didn't go away forever! (CPII: 25-26)

Shanta lied to Mala that Shanta's husband left the family and stayed with other woman. However, he continued to send money every month and paid the rent. He had never visited in fifteen years. Mala blamed her for this tragedy. Presently, Mala is thirty plus and wants to be a little girl- devoid of all the scars that causes the anguish and agony. Later on, Mala realizes that

he left because of her mother. Shanta's brother Vinay bought her a flat. Mala didn't like it. So, she blames her mother that she had asked him for that.

Shanta: I didn't ask for this, Mala. I did not.

Mala: Yes you did. He didn't just buy a flat. He bought you!

Shanta: That's not true! Oh God!

Mala: He bought your silence. So that you can never tell anyone what he did to your daughter!

Sigmund Freud, one of the famous thinkers in the whole range of history of psychology and the founder of psycho analysis, has explained dynamics of interpersonal human relationship banking on sexual needs and instincts of human beings. Human being is basically a biological phenomenon and subject to sexual urges. He upholds that suppression of sexual urges brings adverse consequences in the behaviours and action of human beings. Sometimes, it affects the natural course of human action and causes the behavioral perversion.

However, Karen Horney, the founder of American Institute of psychoanalysis, objects to the certain theories propounded by Sigmund Freud. She attributes that discontent for civilization results from 'basic anxiety'.⁵⁹ Every child needs to be catered with proper warmth and love as well as attention and affection. The deficiency of these things facilitate non-amicable dealings with the surroundings and ultimately leads towards neurotic order. The child placed in non-corresponding social and familial environment in terms of love and affection turns out to be the hostile to the world showing contempt for cultural values and social canons. Like a psychologist, Dattani contemplates on the disintegrated self and its abnormal responses in this play.

Mala suffers from the pain resulting from her sense of guilt and shame. The molestation by her uncle and silence against this crime,

maintained by her mother keeps Mala constantly at unrest and anxiety. Karen Horney viewed:

neuroses are generated by cultural disturbances and conflicts which the person has experienced in accentuated form mainly in childhood, in which he did not receive love, guidance, respect, opportunities for growth. She described the neurotic character structure as a dynamic process with basic anxiety, defenses against anxiety, conflict, and solutions to conflict as its essential elements.⁶⁰

She observes that every human being has an innate drive towards self-realization and that neurosis is essentially a process obstructing this healthy development.

Dattani depicts multiple layers of Mala's slain psyche. Mala feels pangs of guilt of her own fault and also of her mother. She holds her mother as well as herself responsible for her physical and mental disorder. Her conscience is constantly biting her. She has fragmented and disordered consciousness. She finds herself unable to adjust with the other human beings of her surroundings. She feels a sense of uprootedness and alienation. Her behaviour is conflicting to the socio-cultural connotation and context. This prevents her accepting proposal of marriage from Deepak. She says that she can't marry him. He cannot understand her problem.

Deepak: Why not?

Mala: You don't understand! You JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND! I cannot love you. (CPII: 54)

Mala's self is fragmented and disordered. Therefore, Dattani makes use of incomplete sentences, monologues, recorded voice and other symbols. The doll's symbol is very effective. It corresponds with the idea of

numbness or silence which Shanta maintains against victimization of her daughter for sexual gratification. It also symbolizes that Mala is not permitted to express reality by society. Generally, Dattani takes up serious issues for the contemplation. As an abled artist, he fuses comic or funny scenes with the serious ones. *Thirty Days in September* is completely somber drama. The seriousness and horror is so powerful that doesn't allow him to be funny. He admits:

I sometimes see the funny side of even the tragic events that I am conceived with. But in *Thirty Days*, I did not have that scope. There's no way you can see the funny side.⁶¹

The play features the emotional crisis resulting from the lack of parental love and care during the childhood period. After the molestation, Mala needed love and guidance, care and concentration from her parents. Unfortunately, she was deprived of it. Her mother decided to be a deaf and dumb, to her pain and suffering. This aggravates her pain and suffering as well as her agony and anguish. Instead of responding her cry sympathetically, Shanta has sought shelter at the lap of Gopal (God) leaving innocent flower to be crushed and distorted under this modern Kansh (demon) who kills seven children of his own sister. His were the mortal wounds, but Mala's demon uncle has made incurable wounds on her mind, body and soul. They are the physical, psychological and spiritual wounds. The dramatist projects fragmented existence of Mala in the play. Mala's self is divided and her psyche is slain and her consciousness is scarred.

Dattani is famous for employing flash back or time shift device. In this play also, he depicts the past and present with the shift of memory. His plays focus on the margin both issues and the people. Like marginalization of the certain sections of society, some issues are also thrown at the periphery. Dattani locates these issues and presents them through his theatrical art. Child sexual abuse is the issue thrown at the periphery dismissing it associated with the labour class. Dattani breaks this conventional notion by

depicting it in the middle class family of Delhi in this play. Dattani doesn't look at the thing wearing conventional spectacle of the society. He looks at the theme other way and takes a plunge beneath the surface for searching truth, which is shocking and challenging. He first puts the truth on the page in form of script and presents on the stage in his own innovative and daring way afterwards. He facilitates direct communication between his victimized characters and audience offering brain storming exercise to the audience about the problem dramatized so. In this way, he opens up channels of communications between the suppressed and the members of society.

Thirty Days in September depicts the raw emotion of the character and the naked realities covered beneath the cloaks of hypocrisy, shamness of behavior, social or familial relationship, silence or numbness of the people etc. Shanta observed silence against the molestation of her daughter, Mala by her brother Vinay. She puts on cloak of silence for avoiding the protest for the injustice. Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri rightly observes in this connection:

Child sexual abuse spans a range of problems, but it is this complicity of the family through silence and lack of protest that is the ultimate betrayal for the abused. ⁶²

In a vain attempt of defending herself, Shanta, holds Mala responsible for the tragedy arguing that she has willingly participated in the molestation for deriving carnal pleasure. In fact, Shanta fails to perceive Mala's ignorance and immaturity for understanding such things. Her seeming pleasure is not real pleasure, but it is her ignorance. She wasn't old enough to understand horror of the things. So when she grows and understands the stark reality, her bliss becomes perpetual damnation of her soul and identity. Her pleasure becomes the protest against the betrayal especially towards her mother who betrays her by maintaining silence. The result is uprising and aggression. It is attributed:

Aggression and violence are unquestionably male while submission and vulnerability are traditionally female. But of late women writers are not only exploring the issues of female autonomy and female vulnerability but are showing how in the face of male violence, women do respond by committing it against others, though after enduring all kinds of hardship and always as the last resort.⁶³

Among others, realization and redemption are the two dominant functions of the literature. The play realizes its child protagonist her self-guilt and redeems her. She feels the pain of sin resulting from realization of fifth of self guilt. It is because of this guilt consciousness that discourages her interaction with psychiatrist. As Mala says,

(CP: 9)

Critically, Mala is weighed down at the realization that besides being it physical molestation, it was a rape of her honour and identity as well as her soul and innocence.

Dattani doesn't offer any specific theory of feminism nor does he make attempt of moralizing the audience. He is neither preacher nor teacher of values and ideas prevalent in society. He is a presenter of stark realities of urban life. His characters are suffering from the past quilt and sin. So, his dramatic art provides a space for redeeming their mind and soul.

At the end of the play, Shanta responds painfully to Mala's question of being remained silent.

Shanta : I remained silent not because I wanted to, but I didn't know how to speak. I-I cannot speak. I cannot say anything. My tongue

Deepak) Please save her. I did not save her. I did not know how to save her. How could I save her when I could not save myself? (CPII: 54-55)

Shanta breaks the silence and voices her pain and suffering. She tells how and what had happened to her when she was of six.

Shanta:

only summer holidays. For ten years! For ten years! (pointing to the picture of God) I looked to Him. I didn't feel anything. I didn't feel pain. I didn't feel pleasure, only silence. Silence means Shanti. Shanti. But my tongue is cut off. No. No. It just fell off
(CPII: 55)

Thus, Mala realizes the real reason of her mother's silence. She also had the same pain to feel and forget. Therefore Mala says:

cused you of not recognizing my pain, you never felt any anger at me for not recognizing yours. We were both struggling to survive but- I never acknowledged
It's not your fault, mother. Just as it wasn't my fault. Please, tell me that you've forgiven me for blaming you. Please tell me that.
(CPII: 58)

His dramatic art has humanitarian touch. It enables the character overcome from the permanent feeling of the sin or evil. At the end, Mala is realized greater truth- the reasons working behind her mother's silence and her own negligence towards her mother's plight. Therefore, she tells her mother at the close of the play:

Please let me be of help. (Gently turning her mother's face towards her) It's not your fault, mother. Just as it wasn't my fault. Please, tell me that you've forgiven me for blaming you. Please tell me that. (CPII: 58)

Mala realizes the victimization of her own mother and pain resulting from it. She feels relived and relaxed. Shanta is praying God and she rests her head in her lap. She is attached to her now. She feels that they are not at fault. They are the victims of others. Dattani very skillfully shows the theme of sin, suffering and salvation. Mala commits sin out of innocence. She suffers when she realizes the horror of the thing.

Various opinions and interpretation are available on salvation. In Christianity, it is associated with Jesus Christ who saves mankind by incurring punishment of death upon himself. There are some other religious schools which maintain that it is achieved by utilizing 'inner human resources' such as meditation, accumulation of wisdom, asceticism, rituals or good deeds.'

Soteriology deals with theological analysis of salvation offering the means to achieve it. In a sense, salvation is "deliverance" or "redemption" from sin and its effects.⁶⁴

Mala blames herself and feels the filth of self guilt. Eventually, she realizes that neither her mother nor she is at fault. Her emotions are purged and notions are changed. She is redeemed from the suffering resulting from the self consciousness of the filthiness and ugliness of the guilt.

The fragmented utterances, violent images, coarse dialogues, self blaming, haunted images etc. shows tension and turmoil in the mind of Mala. It also shows how the evil of sexual colonialism turns the woman's life into a hell of sin and suffering and forces her into a perennial pain and self accusation. Such crime damages the woman psyche and becomes the permanent part of her consciousness.

A close look at Dattani's plays reveals that they dramatize fractures of familial relationship which is the characteristic feature of modern Indian urban society. They live under the same roof, but shares different views and ideas towards life and world. *Thirty Days in September* depicts the

issue which involves psychological and sociological speculations along with philosophical and moral musings over the things.

The play begins with Mala's self realization and self accusation and also sense of betrayal towards her mother who observed silence against molestation of her daughter in her puberty. The further actions of the play are energized with this. The climax comes when Shanta, breaks her long observed silence the narrating her unhappy lot and her inability to save her daughter from demon brother. With this revelation the play takes newer track and ends with happy union between mother and daughter as though wrapped in grief and remorse.

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Chapter III

A Critical Study of Mahesh Dattani's Radio Plays

Drama has a unique place in the field of literature. It is the representation of human life on the stage. Basically, it is a performing art relying more on performance than on the verbal expressions. The success of drama involves the participation of the three- the playwright, the performers and the playgoers. It articulates message for the viewers largely through stage performance which is marked by its distinctiveness like pluralism and dynamism. It breaks the web of illusion and ignorance developing the understanding and perception of the audience. The stage production of the play requires both the performers and the viewers. However, a play can be enjoyed in three ways- reading, viewing and listening. The production of the radio play cannot be seen; it only can be heard or listened. The radio play can also be called audio play.

It is a universally admitted fact that Information Technology has redefined and revamped almost all the human fields. ICT has contributed a lot in the field of education, art, music and literature. There was no play for listening before the invention of Radio. The arrival of radio has given birth to a new kind of drama i.e. Radio drama. Nowadays, radio plays are increasingly becoming popular all across the world. Such plays are broadcast by the radio stations and the people enjoy listening to them. Hence, the spectators are replaced by the listeners in the radio play. Both the stage play and the radio play are two different kinds of dramas. The former is meant for 'eyes' or 'viewing', the latter for 'ears' or 'listening'¹. Both are enjoyed in two different ways. The way of enjoying radio play is quite different from that of enjoying a stage play. The radio play is performed through 'verbal' or 'vocal action'.²

The radio play is not meant for stage performance. It reaches us through following some technical and mechanical process. The most potent question that arises in our mind is that 'does the radio play succeed in

providing pleasure and enjoyment to the listeners in true sense of term? Can it offer experience like stage play?’

There are some differences between a radio play and a stage play. The first and foremost variation is the mode of presentation. The stage play is presented or performed on the stage, whereas radio play is broadcast over a radio station. Secondly, both plays have their audiences/listeners of different tastes to enjoy them. The audience of the stage play sits just before the performers. In case of radio play, the audience or listeners do not sit before the artists. They are located in the remote parts enjoying the radio play. The listeners of the radio play are not visible. Nor are they in a particular group or mass. They are unknown, unseen by the artists and scattered all over. So, it is most likely that the listeners of the radio play may be larger and bigger than the audience of stage play. Thus, the scope for the radio broadcast is quite wide and vast.

There is an eye to eye or face to face contact between the viewers and performers of the stage play. There is no such proximity between the artists of the radio play and audience as they are placed in remote and scattered areas. The radio play has some benefits over the stage play. It can be heard or enjoyed at any place. One can listen to a radio play while doing other jobs. The listening of radio play and listener’s own activity can go simultaneously. The stage play requires direct participation or physical participation of the audience.

Before the broadcast of radio play, it is recorded and passed through certain technical process. The stage play production requires the arrangement of the stage, availability of stage property, choreography, costumes etc. The performer has to take great pain in creating atmosphere befitting to event and necessary make up and choreography befitting to the characters. The radio play is spared from this entire burden as there is only expression of ‘voice’. The element of voice holds prime significance in radio play presentation.

Moreover, the presence of every character on the stage is very necessary in stage play; while in a radio play, the presence of the character with whom dialogue is held, is not necessary. The presence of the character can be imagined by mind. The listeners see the dramatic scene through their mind's eyes. Briefly, radio play presentation is quite different from stage play production and also a little bit easier than stage play presentation.

It should be noted here that the radio broadcast is done under the government vigilance. So, it has to observe certain rules and regulations concerning broadcast of programmes imposed by government. The dramatists are supposed to take into consideration the guidelines provided by government at the time of writing a radio play. 'Voice modulation' is an important technical feature in a radio play. The voice can be used in three ways in radio plays: "(1) Word (2) Word effect (3) Music".³

In the radio play, the spoken word is used for two purposes: "(1) Dialogue (2) Delineation".⁴ The voice of the artist is the personality of the character in radio play.

The radio play has no visual component. So, the loss of visual effects can be compensated with voice effect and background music. The background or setting is also created with the voice effect in radio play. Super imposed process denotes the use of recorded voice in the main play at an appropriate place.

The responsibility of the radio playwright, artist and presenter is quite different from those of stage playwright, artist and presenter. The roles of viewers and listeners also differ in the way they enjoy the play. Like short-story writer, the radio playwright has to observe economy of characters. The radio play is performed or presented in a limited or shorter time limit. The voice is the only tool or device to introduce and differentiate the characters.

Mahesh Dattani has played an important role in the evolution and enrichment of Indian English drama through his wonderful dramatic outputs. His dramatic genius is marked by diversity and dynamism. He has

also offered a significant mite in the field of radio drama. He has been writing for B.B.C. Radio 3 and 4. He was commissioned to write tales on the six hundredth anniversary of Geoffrey Chaucer, the first English poet and the author of *Canterbury Tales*. Dattani was one of the two writers selected from India. The present chapter studies critically six radio plays of Mahesh Dattani. They are as follows:

- Do the Needful – 1997
- Seven Steps Around the Fire - 1998
- The Swami and Winston - 2000
- A Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child – 2000
- Clearing the Rubble – 2000
- Uma and the Fairy Queen - 2003

Do the Needful is the earliest radio play of Dattani. The play depicts the theme of homosexuality but in a quite different way. The play was first broadcast on 14th August 1997 by BBC Radio 4.

In 1996 Mahesh Dattani was commissioned to write his first radio play for the BBC, the result was the somewhat unconventional 'romantic comedy' Do the Needful. ⁵

Since it is a radio play the dramatist discards elaborate stage description. The narrative of the play occurs at two levels – exterior and interior. Dattani writes about the society he lives in. His plays depict the dynamics and mechanism of modern urban families. Therefore, he gives way to old theatrical device to reveal the move and motives of the character. He uses newer devices like 'thought', 'mobile phone' conversations for revealing the feelings and thoughts of the characters. In this play, he employs the techniques like 'thought', phone talk etc.

The plot of the play revolves around the theme of arranged marriage between Alpesh Patel, a young boy of Gujarati parents and Lata Gowda, a Kannadiga. The parents of both the persons look concerned

regarding their marriage. The dramatic narrative shows the tension and unrest prevailing in the minds of all the characters. Alpesh Patel and Lata Gowda are the two main male-female characters of the play. Alpesh is thirty plus divorced and Lata is twenty four years old and a very notorious girl. However, she is well read lady. Alpesh's family is richer than Lata's. Gowda family is very positive about Alpesh's matrimonial proposal. Both are well to do families and claim to have good names in their respective communities. Even though, they intend to get their children married outside their community. They are brought together through matrimonial correspondence and keen to get their children married soon. Actually, the problem prevails beneath the surface level. Alpesh and Lata are unwilling to marry each other. Alpesh is a gay. He is in love with a man called Trilok, whereas Lata is quite romantic in her notion. She is in love with a man called Salim who is a terrorist. The conflicts and turmoil of their minds are brought on the surface through 'thought' technique.

Both the families are worried about their children who have ruined their family name and honour. The whole Gowda community is condemning Lata's affair with Salim. She has brought social disgrace to the family. So her family is highly eager to get Lata married as soon as possible. Lata's helplessness and her parents' wrath are well expressed in the following dialogues.

Lata: Please, Amma! Please don't insist. I agree to this! You are ruining my life.

Prema Gowda: You should have thought of our lives before sleeping with that terrorist. (CP: 122)

On the other hand, the Patels are also anxious and eager to get Alpesh married as soon as possible. His first marriage didn't work as the woman demanded divorce with Alpesh. It was not in his control to stop her. So, being inwardly reluctant about this marriage, he intends to stop his marriage. His inward is thrown out through his 'thought' during mother- son interaction over the issue of marriage.

Alpesh: Is i

Kusumben Patel: Hmm

Alpesh: (thought) Trilok, you can't say I didn't try. (CP: 125)

Both families are speculating on a suitable match between Alpesh and Lata. But the bride and the groom are wrapped in their own speculations. Lata contemplates only of her lover, Salim. Alpesh keeps on musing on his gay partner, Trilok. Both are distressed and disappointed. It is quite clear that their passions and urges rationed by the power of patriarchy and parental expectations. As a result of this, their minds and consciousness are anguished and fractured. At the very beginning of the play, they lapse into thought which reveal the tide of their passion.

the situation. Will you? I couldn't care less whether you do or don't, but I will ask you that when we meet. You would want to journey! (CP: 119)

The feelings of Alpesh are expressed in his following utterances.

Alpesh:

Thought) Will you understand me? How much do you really care for me? How much do I really care for you? Do I understand? Is it any easier for you? (CP: 119-20)

His mother insists him to marry as it is important to get married without knowing the real cause of failure of his first marriage. He knows well that his gay nature was the real reason for the separation with his first wife. Being unable to tell his mother, he just warns her saying that his second marriage might fail.

Alpesh: What happened to my last marriage...

Kusumben Patel: Yes? What do you want to say?

Alpesh: You don't want it to happen again, do you?

Kusumben Patel: Are you threatening me that it will happen again? (CP: 126)

Alpesh is suggesting her that she should be prepared for the failure of his second marriage. He feels the pangs of separation with Trilok. He is haunted by his association with Trilok. He wants to do justice with his companion, Trilok. Dattani repeatedly employs code mixing technique in the narrative of his plays. At times, he uses words from Indian languages without translating them into English. After listening to Alpesh's matrimonial prospects, the liftman sings hilariously:

Liftman: (fading, away, drumming on the plywood wall of the lift and singing boisterously) Le jayenge, le jayenge, dilwale dulhaniyan le jayenge! (CP: 124)

The play also informs about certain customs and ceremonies to be undertaken at the time of starting something auspicious task. Gifting or donating money to others especially poor people and poojari, priest etc. for seeking blessings upon the task is highlighted in the play. The Patels are going to visit the Gowda family at Bangalore. Mr. Patel first gives ten rupees to liftman and one hundred and one to the poojari for a special prayer for his son Alpesh.

In the dramatic structure of play, *Do the Needful*, Dattani tries to show clash between the homosexuals' sentiments and the established and accepted notions of the society which do not permit an individual to lead life according to the call of his/her conscience. The play is built up on the idea of pushing forward the institution of conventional marriage system. Being a master dramatist, he interweaves the theme of homosexuality in the fabric of the play. He is very original in his art of adopting technique befitting to his purpose. In an attempt to depict the complex and conflicting mental spectrum,

he resorts to 'thought' device for surfacing inside story before audience properly. This is how he lays bare inside working of Lata's mind through 'thought' technique.

Lata: (thought) Salim, I know you are allowed four wives – what's the point in thinking of all that now? I will have to be content keeping you as a lover. How are we going to work this out? What if you have to go back to Kashmir? I will have to find another lover. I can have more than f
girl, I will rot in hell. Oh! Damn the Bangalore catholic school, sending me on a guilt trip now. (CP: 126-27)

After mutual matrimonial correspondence, Mr. and Mrs. Patel arrive at Gowda's portico along with their son, Alpesh to negotiate the matrimonial alliance between Alpesh and Lata.

The character of coconut vendor, Mariappa, is very interesting. His character provides both amusement and sarcasm. He is very out spoken and conventional person of the soil. His character represents the conventional spirit of the people who oppose any idea that brings change in established norms of society. He is furious upon the modern people who allow their children to marry the outside the caste and region. Lata informs Alpesh that Mariappa beats drum when he is very angry with the whole world. His daughter had run away to Bombay to join the movies. So he feels humiliated and hides his face from the villagers. The play highlights wrath and anger of the people against the industrialist for the excessive consumption of water and electricity polluting environment. The play also focuses on sandalwood smuggling going on in this part of the state. Smuggling is done by the local people. So both local and outsiders are thieves.

At her farm house, Lata watches Alpesh smoking in a private place. Alpesh requests her not to reveal it before his father. To the much surprise of Alpesh, Lata expresses her desire to smoke. Alpesh is relaxed to know her smoking habit. He fishes out a cigarette and lights it for her. Lata joins him in smoking. She exhales loud and slow. So Alpesh says '*Teri bhi*

chup, meri bhi chup.' (CP: 142) Lata doesn't understand this Hindi expression. So Alpesh puts it into English that your silence and mine as well. There after Lata and Alpesh go to see Gauri's calf. On the way, both are thinking with themselves. They are musing over the dilemma of how to present reality.

Lata: (thought) I had the chance! I couldn't lose it. I had to tell him about you, then or never.

Alpesh: (thought) What could I say, Trilok? How would I tell her reject me? (CP: 149)

The plays of Dattani offer fine post colonial analysis. They represent the problems and angst of those whose voices were silenced under the pressure of social conventions and prejudices as well as oppressive force of patriarchy. Dattani, since the publication of his first play, *Where There's a Will*, has been constantly attempting to present such themes and issues under the hidden agenda of sensitizing the mass about the problems faced by the colonized class in our society. He focuses on the tension and turbulence of the characters resulting from demolition of human hopes and aspiration under the name of healthy socio-cultural practices.

There is a constant conflict between an individual self with the collective self. In other words, the individual self is trying to acquire as much freedom as possible from the grip of collective or societal self. God has given us free will but the society doesn't allow an individual to exercise his/her free will.

The dramatic narrative progresses through interior and exterior spaces. Actually, they are the two levels of the mental spectrum of parents and mental spectrum of the children. But the interior space dealing with individual's free will and choice is hidden. It is yearning to express under the weight of exterior space dealing with the society/parental mindset. What parents think good/proper is revealed through exterior mode. And what Alpesh/Lata thinks is revealed through interior channel. Exterior device can be deemed as the curtain to veil the internal reality of human mind and psyche.

When Devraj Gowda asks Alpesh to speak something about their press, Alpesh feels that nothing is worth sharing. The father being a snob and hypocrite, he insists Alpesh to present the glorious saga of his achievement. Alpesh is honest and unassuming. So he is not inclined to impress Gowda family by telling a lie. Alpesh thinks to himself.

Alpesh: (thought). What could I say to them? Daddy had his colleague approve the loan. We paid enough bribes to get the damn thing off. We hired the underworld to have Grandpa's tenants every time I speak, I am lying (Pause) In case you think I am

(CP: 136)

In the same way, when Kusumben Patel asks Lata what she can cook, she replies to herself something different.

Lata:

(thought) Salim, you will like my lamb biryani. (CP: 134-35)

The conflict between Alpesh and Lata represents the conflict of the gay persons and women against oppressive power of particular social setup. They are crushed under the burden of patriarchal forces. It is observed:

Dattani once again points at the shared spaces between women and gay men, both under the tremendous hegemony of 'mainstream' patriarchal society that forces them to conform and live lives that are alien to their nature.⁶

Thus, the play *Do the needful* focuses on the shared spaces between women and the gay in the society which predominantly promotes the patriarchal family set up and discourages any change that challenges established and existing structure of it. Alpesh and Lata are compelled to marry each other by their parents. Parents' idealism is confronted with

children's individualism through the exterior and interior dramatic decoding devices. Lata is craving for Salim and Alpesh is pining for Trilok. It is practically impossible for both of them to fulfill their dreams and desire. Socio-cultural tradition prevents them from doing so.

Both, Alpesh and Lata are aching due to their strong passion. They are yearning to express their feelings. While moving towards cowshed, both look puzzled and perplexed due to their commitments elsewhere. But it is Lata who takes initiative of revealing truth. She tells Alpesh.

Lata: Look. I don't want to marry you; I am in love with someone else.

Alpesh (thought) That was good of her. (Pause speech) Can we sit down somewhere? (CP: 149)

Lata asks him to keep on walking. They are going to see Gauri's calf. Alpesh is lost in thinking. He reacts upon Lata's confession.

Alpesh: (Thought) she was waiting for me to say something. May be I should have told her about you. After all, she was decent enough to bring up her Salman or Salim or whatever. At that moment very moment, I imagine, our parents were sort of clinching the deal." (CP: 149)

Lata's candid expression of her love for someone else facilitates private conversation regarding the fulfillment of their hidden motives.

Alpesh: Good, I am glad you don't want to marry me. Because I don't want to marry you either." (CP: 149)

Lata is confused on hearing this response from Alpesh. She feels that she has hurt him. That is why he says so. But soon he explains;

Alpesh: Bullshit. I am glad you brought it up. If you hadn't, I would have.

After making their intentions clear, both start discussing over how to avoid the marriage. They are contriving a scheme to discard their

marriage for having the persons of their own choices as the partners. Alpesh suggests her to tell her mother that she doesn't like him. Lata feels that it won't work.

Alpesh: Oh no, why don't you just tell her you are in love with someone?

Lata: Look. I don't think you understand. They know. They just want me to get married to anyone. I have no say in the matter. (CP: 151)

In this way, Alpesh and Lata are applying their brains for avoiding their marriage. They can't derive out any workable solution. Lata also contemplates over the plan of running away and makes arrangement for this. However, she postpones the idea of running away. She moves towards the cowshed and hears the sound of someone groaning. She goes to Alpesh's room to herself. She is shocked to see Alpesh being homo and exploiting Mali for sexual pleasure. But soon, she is consoled on his being a gay. Mali is highly frightened and beseeching her not to reveal it before anyone. Lata assures him that she will not do so. As Lata tells Mali “

Oh, Mali I am so happy you are alive. I thought the land grabbers or
”

(CP: 154) There is a bond of affection between Lata and Mali, servant at the farm house. They played and ran here and there in their childhood period.

The play *Do the Needful* portrays the pain and suffering of the gay and the woman whose nature is not corresponding with the established pattern of behavior of our patriarchal society. They do cow tow before the oppressive forces of socio-cultural practices and also do needful. It is observed:

The possibility of the shared spaces common to women and homosexuals is put to active use here with the identities of its protagonists. The common oppressor is the patriarchal structure that refuses

to allow any space for the growth of individual beyond a set pattern of gender determined roles.⁷

Again Lata tries to run away. Mali stops her. He asks her not to dishonor family and requests her to marry Alpesh. After a little later, Lata changes her plan and says;

Lata: Why should I run away? Mali has made me see sense. (CP: 155)

She further tells Alpesh.

Lata: What was the Hindi expression you'd used? Something about (CP: 155)

In this way, Alpesh, being homo, appears to her as a safer

Pause

Alpesh: No, I mean, no, I can't marry you.

Lata: Are you going to say no to your parents then?

Alpesh: No. (Pause) Will you bring Mali as your dowry? (CP: 155-56).

They decide to marry each other as per their parents' desires under the hidden agenda of *teri bhi chup, meri bhi chup*. Lata takes Mali with her after her marriage. She brings Mali as her dowry. They become ready to marry each other with twin aims of making their parents happy and hiding their relationship which society forbids. In this way, they decide to live under the same roof and sleep on same bed providing full space to individual's free will. Even during the wedding function, Alpesh thinks of Trilok and Lata ponders on the possibilities of seeing Salim in Bombay. At the end of the play, Lata and Alpesh go out but to the different places. They discuss about their reunion after their business is over.

Lata: Where do we meet up?

Alpesh: You've got my cell phone number, haven't you? Give me a call
(CP: 158)

The play ends with Alpesh thinking of Trilok and Lata thinking of Salim.

Lata: (Thought) Salim!

Alpesh: (Thought) Trilok! (CP: 158)

Homosexuality has remained one of the major motifs in the dramatic works of Mahesh Dattani. He has courage of conviction to discuss openly what he observes in the society wheather it is communal prejudices or gender discrimination, gay relationship or romantic relationship, sexual colonialism or prostitution, consumerism or communal discrimination or apathy towards AIDS affected people.

The play *Do the Needful* decodes the complexity of homosexual relationship in our Indian society which looks contemptuously at such relationship. The main characters of the play Alpesh and Lata are quite unconventional in their outlook and their parents are people of quite conventional bent of mind. Alpesh and Lata are romantic but in a different way. The play ends with a marriage between Alpesh and Lata. But it is a compromise against the burden of patriarchal social order. It is observed:

ike all the best love stories, the hero and heroine end up getting married, but the road to marital bliss is full of the most unexpected twists and turns. For me, this was the joy of working on Mahesh's script: his writing, whilst taking on a conventional form and being readily accessible to an audience, never fails to challenge and surprise. And whilst the play may be set in Indian within the conventions of 'arranged marriages', its wider

The title of the play is very brief and attractive. It is very suggestive and also a little ironical. Under the pressure of circumstances, Lata and Alpesh are forced to marry each other. They don't see any way out of escaping from the compulsion of arranged marriage. So, they think out a midway by agreeing upon the norms of society outwardly and disagreeing inwardly. They are tied up with wedlock. But there is no lock to their hearts. The play alerts us about the excessive parental pressure for conforming to the tradition and conventions of society.

The play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* depicts deplorable condition of hijra (eunuch) in our society. The play begins with chanting of Sanskrit mantras at the wedding ceremonies. It is a gruesome tragedy in the life of a transsexual and also who loves and shows sympathy towards marginalized eunuch community. The transsexuals are not considered as respectable and acceptable human beings. They dress up themselves in women's costumes but they are not considered women. Transsexual is neither he nor she. It is neuter gender. So pronoun 'it' is used for denoting their neuter gender. The human identity of the eunuch is enveloped under the cloaks of myths and conventions. Dattani observes:

Hindi, Persian and Arabic, literally meaning 'neither male nor female.' Another legend traces their ancestry to the

exception. The purpose of this case study is to show their position in our society. Perceived as the lowest of the low, they yearn for family and love. The two events in mainstream Hindu culture where their presence is acceptable- marriage and birth- ironically are the very same privileges denied to them by man and nature.

Not for them the seven rounds witnessed by the fire god, eternally binding man and woman in matrimony, or the blessings of 'May you be the mother of a hundred sons.' (CP: 10-11)

The theatre has ability to lay bare the dynamics of human relationship and sensibility and conflict that evolve out of it. It explores what is lying at the bottom of every human heart. It surfaces the truth covered beneath various modes of behavior as well as cloaks of myths and conventions. Theatrical art helps to reveal multiplicity of themes and unfolding varied layers of human identity and love. Mahesh Dattani seems to wrestle with a problem that is the characteristic feature of the postcolonial writers.

The plot of the play revolves around the investigation of murder mystery of Kamla, a beautiful eunuch. Uma Rao, the daughter of vice-chancellor and wife of superintendent of police, Suresh Rao is a student of sociology and doing her research on the life of the eunuch. She goes to the jail to meet Anarkali, another eunuch who is falsely accused as murderer.

Uma gets interested in the murder mystery of Kamla and feels sympathy for Anarkali in particular and eunuch community in general. She is a very sensitive lady. She develops emotional affinity and bond with the eunuch. She is grieved at the mal treatment given to them in the jail. She asks her husband;

Uma: Yes, why did you arrest her?

Suresh: (off) Didn't you go through the file? (Sound of gargling)

Uma:

(CP: 9-10)

Suresh doesn't have any sympathy for the eunuch and advises her wife not to develop good relationship with Anarkali. He calls them liar and *castrated degenerate men*. (CP: 10) But Uma is greatly interested and believes that Anarkali is not a liar. She hasn't killed Kamla. So she raises the very subtle and logical question.

Uma: What is the evidence against Anarkali?

Suresh avoids answer as he is not interested in the release of Anarkali. In fact, he is wooing mood at present.

The eunuch is also human beings like us. They also long for human relationships. They want to bind themselves in the relationships of brother, mother, sister, father etc.

Anarkali: (Sympathetically) Oh. (smokes) if you were a hijra, I would have made you my sister.

Uma: Oh. Thank You. (CP: 13)

Uma symbolizes the centre and Anarkali symbolizes the margin. The play presents social dichotomy through their characters in an interesting way. Anarkali is hopeless and frustrated. However, after befriending with Uma, she starts anticipating her release. She wants Uma's help in coming out of jail. She beseeches her for the support.

Anarkali: Get me out of here.

(Pause) Sister, I did not kill Kamla. You believe me, No?

(Pause) You don't believe me? You doubt your own sister?

Uma: Er-no. I do (CP: 13)

Anarkali believes that Uma has got wealth and power. So she can help her get herself released from the jail. She is disappointed when Uma expresses her inability to help her.

Anarkali: Then say that. Don't pretend to be my sister.

Uma: I don't have any power! (CP: 13)

In the play, Dattani explores plurality of subalternity. The two dimensions of marginalization-the one sexual subaltern and the other

gendered subaltern are explored dexterously in the play. Anarkali and Uma Rao represent these two facets of subalternity. If Anarkali is biological subaltern, Uma is gendered subaltern. Uma wants to help and pay for the bail of Anarkali, but she has no money. She can't demand money from her husband for this purpose. She has no such liberty as such. She explains:

Uma: Here. That is all the money I have. Even if, I wanted to, I couldn't explain to my husband why I am paying for your bail. (CP: 15)

If we observe very minutely, we'll find that the condition of Uma is also not much better than that of Anarkali. Both of them are sailing in the same boat which is swayed by the winds of social myth and pride. Uma tries to unmask the real condition of Anarkali. But surprisingly, she unveils her own subaltern hood before her husband. Anarkali points it to her in a very subtlest way.

Anarkali: Maybe you are unhappy than I am.

Uma: Look, I want to help you but I don't know how.

Anarkali: If you give them money, they will release me.

Uma: But I can't bail you out! (CP: 14)

The play highlights the brutality and cruel treatment of our cops to the eunuch community. The helplessness of Anarkali is highlighted in the following dialogues.

Uma: You can't do that! You have to report to the police station.

Anarkali: They will kill me also if I tell the truth. If I don't tell the truth, I will die in jail. (CP: 14)

During the process of unmasking the murder mystery of Kamla, Uma Rao displays various merits of head and heart. She is convinced that Anarkali is innocent. She has been falsely accused for the crime.

Uma is investigating for academic pursuit. But now it is not merely academic venture. She is deeply attached to eunuch community and receives acute pain after knowing the pathetic plight of the eunuch community

Munswamy constantly requests Uma not to involve in the affairs of hijras. Despite this, she goes to Champa's house to know the truth. Since Uma is embodied with essential human goodness and qualities, she also develops emotional bondage with Champa.

She takes money from her father and meets Champa.

Champa: Have you brought money for her bail?

Uma: Yes.

Champa: Oh, may you have a hundred children! I knew that you are really a social worker. (CP: 24)

Thus, Uma hands over money to Champa for getting Anarkali's bail. In the beginning, Uma doubts that the cause of murder is competition between Kamla and Anarkali. But later on, she realizes that it is not the real cause of the murder. When Uma and Champa are conversing, Salim comes over there for getting one particular portrait.

Salim: You can keep all that. Let me first go through her trunk. And I didn't give her anything. (CP: 26)

On knowing Uma being the daughter-in-law of the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Salim hurriedly leaves the place to avoid further inquiry. Uma has become very curious to know about Salim and the thing he was searching for. Champa informs her that Salim is the bodyguard of the minister, Mr. Sharma. He used to come for Kamla every day. Surrendering to the Uma's threat, Champa reveals that Salim was searching for the photograph. This adds more complexity and element of suspense to the plot of the play. Uma is very restless and anxious to meet Salim. Escorted by constable Munswamy, she goes to minister's house to inquire about his

relationship with Kamla. She wants to meet Salim's wife as she heard that Salim's wife had killed Kamla.

Mr. Sharma:

and his wife found out?

Uma: Possible. I am just checking out the story. One of the hijras who has been arrested says it could be Salim's wife who killed Kamla.

Mr. Sharma: It is all very disgusting. (CP: 30-31)

During this conversation, Subbu, the son of minister, appears and makes strange statement:

Subbu: Are you going to arrest Salim?

Mr. Sharma: Go back to your room, Subbu. You are unwell.

Subbu: Please don't arrest him. He is a good man.

Mr. Sharma has arranged Subbu's marriage with a beautiful lady. But he is unwilling to marry any one else. Uma tries to talk with him in a friendly manner. Subbu's utterances and behavioral patterns also create some more complications. The end of the play is very depressing and disgusting. It reveals the truth of murder of Kamla. The dramatist unveils the mystery of Kamla's murder during the wedding ceremonies. It is revealed that Mr. Sharma got Kamla murdered as his son, Subbu loved her. Displeased by this, he got Kamla murdered. There is an occasion of wedding ceremonies of Subbu with a beautiful lady. As usual, a group of hijras including Anarkali and Champa appeared at this occasion. Uma Rao, Suresh Rao and many other celebrities are present as the guests there in. Mr. Sharma suspects the intention of Uma Rao. It is because of this, Mrs. Sharma looks nervous on the most auspicious moment of his life i.e. the marriage of his son. He orders security staff for not allowing the hijras into the campus. Uma Rao convinces Mr. Sharma saying that it is bad luck to turn away a hijra on wedding or birth. Champa thanks and blesses Uma. "May you have hundred sons?" (CP: 38)

Champa seeks the permission of Mr. Sharma for singing and dancing as it was the usual way of blessing the house and the handsome couple. When the hijras' dance begins, Mr. Sharma requests the young couple to come there. Subbu, seeing dancing Anarkali, recalls the image of diseased Kamla. He becomes restless and fanatic. He snatches Suresh's gun and cries out;

Subbu: I am leaving you all! You can't keep me away from Kamla. (CP: 39)

Everybody tries to persuade him but he is mad and adamant. Anarkali tries to subdue his agitated state of mind by giving a photo. It was Polaroid picture that Subbu and Kamla had taken soon after their private wedding in some remote temple. Beena Agrawal rightly observes;

As soon as Subbu looks at the photograph, the living paraphernalia suspends and the dead kamla assumes the role and significance of living entity governing and guiding the entire scene. ⁹

In a state of utter distress and despair, he kills himself crying "You killed her." (CP: 40) With the death, murder mystery is solved silencing Uma Rao. She is unable to reveal it publicly. The play ends with Uma Rao's (voice- The case was hushed up and was not even reported in the newspapers. Champa was right. The police made no arrests. Subbu's suicide was written off as an accident. The photograph was (CP: 42)

Thus, the play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* artistically unearths the shameful of our public thoughts and brutality of private thoughts. It does not delineate only the subalterns of the eunuch but also of women. The creator of this work gives vent to his anguish against the irresistible forces of social apathy and injustice towards realization of human identity of the eunuch community. Uma Rao is the mouth piece of the dramatist and shares anguish with its creator.

The play gives the message that the eunuch is human being as man and women can be. Their hearts are full of milk of human love and sympathy. It is a grave crime that they are denied human love and identity. Their hearts also throb for love and joy of life. Nature curses them with denial of sexual competency, but society curses them more cruelly with their social boycott. They are finished with social boycott and stigma. Human soul of the eunuch is bruised and bleeding. Longing for love and relationship is the keynote voice of this artistic work.

Mahesh Dattani projects the pathetic plight of the eunuch community without offering any suitable solution. The treatment meted out to the eunuch reflects the social and cultural notions. The attitude of the elitist towards the subaltern is very mean and disgusting. Mr. Suresh Rao looks at them with disgusting attitude. The play is set in Indian metropolitan environment and scenes moves from pose area to peripheral parts of the city. These two localities symbolize the two concepts of 'centre' and 'margin'. The play highlights the creator's awareness of social hierarchical structure, scenario and changing perceptions.

The play *The Swami and Winston*, another radio play, also probes into the death of a member of the English aristocracy. Again, Uma Rao is doing her research on violence in India. The play was first broadcast on 3rd June 2000 at 3 p.m. on B.B.C. Radio 4 under the directorship of Jeremy Mortimer. The dramatic narrative of the play moves ahead through exterior and interior device. At the opening of the play, lady Montefiore and the driver are negotiating in the car.

Lady Montefiore: Surely this isn't the place! I know an ashram when I see one.

Driver: No Madam. This is the famous Bull temple. All tourists come to

Lady Montefiore, an English lady of good socio-economic background, visits India. It is explicit that she is not a tourist. She has come to

India to see the beauty and charm of the land, but she has come to find out her brother, Charles Montefiore who has settled down in an ashram in Karnataka. Actually, Charles was fascinated by Advaita Philosophy of India. He met an Indian named Sitaram Trivedi in London. This man impressed Charles with the discourse on Indian Advaita philosophy. Eventually, he turned out to be the most racist and sham philosopher. Charles joined the Ashram and dived deep with the spiritual fervor of the Hindu religion. Even after the death of his sister, he absorbs shock and finds happiness and joy in the life of ashram in India. He asserts that he is experiencing happiness in ashram which he has never experienced earlier. At the bidding of Swamiji, he recites *Shanti path* for the audience. After chanting *Shanti path* in Sanskrit, he begins his discourse in English.

wanted me to go back to England with her. She loved me and she thought she knew what was good for me, she felt this somehow wasn't na
as she called it. I tried to explain to her that I was a deeply

things. But here in this ashram I have found happiness, I have never experienced before. (Applause from some members of the audience) I feel sad that someone got something out of killing my sister. Nobody would want her dead for any other reason. She was a warm and wonderfu

miss her terribly, but India and Swamiji have taught me how to deal with this loss. I am still a happy person. Dhanyavada. (CP II: 312)

Lady Montefiore, with impressive background, was carrying with her dog named Winston who is lost somewhere. She feels nervous and makes announcement of reward of five thousand pounds to the person whosoever informs her about Winston. She visits different places of

Bangalore in a hired taxi. She looks deeply concerned about the loss of her dog. After the disappearance of her dog, her reactions are very sharp and suspicious. They throw lights on the two things- first her attachment and affinity with Winston. She wants to find out her dog first and then wants to go to the ashram or whatever it is. Therefore, she asks her driver to take the taxi to the temple first where her dog was separated from her.

Driver: Oh, Madam. Shall I take you to the ashram? Big ashram?

Lady Montefiore: Not the ashram (spelling it out) To the bull temple. Take me to the bull temple. (CPII: 292-93)

Secondly, this incident also reveals the distrust of foreign tourist in our cops. She tries to retrieve her dog by using her own resources as she doesn't trust police department. She explains, "I don't trust your police. I have made my own arrangements, thank you. I instructed the hotel manager to advertise in the local papers. I am offering a reward of five thousand pounds." (CPII: 292)

Dattani's plays are rooted in diverse themes, technique and structures. The play *The Swami and Winston* portrays the theme of violence and crime. Since this is a radio play, the dramatist spares the use of techniques and stagecraft which was employed in his stage plays. The story is told in a simple and straight forward way by using exterior and interior devices. Along with the sound of spoken words, the sound of the rainfall is heard again and again in the play. The rain fall lessens the speed of the vehicles and creates some inconvenience in her search for her brother Charles.

Lady Montefiore feels enormous relief and great joy at the rediscovery of her dog Winston. Amidst the dreadful rain, they are moving in a car on a lonely street. The driver is worried and anxious to get her back to the hotel. When they reached near the bull temple, suddenly the car coughs a little and comes to a halt. The driver goes in search of a mechanic in the heavy rain locking the car door behind him leaving Lady Montefiore and

Uma: (Speaking quickly to have her say before it is interrupted) You did. You never let me complete my thesis!

Suresh: Sweet heart let us be clear about this. Your professor didn't like
(CPII: 297)

The murder of Lady Montefiore enhances the actions of the play. Despite Suresh's reluctance, Uma goes with her husband to the police station as she is greatly interested in such cases. Actually, she is a very kind and considerate lady. She doesn't succumb to the forces that prevent her responding to the call of humanity. She shares the anguish with the dramatist against the ill treatment meted out to the marginalized sections of our society. After reading the sad news of her death in the news paper, her brother Charles approaches to the police station. He expresses his displeasure for not informing him about her death. So, Suresh explains that the police don't know who you are in what way he is connected to her.

Charles: She was my sister. I cannot believe it. I had to read about it in the paper this morning!

Suresh: No, we didn't find any address. Only a book with phone numbers, all foreign. Not a single Indian phone number or address, except a card of the hotel she was staying in. (CPII: 298)

On Charles' further query, Suresh replies that her dog Winston is being looked after by one of the constable named Munswamy. The police department assumes it as a robbery case and makes the arrest of some people belonging to Muslim community in that area. The police have also arrested her driver Maqsood thinking involved in her murder someway. Uma dislikes this act of arresting him even there wasn't any loss of money. She decides to meet the driver and tries to know the truth. Suresh forbids constable Munswamy helping her when he is on duty. In the absence of her husband, she goes to the police station to meet the driver accompanied by constable Munswamy. The driver is honest and innocent. He wasn't involved

proverb *Muh me Ram Bagal me Churi*. Sitaram Trivedi is one such character in the play. He is a fake philosopher. He uses religion as an instrument for material benefits. Uma does her best to solve the murder mystery of lady Montefiore. After meeting the driver, Uma, escorted by Munswamy, goes to see Sitaram Trivedi, a north Indian. Munswamy informed her that he found the dog Winston. So Uma wonders how he has found the dog. Uma meets Sitaram Trivedi at his place and tries to find out the truth. She also clarifies that she is doing her research on violence in India. Therefore, she is simply fascinated to find out the motive for her murder. Sitaram Trivedi explains circumstances in which dog was found. He puts, "I feed the poor people at the temple every day. I too have dogs. So, one of the street boys who found the

(CPII: 301)

Actually, Sitaram Trivedi invited the lady for lunch after finding the dog and had a long chitchat. He also informed Uma Rao that she did not live in England although she was an English lady. He added that England had very strict rules about the bringing of the animals. Sitaram knows all about the lady. He is the murderer of the lady. Despite this, he behaves as a quite innocent and amicable person. In the beginning, Uma is also pleased with his response and behavior.

Sitaram Trivedi: (Laughing) A woman with your fine background needs all the encouragement. I will be happy to tell you what I know of the dear departed English lady.

Uma: Thank you. I appreciate that. (CPII: 302)

Sitaram Trivedi is a pseudo religious person. He does religious practice for the material benefits. The horror of partition still haunts him. He is blinded by his fundamentalism. He is a very clever, cunning, cruel, and scheming person. While talking on European travelling to India. He observes in the following terms,

Sitaram Trivedi: There are two types of Europeans. Ones who understand and appreciate the depth and complexity of Hindu philosophy and the others who feel threatened by it. The world will realize the greatness of the Hindu way of life. Wait and see. It is a question of time. They can't be blind for ever even if they choose not to see. They have to open their eyes sooner or later. We shall have our temples all over the world. (CP II: 303)

Dattani tries to explain that how religious fundamentalism challenges the call of humanity and causes hatred among the people for other religion. They try to enlist the support of others by arguing that they are establishing the pride of their community. After meeting Sitaram Trivedi, both Uma and Munswamy feel that he is a treacherous and dangerous man. On the same day afternoon, Uma also goes to see Charles, the brother of Lady Montefiore, at Swami's ashram. Strangely enough, the car comes to a halt on the Whitefield road.

Uma: Interesting that it stopped just a kilometer away from the temple.

Munswamy: This is the very good place to kill the English lady. Only fields, no houses or shops. It was raining so heavily that there was no traffic on the road. The road was filled with water. We don't know whether he came in a car or from the fields.

Uma: Or from the temple. (CP II: 306)

This area is surrounded by sugarcane fields which is quite suitable and safe for hiding spot. Uma walks towards the field and finds a raincoat. Uma expresses her wrath against the police department saying that people don't have trust in police. The people don't tell anything due to the fear of harassment. She is sure that the raincoat is from England as she has seen it in a movie. She is also sure that 'it belongs to a man.' (CP: II, P 308) Soon after this, Uma and Munswamy ran into Sitaram Trivedi who leads a procession chanting of 'Jai *sri Ram, Sita Ram*'. He exclaims, "I know you are

trying to appease the minorities. I too believe in peace. After all we are very
(CPII: 309)

He uses religion to fulfill his mal intention. He tries to deceive the innocent people by arousing their religious faith and pride .As he asserts, "It is my dharma to protect what we hold sacred. We must re-establish
(CP: II, P. 309)

Uma and Munswamy start making inquiry of Charles suspecting his hands in the murder of Lady Montefiore as the rain coat belonged to Charles.

Charles: But why?... Surely you don't believe I killed her do you?

Uma: I don't. But you are the only one, it seems, who stands to gain from her death.You inherit her wealth and property. All five hundred acres of prime hertfordshire land! (CPII: 317-18)

Charles has become full time ashramite and has recovered from the shock of her sister's death. He has become the staunch devotee at the ashram. He wears *dhoti* and does ritual in the ashram. He believes that swamiji stands for peace and love. He has married an Indian girl called Radha and has also applied for Indian citizenship. Uma wants to have a word with him in private, but he denies of having any space for private talk in the ashram. He suggests her to join him at the market way where he goes to sell vegetable in a bullock cart which he calls Rolls Royce. Uma has also some past memories associated with the ashram. During her childhood, she used to visit the ashram with her mother, who was the devotee of the Swami.

On Uma's further inquiry, it is revealed that Charles gave the coat to the swamiji. Charles believes that swamiji was at the Bull Temple when her sister was assassinated. Munswamy is very furious upon swami.He wants to inform the police for getting swami arrested. Listening this, Charles reacts,"Arrest him? Just because he was at the Bull Temple and lost his raincoat when my sister died? You might as well arrest scare crow." (CPII: 318)

Charles is worried about some documents which were in his sister's bag. Uma asks about the contents of those documents. Charles replies, "I-I can't. I promised her I would keep it a secret. But I guess it doesn't matter. Now that she is dead. She wanted me to go back and look after our estate. I didn't want any of it. So we had to set up two trusts. For one of the trusts dealing with my share of wealth, I had the ashram the beneficiary, with swamiji as the senior trustee. So you see, he had no reason to kill my sister. He has no motive to kill her." (CP11: 318-19)

When swami, Uma and Charles were conversing, Radha, Charles's wife comes there with milk for swami. Uma helped her that evening when she fainted. She is observing her vow of silence. A little later, she falls to the ground as she has consumed the poisonous leaves of *dhatoora*. Uma and Charles are taking her to the St. Mary's hospital in the car. Uma explains the complexity of the murder's plot.

Uma: It's not your sister's death which is important to him. But yours.

Charles: Then why was my sister killed?

Uma: He had to stop her from executing your letter of intention to brains worth and milling. That would leave the swami with everything. And he would get nothing. He wanted that raincoat to be found. That's why he threw it in the field, knowing it will be found. So he could put the suspicion on swami. Now listen to me. Once we get her to the hospital, you are going to move into a hotel in town and make sure that the police provide you with enough security until you have set up your trusts.

Charles: (CP11: 322)

Uma feels that assassins were interested in his property for setting up township or mega ashram. The political motive is also involved in this case. Suddenly the car comes to a halt as Munswamy forgot to put the fan belt on again. They are soon approached by another car. The man fires

from the gun and hits the body of the car. Soon it is discovered that the man who is firing is Sitaram Trivedi. He shouts, "Get that man to come out! (Yelling) Get out of that car Charles or I'll shoot her." (CP: II, P. 324) Radha is dying in the car. He goes to see Radha for himself. Charles grapples with Sitaram accusing him killing his sister. And the gun goes off. Sitaram falls on the ground. Sitaram is also taken into the car. Charles asks a very subtle question to Sitaram Trivedi.

Charles: How could you have killed her? How do you wake up in the morning and justify your actions to yourself.

Sitaram Trivedi: I-I didn't want any of it for myself. (his breathing is heavy)
 I-I only wanted to help the Hindu cause. (CP II: 324-25)

This is how Sitaram Trivedi is exposed as a cruel and scheming religious fundamentalist. He is dismissed as the Hindu fanatic and pseudo scholar. Suresh tries to persuade Uma to present false account of the incident before the court as he wants to prove it as an accident. This is how Suresh tries to defend Sitaram Trivedi.

Uma: of course I do. Why would he pull out a gun and shoot real bullet at us?

Suresh: In the court, I want you to say it was an accident.

Uma: The man tried to kill your wife!

Suresh: No he did not. That's just your imagination. (CP II: 325)

Uma is exceedingly a lady of good head and heart. She is kind, considerate and honest. She can't act against the call of her conscience. She plainly denies her husband to help him manipulating and fabricating the things. She boldly presents truth in the court displeasing her husband considerably. Charles is leaving for England with the dead body of his sister. He wants his sister rest peacefully in his family graveyard in England. He intends to come back for taking Winston to England. The play ends Charles

offering of reward of five thousands pound to constable Munswamy for looking after Winston. This amount, originally, was made his sister for Sitaram Trivedi for finding Winston. Uma solves another murder mystery and wins the credit of solving the two most complicated cases. The one of *hijra* case which she solved in the play *Seven Steps Around the Fire*.

The action of the play follows pyramid structure of the drama. At the beginning of the play, the lady Montefiore is seen in her search of her brother Charles, with the rise of the plot, she is slain. The play reaches to the climax when Sitaram fires on the car of Uma and Charles. At the end, Charles Montefiore is seen taking dead body of his sister to England for resting her in his family graveyard. Dattani's dramatic genius presents scheming and pschedo philosopher and exposes them eventually. He also decodes how religion is used to trick the innocent and gullible folk for getting hold of properties and political position. The play is full of surprises and suspenses. The character of Munswamy offers a significant help in arriving at the criminal all though Uma unveils the murder mystery. The play holds red torch against sham-religious minded people who are devil in the forms of saints and *sadhus*.

Dattani looks concerned with the issue of fundamentalism which hinders the call of humanity. In the play *Final Solutions*, he delves deep on the issue which causes wrath and hatred for the members of other religious segments. People like Sitaram Trivedi can go on any extreme for their self-interest and self-motive. The play shows us how such people attract other expatriate millionaire Indian get them offering donation for the ashram, temple etc. Sitaram Trivedi uses religion as tool to get his own motives fulfilled. He is very shrewd, cunning, crafty and cruel. His religious hypocrisy and shamness is unmasked by Uma. Sitaram Trivedi stands for all those who exploit other in the name of religion. They want to build ashrams and temples at home and abroad for gratifying their self interest.

Dattani observes the contemporary society minutely and presents them through his theatrical mechanism. He presents true picture of

society by capturing the nature of an individual and contemporary social culture.

A Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child is a very brief but a moving radio play. It was commissioned as the part of 2000 tales, a landmark drama series on the occasion of six hundredth anniversary of Chaucer, the father of English poetry and the author of the *Canterbury Tales*. Dattani was one of two authors selected for writing plays on this event from India. The present play is one of 2000 Tales which were retold to groups of travelers who were compelled to stay night together at a service station on a motor way in England. Directed by Jeremy Mortimer, the play was first broadcast on 29 October, 2000 at 6.30 p.m. on BBC 3. Jeremy Mortimer puts this in the following terms:

2000 Tales created a vibrant, entertaining and challenging piece of contemporary drama which reflected topical concerns as defined by the leading writers of today.¹⁰

Along with the main issues of human sensibility and social stigma, Dattani also weaves into the fabric of the plot some other issues like racial discrimination, the poverty, negligence on the part of government administration setup, the impact of drought in this play. Gujarat is consisted of several regions. Saurashtra and Kutch are its two distinctive adjoining regions due to their rich socio-cultural heritage. Dattani has tried to show the pride and spirit of these people through two different plays. The play *Clearing the Rubble* portrays the plight of the earth quake affected people of Kutch region, whereas the present play also throws some light on the plight of drought affected people of Saurashtra region, while dealing with the human sensibility that crosses beyond the boundary of class and caste as well as language and nation. It doesn't respond to any such barriers or bump. Instead of depiction of urban middle class family, Dattani deviates from it and depicts the miserable condition of the poor and lower castes people of our society in this play. He

invests his theatrical art to reflect upon what he observes and views in day to today social life.

Theatre is not a secluded art, but it develops and blossoms in the vicinity of social scenario and scene. It captures the societal view with its mode of behavior and patterns as well as tide of changes and challenges. Dattani focuses more on human psyche and emotional upheavals in the mind of the character. He also tries to do justice with them. It is his attempt of justification that makes his dramas more live and powerful. It is observed:

He could, in a sense be seen as one of the strands that carry forward the tradition of Indian theatre through the necessary dynamics of change and innovation.¹¹

The play is designed in the form of 'monologue' a literary device to reveal the secrets and motives of the character. With the help of effective use of dramatic monologue, Dattani provides us an insight into the feelings and thoughts of the protagonist, Anna Gosweb. Dramatic monologue is defined as

A literary work which consists of a revealing one-way conversation by a character or persona, usually directed to a second person or to an

12

The 'dramatic monologue' is generally used in poetry and drama, whereas 'stream of consciousness' is a fictional device. The term 'stream of consciousness' was coined by William James, who was a pioneer American psychologist and philosopher and also brother of novelist Henry James. In the present play, there is a one-way conversation by a single character named Anna Gosweb to an imaginary audience of the radio play. The plot of the play is enhanced through her consciousness. The play reminds us of the technique of dramatic monologue employed in Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess*.

Anna Gosweb, a quite young English lady, revisits India after twenty years. She narrates the tale of her journey back to India especially to a village called Kapaswadi in Saurashtra where her erstwhile lover named Jaman lived. The plot of the play moves further in the form of memoir. She had developed an affair with this poor labourer during her first visit to India. Following letter of help during drought from Jaman, she arrives to find his village in drought affected Saurashtra for providing help to him. Despite some odds and obstacles, she arrives to the village of Saurashtra where Jaman lived. Unfortunately, he had died before she rescued him. But the charms and the beauty lie in her resolution to rescue his family. The title of the play is also very interesting and appropriate. It indicates her efforts to feed the daughter of her past boy friend, Jaman. The irony of the situation is that she rescues the daughter of her past lover, while her own daughter is unattended and unaided.

Anna Gosweb came in contact with Jaman, a labourer of Saurashtra, in Goa. Being very poor, he went to Goa for some stray jobs. He was handsome short and well built man. He had a daughter and wife to feed. He met Anna there and served her as a servant. He escorted her to the beaches and did light camp fire for her. Anna puts; "He escorted me to the beaches and old part of the town. He protected me from drug peddlers and con men. I didn't take his address when we parted. But he wanted mine. (CP11: 565)

They were drawn closer and developed friendship. Ultimately, their friendship resulted into a sharing bed together. He took her address on the paper napkin, thinking to correspond with her in future. Anna didn't expect that he would write her ahead as he himself was not able to write any language. But almost after two decades, it so happened that God failed to favour people of Saurashtra in the form of rain. There occurred drought in this part of Gujarat. People were struggling for food and water. Since Jaman belonged to the poor class family, he had a great struggle for food and water. In the hours of crisis, he recalled Anna and wrote her a letter in English which was originally drafted by the postman of the village. Jaman Gopalia wrote,

“Dear Miss Anna Gosweb, I hope your God has been kind to you and favoured you with a good husband and many children. Our Gods have failed us, or should I say that He did not succeed in reaching us. They were too busy favouring our brethren in the cities and of course, the higher caste people of the villages. I have never begged you or anyone else for anything in all my life. I cannot bear the humiliation any longer of seeing my wife and child
(CPII: 555-56)

Anna was wonder struck to receive his letter as she had never thought of it. When she read, she was grieved to learn the pathetic condition of her past friend and soon decides to fly to India and saves her friend and his family. She immediately manages money for him. She explains; “I drew all the cash I had in my bank account. About four thousand pounds, I wasn’t too sure whether traveller’s cheques would be of any use where I wanted to go. I got
(CPII: 566)

The play can also be interpreted from the point of view of ‘guilt’ and ‘redemption’. She feels a sense of guilt due to her relationship rather ‘one whom I had met several years ago in Goa- one of those wild trips that, at nineteen, you think will take you to paradise and nirvana-. (CP:565) Thus, she was carrying the weight of this guilt for these many years. So when she receives a letter from Jaman sending him money, she grabs this opportunity for freeing herself from the guilt inhabited in her consciousness and as a redressal of loss. It is observed:

These two distinctive spaces of conflict dramatized in the play, extend the impression of splited stage and in that process the text of the play has become self-
13

She arrived in Gujarat by railway journey. She peered through the thick glass of the train to see the miserable sight caused by drought. She narrates, “The land was tawny, deathly and broken down to flakes of dunk- of dried earth. The number of carcasses strewed around

increase as the hours go by, and we get closer to Saurashtra.” (CP: 566)

Anna knew the topical and social setup of Saurashtra before she left for India. She knew that there was scarcity of water and other necessities. The water level was so deep that it was impossible to access it. She also knew that Jaman was lower caste Hindu and his family had no direct access to water due to their lower caste. The events that pass through Anna Gosweb consciousness can be compartmentalized into two groups. Social stigma of liaison between Anna Gosweb and Jaman Gopalia and the plight of the poor and lower caste people in Indian villages. She expresses her wrath and anguish against the injustice done to the lower caste people. She puts; ... There were patches of green land, the ones I came to know that belonged to higher caste farmers. But I knew that they didn't belong to Jaman or his

(CP: 566)

At last, she got down from the train and started for Jaman's village. In a very hot climate, she reached to Kapaswadi, Jaman's village, with great difficulties. A woman was traveling with her. She helped her otherwise she couldn't reach. Local people walked with her and guide her to the next settlement. They were thinking that she was going to wrong man's place. She had some mineral water bottles to save a child from dehydration and certain death. In the beginning, she couldn't pronounce name Jaman properly. When she pronounced Jaman correctly, soon there was murmur of recognition followed by a long silence. She realized that her visit was in vain. She broke down that Jaman was no longer alive. As she speaks painfully, "I didn't have much strength left in me and yet I cried. I wanted to tell him about Jennifer. I wanted to show him pictures of our daughter and perhaps invite him to England to meet Jennifer. At that point I simply wanted to come back to England. If only I had tried to contact him earlier. If only I had arrived a week

(CPII: 567)

She wept saying that she should have come earlier or she should have at least contacted him earlier. Jennifer was the sign of her physical encounter with Jaman. Jaman didn't know that she became pregnant and delivered a baby. Emotional crisis of Anna Gosweb's life and existential

crisis of poor villagers of Saurashtra are counterpoised in the play. Drought has caused pain and suffering to the villagers and her physical relationship with Jaman has left her guilt ridden. She also feels pain of social disgrace for Jaman resulting from their relationship. This has prompted her to help the family of Jaman. It is an attempt to compensate the loss as much as possible. She is sensitive, frank, and a very kind lady. She candidly admits; "I could barely understand the few English words he spoke. At that time, I must confess I wasn't really paying attention. All that mattered was that I was

(CP: 565) She also avers that his financial crisis forced him to sleep with her. Otherwise he wouldn't do it. He was having a strong sense of pride and dignity. It is also revealed through Anna Gosweb's narration that she was encouraged to revisit India for sharing the secret of her relationship i.e. birth of daughter out of their relationship. She doesn't consider their relationship illicit or unethical. She is a daring and gutsy enough to bring and nurture her on the face of society.

She had apprehension that people gathered over there, would plea her for help but she understood their pride and sense of dignity after meeting Jaman's wife. Jaman's aunt and other women brought her Jaman's hut. She couldn't see the face of Jaman's wife because she had wrapped sari over her head. In the beginning, she didn't like Anna's arrival. But her daughter Shanti insisted her to allow Anna stay with them for some time. She showed them the picture of Jennifer. Shanti was pleased to see the picture of Jennifer. Anna felt connected. There was argument between Shanti and her mother about Anna. All these didn't matter for Anna as she wanted to help

can be mature about such things. I didn't have the words to tell her that it was just one of those one night things. I wanted to tell her that he slept with me only for the

great deal more out of it. More than I wanted really. I-I was only nineteen! Of

(CP: 568)

She had enough money to tide over several droughts. She wanted to speak them in Gujarati. She wanted to learn more about Jaman.

And she wanted to tell them that Jenny was in university. She had her troubles but she hoped that everything would be fine with the passage of time. Anna came out into the streets and saw that all the houses were of low caste people in that settlement. So, they were not allowed to draw water from the well nearby. Of course, now all the wells were dried up due to droughts. They had to walk three miles to fetch a pot of water. They had to wait to fetch water from relief tanker till the upper caste people had fetched. Anna didn't know as to where she would spend the night. She heard a moan of Shanti. She was dying out of starvation. She was given sugary water, but she was not able to swallow it. Her relatives were not able to heal her. Anna picked her up in her arms and started to walk for taking her to hospital nearby. Jaman's wife also joined with her. They took Shanti to Kapileshwar for hospitalizing her. Anna is very humanistic and liberal lady. She is greatly grieved to see the humiliation of the lower caste people. She can't tolerate all these. That's why she kicked off the higher caste fellow who yells at Jaman's wife for sitting next to his wife. She narrates; "A bus was about to leave. Jaman's wife stopped a little away from the bus. I felt annoyed with her for taking this caste thing so woman. He raised his voice and ordered her to get out. He turned around to gather support from other people. I planted my foot on his butt and pushed (CP: 570-71)

Ultimately, with Anna's brave and prompts efforts, they were able to reach volunteers tent. Shanti was given treatment there so her fever subsided slowly. She swallowed some gruel. It gave great relief to Anna as she could help her. She could save her life rather life of her child. She stayed with Jaman's family for months. She experienced their suffering and difficulties. She brought sweets for them from the sweet shop and necessary food stuff. Earlier, they were barely able to drink dirty water from earthen pot. Now they were drinking mineral water. In the place of little and unhygienic food, they were eating jalebis, samosas, kachoris etc. She plays with Shanti in sands and learns songs from Jaman's wife and his aunt. The days of drought were over. In the monsoon, it rained sufficiently. Anna danced in rain with

them and helped to plough the land. God has favoured them with rain. Mother Earth's breasts were swelling up once again with nourishment for her children. She was happy as she was the part of Jaman's family. She felt connected and elated. Jaman's family was at the peak of joy. Anna wanted to be there forever. But she had to go back to England. Her Jennifer fell ill. She was being hospitalized now. She is not sure about Jennifer's life. However, she had satisfaction of saving Shanti. She wants to feed her forever. She is concerned about Jennifer. She was unable to help her own daughter. The play ends with her following monologue: "I saved them. At least I saved Shanti. I fed her every day and will do so as long as I live." (CP: 572) These ending words throw ample light on her own helpless condition. She further says; "I am as helpless with Jennifer as Jaman's wife was with Shanti. There is a veil between us. But it is Jennifer who wears it. She can't see me, she can't see help. She just won't eat. She just won't eat. At least, I saved Shanti." (CP: 572)

Anna Gosweb's present narration revives her own past and brings other characters into the light. It is quite identical that dramatic narrative is greatly influenced by the concept of 'streams of consciousness'. It helps the present to mingle with past action and reconstruct the past actions. Dattani has made extensive use of juxtaposition of past with present in his plays. The beauty of this device is that it helps present unite with past and past is animated with present. There is a free flow of rhythmic prosaic expression which beautifies the thought and feelings of the character. Honesty and sincere are the eye catching characteristics of Dattani's characters. They are the hallmark qualities of his dramatic art. It is observed:

Dattani's plays deal with contemporary situations with a rare touch of honesty, sincerity and objectivity. He presents situations, and events authentically to re-create the characters as they are seen in the contemporary society. ¹⁴

Critically speaking, the play displays three facets of Anna Gosweb's personality. In the first phase, she appears to be a girl of unbridled sexual urges who tempts Jaman to sleep with her for the sexual gratification. Secondly, in her desire to help her late boy friend's family, she displays the qualities of ethical richness and human sensibility. Her heart is teeming with milk of human sympathy and compassion. In the third stage, she tries hard to help and cure Shanti, daughter of Jaman. The way she cares and cures her speaks volume of her motherhood status. In this way, the character of Anna Gosweb passes through the three different stages of evolution in the theatrical frame work of the play. It is observed: "This evolution of Gosweb's character justifies the different phases of feminism. The quest for sexual desires, the idea of guilt and shame and craving for motherhood, are the parts of universal

(CP: 158)

The play shows how human love and sympathy unite the people residing in the two opposite poles of the world even without knowing mutual languages. It is rightly said that love needs no words. It has got its own course and mode for communicating and understanding each other's feelings and thoughts.

Clearing the Rubble, a radio play for three voices, is a touching tale of the victims of natural calamity and social discrimination simultaneously. Though the play is very short, it puts long lasting impact on the minds of the listeners. Mahesh Dattani is often commissioned to write a play by BBC Radio on different occasions. After the terrific earthquake in Bhuj, Gujarat in January, 2001, he was commissioned to write a play by BBC Radio for broadcasting on the first anniversary of the tragedy. The play *Clearing the Rubble* was first aired on 17th January 2002 at 2.00 p.m. by BBC Radio 4 and was also re-aired on 26th January 2002 on the BBC world service under the directorship of Jeremy Mortimer.

The play *Clearing the Rubble* revolves around the three characters who were affected by the devastating earth quake in Kutch, a region of Gujarat, in 2001. An English journalist namely Jeffrey visits Bhuj a

year later. He tries to find out the boy named Salim whom he had met a year ago when he was helping with relief operation. At the beginning of the play, there is a recess in the school. So, school children are seen on the ground. Salim is wrapped in the thoughts of consequences of cruel stroke of nature. i.e. earthquake.

Salim: (thought) Rahul lost his left leg. Pasha lost his sight. Nilima lost

And I lost my mother, my uncle, my aunts, my grandfather and my

Jeffrey. (Pause) Poor Jeffrey. He tries so hard. (CP: 65)

After the devastating calamity in Kutch in 2001, the relief operations were undertaken to save humanity against the cruel attack of nature very soon. The relief tasks like clearing the rubble, providing food, water, medical aid, shelter, clothes etc. were the chief businesses of the day. The peoples across the world were showing their sympathy and praying for the lives of this mishap affected people. It was the time of showing compassion and love for the grief stricken people. Amidst this scenario, the social prejudices were at work. There was disparity in the distributions of relief to the earthquake affected people. Under the name of religion, the Muslims were not properly provided help and relief. They were the worst sufferers. Upon the stroke of fortune, they received the stroke of communal discrimination that broke them within. Dattani unearths such crime and injustice in this play. Like voice-over technique in other plays, he makes effective use of 'thought' techniques in this play. In fact, he always chooses his technique in accordance with the nature and complexity of the problem and themes. Through the thought process of Fatima, Dattani tries to narrate the plight of the minority people during the earth quake in Kutch.

Fatima: (thought) Allah be merciful! It is time for my prayer. Forgive me, but I cannot face Mecca. I cannot move. My Allah, please forgive me! Please show compassion. Both my daughters are

with you now. I am coming too. Take me away from this unjust world now. I will hold the bodies of my daughters till I follow them to your world. I have no more strength to call out to those people who help others but not us. I cry out for you now. Only in your world is there justice. I want to be in your world. (CP: 65)

Jeffrey revisits India after a year. He first visited on 28th January, 2001, two days later a terrific earthquake in Kutch. He starts his journey to Kutch again writing a letter to Nora. In the letter, he narrated all about the massive earth-quake that devastated land and his own experiences regarding his own on site visit. Through his letter, it is learnt that he first came at Malliya town, a close town to the region of Kutch. He was mistaken by the man as the official rescue workers. He informs him that he is a journalist coming from England. To the question asked by the man, Jeffrey replies that “It means a lot to me, to write about the condition of humanity in other parts of the world.” (CP: 66) He describes the sorry state of the land as he has seen during his visit. There was no sign of buildings for miles and miles as all of them have reduced to heaps of rubble. People were seen standing outside the relief camps for completing paper works to get shelters and foods. Jeffrey arrives at a village in Kutch and grieved more to see the plight of the earth quake

here has lost something or someone. They are not crying. There are no wails. Only silence. Grief
hem a
new momentum. (CP: 67-68)

The hospital of the village collapsed during earthquake killing and injuring many people. During the night, Jeffrey heard the voice and went to place where the cry was coming out. He met there a young lad who was crying out “Don’t go! Help me! Help, please!” (CP: 69) Jeffrey approached him and tried to know all about him and his misery. His name was Salim. His mother and sisters were under the debris of the fallen hospital. The journalist tries to dress his wounds. He doesn’t want to heal his wounds, but he needs

someone help him. He wants to remove the debris to take out his mother and sisters. The lad exclaims; "They tried! Not enough!" (CP:69) Some people were working there but he was not satisfied with their efforts. The men were trying to pull down the beam. It was so heavy and massive. So, the earth moving equipment like crane was necessary for doing that task. Jeffrey tries his best to console the boy in various ways. He is also unable to help him right away. The boy is extremely grieved and panicky. He tries to explain the journalist that the communal discrimination has aggravated his problem. The boy tells the journalist; "We are Muslims!" (CP: 69) So, they are not paid due attention to them.

Jeffrey's heart is full of love, care and sympathy for the boy and his family members. Under the circumstances, he was also helpless. As Jeffrey puts, "He needs my help. What can I do? I can only do some first aid on him and give him a mild sedative if he is in shock. But he wants me to do something about his mother and sisters buried alive." (CP: 69) Jeffrey barely understands what exactly the boy wants him to do. Ultimately, he realizes that boy expects Jeffrey go and fetch crane to remove the rubble. Salim has two sisters namely Saira and Mumtaz who were buried under the debris of the building along with his mother Fatima. Again, there were so many questions in the journalist's mind to ask Salim. He was sensitive and sensible enough to understand that there is neither time nor scope for asking him questions. As he writes, "

(CP: 70) Jeffrey approaches the man he met earlier and convinces him to go to city for getting crane. The man says; 'If we move any of that, we will cause the debris collapse further and might kill the people who are alive. That's why we stopped our work' (CP: 71) Ultimately, Jeffrey, the man and some other people arrive in Bhuj in the morning and meet a German lady in charge of the operations at the Red Cross. She hands over a key of the truck containing mini crane in it.

The play deals with the wrath of nature along with injustice by government officials to the poor and the minorities. On their way back to the

village, as predicted by the wiseman of Malliya, they were stopped and interrogated. The officers were making inquiry of the man who was driving the truck. The officer asks to get them off. Jeffrey tries to take his photograph. So, he was annoyed and asked “who are you?” (CP: 71) Jeffrey replies in a furious mood that he is a journalist, writing on the communal and caste biased nature of the relief operations. Jeffrey makes counter questions; “Are you preventing equipments and supplies from reaching Muslims and Dalit population?” (CP: 71-72) However, they succeeded in reaching the village with the crane. After physical verifications of the contents of the truck, they were surprised that truck contains many more things along with the crane. There were blankets, vitamins, foods, clothing, tents etc. in it. They set up the crane and remove the heavy beams. The journalist wants Salim unite with his mother and sisters. He searched for Salim to identify his family members, but he was not there further. Jeffrey’s hope to unite him with his mother and sisters was unfulfilled. He was consoled with the idea that he helped to save the villagers. At least, some human lives were saved. Today now, after a year, Jeffrey is revisiting Bhuj, the epicenter of earthquake of 2001 and tries to track out Salim who had met during his first visit.

Dattani depicts contemporary socio cultural scenario of the society in his plays. He is a keen observer of the modern society and its problems. In this play, he condemns rigidity and oddities of government who pays less attention to the problems faced by the deprived sections of the society. Dattani intends to indicate that religion and caste consciousness is so down deep in the blood of the people that it hinders the call of humanity. As

village any more. It has withstood many calamities. Droughts, floods, caste wars. But the earthquake that brought you here, took my village someplace
(CP: 79-80)

Generally, Dattani deals with the dynamics of human relationship within the range of urban Indian families in his plays. However, the play *Clearing the Rubble* and *ATale of Mother Feeding Her Child* deal with the problems and pains of the poor village folk. Both the aforesaid plays have

of the children told the teacher that I should be sent in to pick up the rat and clean the room. I did not want to do it. The bigger boys called me a cobbler's son and said that it was my job to do these things. If I could touch the hide of a cow, I could pick up a dead rat. The teacher did not say a word (CP: 78-79)

Dattani has enriched Indian English theatrical tradition with innovations and experiments. He has discarded the old dramatic device called 'aside' and made extensive use of 'thought' and 'voice-over' techniques in many of his plays. He has used successfully these techniques in the plays like *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, *Do the Needful* and *Clearing the Rubble*. The 'thought' device reveals the characters' reactions and responses as well as their motives and movements. With the help of this technique, Dattani explores inner recesses of the characters. The play *Clearing the Rubble* is the fine example of his effective and extensive use of 'thought' technique. The plot of the play is presented through this technique barring one letter device. The feelings of the all the three major characters are presented through 'thought'. For example, Fatima thinks to herself.

Fatima: (Thought). The mosque is all right. Oh! We are fortunate! Everything will be fine soon. Everything will be like before. God knows that we are living in this not so fine world. But it is his

(CP: 73)

The technique of 'thought' is used to hold direct dialogue with audience without allowing character concerned know the thing. The technique of thought and linguistic investment lends a greater height to the play.

Uma and the Fairy Queen a detective play in nature. *Seven Steps around the Fire*, *The Swami and Winston* and *Uma and the Fairy Queen* together forms the trilogy which have the same female protagonist named Uma Rao, a researcher who unravels the three murder mysteries, one in each play.

Played out against the backdrop of a hot and bustling Bangalore, a thirdcase, for Uma Rao, intrepid sleuth and wife of Suresh Rao, the police superintendent.¹⁵

The Play *Uma and the Fairy Queen* was first broadcast on 16th August, 2003 at 3 p.m. B.B.C. Radio 4, directed by Mark Beeby. Like *The Swami and Winston*, there is no detailed arrangement of stage or any other stage craft device. The dramatic structure of the play develops through exterior and interior devices. The play encompasses the personae of three countries— India, Pakistan and England. At the outset of the play, the audience hears Michael talking with someone. At the exterior level, the audience hears the honks of the impatient drivers of the car which has stopped to pick up its passengers. Michael asks, "where are we going? Listen! I have to be at the hall by six! Take it easy! Stop pushing me! Oh I say!" (CPII: 425) Soon it is perceived that the characters are excited as something unwanted has happened. There is an air of tense and unrest prevailing at the very beginning of the play. Nila rings the doorbell at Liam's house. She seems to be panicky and wants to share something serious with Liam.

Nila: It's, it's Michael! I am so afraid, I don't know what to do! Liam, you are the only one I can turn to. (CPII: 425)

It is clear that something has happened to Michael and Liam is very close to Nila. On the other hand, Suresh and Uma Rao are moving in a car conversing something important. It is also clear from their conversation that Uma Rao has successfully unraveled the mystery over the death of English lady. Her husband doesn't like her involvement in such cases and Uma's visiting police station for going through the office files.

The British Council has organized theatrical show of Shakespeare's famous drama *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* for celebrating the Independence Day in Bangalore. Uma views this as a special occasion and considers it a nice gesture from the British Council. Suresh thinks altogether otherwise than her. He says, "Bringing a Shakespeare company to

mark our Independence Day! If you ask me, they only want to remind us that they ruled over us once "(CP11: 428) Liam Tate is the British cultural ambassador. He wants to have a word with Uma in a private. So, they walk down a passage for sharing confidential news. Mr. Tate informs Uma that Michael has been kidnapped. Michael, Nila's husband is a British actor. He is one of the major performers in the stage production of *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*. Mr. Tate also informed her that Nila had seen some men pushing him into a car. However, he wants to keep this news confidential. He feels that they can't perform without Michael. They are not in a position to announce the cancellation of the show suddenly. Mr. Tate wants to create too much of suspicion so that they can later cancel the show. He wants Uma's advice in this regard.

Nila Ahmed is a Pakistani descent. She is a very famous TV serial artist. Mr. Tate and Uma go to see Nila Ahmed. Mr. Liam informs Uma that they were not having happy married life. As Liam tells Uma, "As the Fairy king and queen they certainly share a destructive chemistry on stage, like they do off it. Uma, I think you ought to
It's an open secret in London, but- it's not something they like to talk about."
(CP11: 430)

Liam introduces Uma to Nila as the detective person. Thereafter, he leaves the two ladies and goes for the announcement about the cancellation of performance due to technical reasons. Nila is talking about Michael with Uma. She informs her that there were three persons of medium height with beards. She adds that her husband also received a written threat simply saying "I will kill you." (CP11: 433) She adds that she loves him very much. She doesn't want another divorce. At this juncture, Michael appears and expresses his love for Nila.

Dattani is famous for fusing old and modern devices to peep into the past and present. He gives up traditional theatrical device of 'aside' and 'soliloquy'. He invests newer technique like dramatic monologue, voice over thought, phone call etc. In *A Tale of Mother Feeding Her Child*, Dattani makes

effective use of dramatic monologue, In this play, Dattani invests newer technological device i.e. a phone call. He replaces dramatic monologue or thought with phone call for gathering significant information. It helps the character access the significant details which enhance the plot of the drama and also offers help in revealing truth. Uma Rao, the researcher, makes effective use of phone call for gathering past details about Nila.

The dramatic structure of the play *Uma and the Fairy Queen* presents sensuality as the cause of crime. Nila, a famous Pakistani actress, has remarried Michael Forsyth, a famous British actor. In the past, Nila was Mr. Malik's second wife. She was known as Ruksana, an ideal housewife in Pakistan. She was pregnant. Everything was fine. However, a storm took over her as Sohaila, the first wife of her husband, disclosed that their husband was unable to father a child. Sohaila did so because she was in difficulty. People were pointing finger at her. If Nila can conceive, why can't she? She had become the object of criticism and condemnation. Under the circumstances, she was forced to prove her innocence. In a mood of fit, she showed the medical report to her friends stating Mr. Malik's inability of being a father. In this way, the scandal broke out putting Nila in a very awkward and difficult condition. Nila tries to defend herself by saying that she informed her husband the same. Her husband was quite considerate and cooperative. This revelation spoiled Nila's prestige and popularity as an artist. Her existence was endangered. She puts, "More grave than that. Overnight I became the adulteress from an ideal house wife! Public anger built up and there was a fatwa on me! That I should be stoned to death in public!" (CP11: 462) After this scandal, she managed to flee from Pakistan and sought asylum in UK where the fairy queen met her fairy prince, Michael. Michael was her rescuer. They were in love.

In the present, the show is going to start soon. Mendelsohn's music is played on. Michael is played as Oberon and Titania is played by Nila of Shakespeare's drama. Nila enters as Titania. People receives her with mild applaud. This is how Shakespeare's dialogues between Oberon and Titania go on.

Michael (as Oberon) I'll meet my moonlight, proud Titania!

Nila: (as Titania) What, jealous Oberon? Fairy, skip hence. I have
(CPII: 434-35)

The play was performed very successfully. They performed their roles in an amazing manner. So, people greeted them with a huge round of applause. The artists were waiting for curtain call. Suddenly a gunshot is heard. Something has happened at the backstage. Soon it is discovered that Michael was murdered. Police started inquiry into the murder of Michael. Suresh doesn't want Uma's meddling around in this case. He has instructed his subordinates not to allow her in the greenroom. He advises her to concentrate in other jobs. It is also revealed that absentee of the children in their marital life is also creating tension between husband and wife. Uma is greatly interested in this case. She wants to have clue to the case. She also makes a call to Charles in England for collecting information and getting his help.

Uma (tentative at first, softly) Hello! Charles?
sorry to call at this hou

Where is the gun?

tell me a little bit about Liam. (CPII: 440-41)

Uma is smart, energetic, and active. She leaves no stone unturned to gather the past details of Nila. She also calls up Menon for procuring clues to the case. After this telephonic talk, she contemplates a little over the sentence "There are the forgeries of jealousy". After this, she calls to Mumtaz in Pakistan. She wants to know Nila's past record in Pakistan.

Uma:
she acted in? The one that made her really famous? (Scribbling
here Scribbling down the name.) Wasn't she married when

she met Michael? But Ahmed is really her screen name? What

scandal a

back. (CPII: 445-46)

Before inquiring Nila, Uma Rao collects all the relevant details of Nila's past. This is her third case in the murder mystery. There is an apprehension that Nila has killed her husband. She wants to leave India, but she is not allowed to do so. She is detained for the the police inquiry. The police have collected the gun from the site of the murder. They are working on it. The Police is making inquiry in their own way. Since, Nila is Pakistani descent; the police is looking at the other side of the issue. The police suspects Pakistan's hand in this murder. Suresh tells Uma," You don't understand these matters. They don't want us to have good relations with

(CPII: 443) Uma thinks in a different way. After this, Suresh is informed through a phone call that the case is transferred to the commissioner's office. Interpol is now involved. Uma is keen to resolve this case. Her help is sought for the solution of the murder mystery. Suresh hands over the copies of the forensic reports to her. She replies to Suresh in the following manner.

Uma: Suresh. It is you who don't understand. It is not in our interest that this murder gets to be more political than it really is. The relations between Pakistan, India, and UK are at stake. This is the real issue (CPII: 444)

Suresh feels that Uma has got the case transferred by using her influence. Nila is a British citizen of Pakistani descent. Uma opposes the idea of arresting her without substantial evidence against her. She feels that it will harm our diplomatic relations. She takes the help of Liam Tate for making things in proper order. She is now an authorized person to make inquiry into the case. She has permission to examine the green room, stage, properties room etc. She goes to the place where Michael was murdered after the

performance of the play. She is reminded of the famous words of the play. She speaks these words to herself.

Uma: And this same progeny of evils

 Comes from our debate, from our dissension.

 We are their parents and original (CPII: 446)

Uma visits the green room and makes the inspection of the site of the murder. At first she is convinced that Michael was not kidnapped as he himself ordered the taxi. So, he was not being forcefully taken to the taxi by ruffians. She also checked the things at hotel and gets hold of the death threat note which was torn at the last word. This torn note sets Uma's mind into two directions.

Liam: One of them being where is the rest of the note?

Uma: Absolutely.

Liam: And the other?

Uma: Where did Michael go, after deliberately tearing up the note, destroying a part of it and throwing the rest in the waste basket, and calling for a taxi? Also, who were the three men who joined him outside the hotel? Let's go. (CPII: 450)

Mr. Malik is the former husband of Nila. Michael used to visit him. So, Uma approaches Mr. Malik for eliciting relevant information from him. He informs her that he helped his son during school education and has plans to pay for his higher education abroad. During Uma's investigation, he was enraged and asks them to leave his house. Uma warns him in a polite way.

Uma: I am afraid, Liam, there is every reason to get emotional. Mr. Malik, I know who you are and who your son is. I understand your reasons for secrecy. It is not something our society

approves of. But believe me, all I am interested in is finding out some more details that will help us solve this crime. If you don't cooperate, it will leave me no option but to send the CID over, and they will not so understand about your family matters. (CPIL: 454)

Malik explains that his son Feroz was telling him about his future plans regarding his higher studies at London. Uma is not convinced because Michael was more needed at the theatre at this time. It is not possible that he missed the performance simply because of listening this. Uma expresses her desire of talking to Malik's son Feroz. Malik denies on the ground that he is very shy. Quite dramatically, Feroz appears before them and looks worked up. He shows his willingness to be inquired. He accuses that they have come to throw mud on their faces and to disturb their peaceful life. On further inquiry, he speaks in a furious mood.

Feroz: She is a whore! She killed him! She was responsible entirely for his death. (CPIL: 456)

He hates her so much. He is not ready to acknowledge her as a mother. Uma is persistent in her inquiry. She wants to know the truth. She wants to know why she has killed her husband.

Uma: Tell me Feroz! Why?

Feroz: Because she is in love with this white man! (CPIL: 457)

At this juncture, Suresh Rao appears with order papers that set Nila free to go to her country. Nila is no longer held back for questioning. In a smart and daring move; Uma tears up the order papers so that she can make further inquiry of Nila Ahmed. She tells Suresh," remain here because your bureaucratic office will want papers to release her and you don't have them. Come on, Liam." (CPIL: 458)

Quite dramatically and also daringly, Uma approaches Nila along with Liam for making her inquiry. In the beginning, Nila doesn't accept

the crime. She raises counter question to Uma as to why she would kill her own husband. Uma argued that she was the only one near him when he was killed. Moreover, she was not having good relation with him. Uma also convinced her that she lied about his kidnapping. Uma is convinced either Nila has killed him or she got it done by someone. This is how Nila defends herself.

Nila: I don't know! I wasn't in the green room! I was prepared to come on stage for the curtain call. I was waiting for Michael to come out and join me for the curtain call! I heard the gun shot, I went in and saw him lying on the floor with blood all over.

Uma: By then the murderer had escaped!

Nila: Yes!

Uma: Nila, it was impossible for the murderer to leave the greenroom without bumping into you! (CPII: 460-61)

Uma is exceedingly smart sleuth. She is persistent in her inquiry. At last, she strikes hard stroke which compels Nila to confess her crime.

Uma: No you weren't. You were in the room with Michael. So, you either killed him yourself or- you know who killed him and you are not telling.

Silence.

Nila: I killed him. (CPII: 461)

In this way, Nila confessed her crime under pressure of Uma's unceasing and logical inquiry. She further asks,

Uma: And the note ? Who wrote the note?

Nila: I did.

Uma: It doesn't look like your handwriting.

Nila: I got one of the waiters to write it for me.

Uma: More strange than true' (CPII: 461)

Uma keeps on her questioning her. She wants to know about the access of the gun used in the murder. Uma is investigation various implications. Feroz reappears in a very desperate mood and fires from the gun. Before killing Nila, he empties his wrath and anger towards Nila in the following words:

Feroz:

forgive! She slept with her actor friends! For money, for pleasure, or just to please the Devil. And I was born out of her cesspool of lust (To Nila) You! You don't know what I had to suffer. In school, I was known as the bastard! At home I was the unwanted child. We had to move to India and live in hiding to run away from the disgrace, but you won't let us live in peace. Unless you are dead you won't let me live in peace. So die. Prepare to go to hell, Mother! (CPII: 464-65)

Uma tries her best to divert Feroz's mind from his intension of killing his mother. Uma informs him that Nila is ready to surrender herself and go to jail. Feroz is highly agitated and frenzied. He shouts that 'Jail is not hell enough for you' (CPII: 465). And in an extremely agitated mood, he fires at Nila. She is in the ICU of the hospital and Feroz is likely to be put into juvenile home as he is still a minor. This is how Nila speaks to Uma.

Nila: He is young. He needs me.

Uma: And you?

Nila: I need to make amends

Uma: Yes, I will try. Now rest. (CPII: 466-67)

The play *Uma and the Fairy Queen* also focuses on the theme of longing for children. Nila's tragedy emerges from her desire of being

mother. Uma and Suresh have no children. Suresh is more upset at the want of children. He thinks that his wife Uma is taking interest in the other affairs because she has no child.

Inset story of 'changeling child' is also very symbolic in the play. The play shows sorry state of the parents both having children and non-having children. Nila has the son Feroz. She is suffering because of him. On the other hand, Uma and Suresh are suffering for having no child. The play ends with Uma's concluding remark comprises both situations. "Damned if you have children and damned if you don't." (CP11: 467)

Like an archeologist, Dattani unearths the truth hidden beneath the surface and presents through his theatrical medium. He reflects serious issue of human life through his theatre. He interacts with audience about various visible and sometime invisible issues of the society by innovative use of theatrical art retaining his affinity with the native theatrical tradition. His theatrical performance is not mechanical and routine presentation of human experiences, but it is real life experience. So, it is called real life theatre. In *Uma and the Fairy Queen*, the dramatist has successfully carried out the thematic and technical innovations. In this play, Dattani deviates from the themes he dealt with in his major plays. The movement of the play is enabled through the use of interior and exterior devices in the play. Uma Rao is credited with the successful inquiry into three cases with the successful unmasking murder mystery of Michael in this play.

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Chapter: IV

A Critical Study of Mahesh Dattani's Screen Plays

Mahesh Dattani's dramatic genius is quite diverse and distinctive. He is regarded as one of the best screen play writers in Indian writing in English. Apart from stage and radio plays, he has also ploughed the field of screen plays very successfully creating autonomous aesthetic position to his screenplays. As a dramatist, he carries on simultaneously three pronged career namely stage play writer, radio play writer, and screen play writer in a remarkable way. His screenplays bear the unmistakable imprint of his innovative theatrical art in terms of theme and technique. The present chapter covers up Dattani's three screen plays for full length critical exploration and elucidation. They are:

- Mango Soufflé
- Morning Raga
- Ek Alag Mausam

Lately, the screen play writing has evolved as an independent and separate genre from that of stage plays writing and also of radio plays writing. Actually, it is inter-related with two art forms, the drama and the film. So, it is also called inter-genre touching up poetics of the drama and the film. According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, screen play is "The script from which a motion picture film is produced; formerly the film itself." ¹ While, *The Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines the term screen play elaborately as, "The written text for a film, with dialogues, stage directions and descriptions of characters and setting." ²

Thus, screen play may be called textual version or manuscript for a film. It can also be deemed as merging of theatrical and cinematic media into one. It is true that theatre and film overlap at certain levels. There are some differences between them. About the film, it is observed:

It is a sensory medium with a strong emphasis on the visual component; colours and use of light are significant. Art direction is a special category which is as important as cinematography. The director's job is really in bringing it all together to serve the script.³

The narrative is done in the form of visual presentation in the film. It relates visual and verbal. It is attributed:

The motion film gives us objects and persons moving and enacting in a visual system of narration, which combines the powers of poetry and painting in an extraordinary synthesis.⁴

The film requires a lot of accessories, actors, actresses, singers, choreographers, technological tools etc. Hence, it involves more expenses than a play. Briefly, film adaption of a play is a very huge and challenging enterprise. Pudorkin points out that conversation or words are very useful for illuminating relationship between human beings. Moreover, the film admits the responsibilities of connecting the animate and the inanimate.

In a sense, a film is technologically enhanced and updated manifestation of theatrical performance or a narrative art. The film has some advantages over the theatre. It can explore possibilities of employing lighting arrangement, retake, and sound effect. The theatre presents real situation and events, whereas the films 'create virtual presents'.⁵ The visual component matters much in case of a film. The story is presented with the help of the sounds and pictures. Thus, film is the most powerful and popular means of mass communication and entertainment. One must mention thing here that despite all these facts, screen play has not inspired wide and vibrant criticism which hinders the process of the recognition and popularity of the screen play as an art form in the field of literature.

Mango Soufflé is a famous screen play dealing with post colonial theme i.e. homosexuality. It is a film adaption of stage play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*. It is the debut film of Dattani. Directed by Mahesh Dattani, the film was released in India on February 2002 and bagged the best motion picture award at the Barcelona Film Festival in the same year.

Both the play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and the film *Mango Soufflé* depict the theme of same sex love. The title of the play is very symbolic and meaningful. Mango symbolizes the human passion. The mango fruit incites desires passion etc... It incites the desires of love and friendship in the film. The most of the events take place at the family farm house in the vicinity of mango orchard. This fruit gets ripened during the summer season. The hot atmosphere outside and strong passion inside are suggested through the title *Mango Soufflé*. "Mango as you know is the fruit of passion just as the Apple is a fruit of temptation in the Christian World." ⁶

Besides these, it is also regarded as the king of fruits. It is interesting to note that Sharad, a gay character, wants to be the king like mango fruit. He puts;

wife, I can have children, who will all adore me simply because I
- a real man. Now why would I
want to give it all up? So what if I have to change a little? If I can
be a real man I can be king. Look at all the kings around you,
look at at all the male power they enjoy, thrusting themselves on
to the world, all that penis power! Power with sex, power with
muscle, power with size. Firing rockets, exploding nuclear
bombs, if you can do it five times, I can do it six times and all
that stuff. Power, man! Power!" (CPII: 217)

Since, *Mango Souffle* is a cinematic reproduction of *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, there is no change in characters, themes, etc. Kamlesh, Sharad, Kiran, Ed/Prakash, Deepali, Bunny, and Ranjit are the common characters in both the works. The locale of living room of Kamlesh in Mumbai

is replaced by the farm house of Kamlesh in Bangalore in the film. The theme of homosexuality finds no alteration in the film. Dattani reflects on the contemporary issues in his plays in an honest and subtle way. He doesn't attempt to show himself as a scholar. So, he adopts all those techniques and devices which impart a touch of reality and universality.

Dattani, being experimentative and enterprising dramatist, presents the issue of the homosexuality on the screen in a very daring and interesting way. Perhaps, *Mango Soufflé* is the first attempt of screening radical issue like same sex love relationship. Dattani had an intense desire to direct such a film and *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* struck a chord. "Mango Soufflé is a product of two intense desires-my desire to make a film and Mahesh's to direct one."⁷

The dramatic narrative of the play is brief and swift in this play than the original one. It is necessary to pinpoint here that the dramatist has discarded certain elaborations or events in the cinematic version of the play. In original play, he mentions a good deal of information about the past-unsuccessful life of Kiran. Moreover, in stage play, the guard is paid for sex by Kamlesh, but it isn't clear in the screen play. Actually, *Mango Soufflé* has created powerful effects on the audience. It is the great cinematic success due to certain omission and addition done by the dramatist while converting stage play into a film. Asha Kuthari aptly avers;

There is, even in the play, the element of separation in terms of spatial reality: the plot unravels on the top floor flat that looks down at the 'normal' wedding – which is set at a 'safe' distance, which is also evoked in the film, once they are within the precincts of the farm. The film in a sense actually makes the 'other', the outside, palpably visual, with cuts of the marriage next door. This is the subtle way in which the translation into the cinematic version evolves: this is a

narrative that entails different space-time complexities, and the resonant emotional quotient that works wonderfully on stage would be completely static on the screen.⁸

The narrative of the play takes place through interior and exterior devices in the play. Soon the scene shifts from Kamlesh's parental home to his farm house. The conversion of setting of apartment into a farmhouse helps significantly explore the possibilities of screen play. In the place of muggy night, the dramatist presents hot day in a summer. Sanjeev Shah mentions:

Mahesh and I had several discussions on the script as he agonized to make the play more cinematic. The clincher was changing the setting of a muggy night in a Mumbai apartment into a summer day in Bangalore at a sprawling farmhouse (where I incidentally lived). This opened up many cinematic possibilities and suited our budget.⁹

Dattani divides stage into different sets and uses various techniques to show mental 'space' and 'space' of time. In film, he exploits flashback / forward to show the past and present events. There is a flashback which shows us the past party in which Ed and Kiran are seen dancing. Soon Kamlesh arrives at his family farmhouse. There is a sign 'Mango Grove' at the gate of the farmhouse. After the black out of the six months, at the exterior level in the mango grove, the watchman is seen necking his girlfriend in the mango grove. The fruits are seen on the trees. After hearing Kamlesh's voice, the watchman goes in the farmhouse. Kamlesh is expecting some guests. So, he wants the watchman fetch some drinks and foods.

Kamlesh is suffering from depression. He is passionately in love with Ed who has deserted him. Kamlesh is greatly concerned about his sister Kiran who loves Ed, his past lover, and intends to marry him very soon.

After the departure of Ed, Kamlesh develops relationship with Sharad, another homosexual, who lives with Kamlesh for some time. However, Kamlesh doesn't get on well with Sharad as his love for Ed is very strong and passionate. Kamlesh sacrifices his own happiness for the sake of his sister. However, the problem is that he can't take out thoughts of Ed/Prakash from his mind completely. He is distressed and depressed inwardly. So, he has invited his friends with a view to counseling him and treating his depression. He wants the help of his friends for overcoming from this enigmatic condition. In the beginning, Sharad arrives at the farmhouse. Kamlesh informs him that his sister is going to marry Ed. Sharad inquires back, "Ed? That's it? Your sister fell in love with an Ed? Is he sexy or just husband material?" (CPII: 176)

Nobody knows the reason for convening the meeting so suddenly. So Sharad tries to know the reason for sudden invitation asking whether it has to do with Prakash. Kamlesh is annoyed at the very mention of Prakash's name.

Kamlesh: How dare you bring that up?

Sharad:

came up. You know I still love you. (CPII: 177)

Since Sharad has been living with Kamlesh for some time, he is quite familiar at Kamlesh's bedroom and Kitchen. Later on, he left the place as they didn't cope up properly with each other's expectations. Hence, the relationship between them is at stake at present. However, Kamlesh tries to reassure Sharad that he still loves him.

Kamlesh: I love you too.

Sharad: [angry] Oh! Spare me the lies! You could never love anyone because you are still in love with Prakash! (CPII: 177-78)

Kamlesh wants to realize Sharad that despite misunderstanding, he is having soft corner for Sharad. Actually nobody knows that Ed and

Prakash is the same person except Kamlesh. Kamlesh admits that he needs Sharad's help to forget Prakash. On Sharad's inquiry, it is revealed that Kamlesh tore all the photographs of Prakash except one which he brings out.

Like the play, the film also shows marriage going on at the next door. Next to Sharad, Deepali arrives at the farm house. She is also a lesbian character of the play. Outside the farm house, the marriage ceremony is on and the bride is being taken to the *shamiana*. She has to wait for the crowd to disperse. She also asks Kamlesh why he has invited them. Kamlesh replies that he would disclose after everybody has come there.

The guard comes back bringing refreshment material, while Kamlesh is in the kitchen. Sharad notices a bruise on the watchman's neck. So, he becomes very apprehensive and inquires of guard about the bruise. The guard replies that it's just a bruise nothing else.

Sharad: *Kamlesh saab ke pas bahut si dawayian hain aise chot ke liye.*
(Master Kamlesh has a lot of remedies for such bruises)

Maqsood: [going to the door] *Ji- ji nahin. Main theek hoon. Ye rahan saabka bill Aur ye Chutta.* (Er-no sir, I am fine. This is Master's bill and his change) (CPII: 181)

Sharad thinks that Kamlesh is having sexual relationship with the guard. Kamlesh disapproves it and says; "I did not sleep with him. He is heterosexual." (CPII: 182) In the stage play, it is crystal clear that Kamlesh is exploiting the guard for the physical pleasure.

The film shifts into the past time and again. The dramatist dexterously surfaces the hidden desires of the characters in the play. Most of the characters are the homosexual – either gay or lesbian. The film is a daring documentation of human desires for same sex love. Dattani broods over urban angst and issues in his plays. The people who are thrown at the peripheral level of society catch his attention again and again. His theatre or film projects invisible issues like homosexuality, eunuch, child sexual abuse,

social apathy towards the marginalized etc. The film makes the characters more communicative and expressive about their problem and constraints. Since it is English movie, target audience is not middle class people or regular film goers. They are the urban people. In fact, the issue of the homosexuality deals with the urban life. It can't find much expression openly in rural background. It is attributed: "The movie is targeted at urban audiences since it is all about urban life and urban relationships." ¹⁰

The strong urge for same sex love is depicted skillfully in the play. Ed wants to marry Kiran retaining his relationship with Kamlesh. He is gay rather bisexual like Bunny Singh, a TV artist. Despite being gay, Ed asserts that he is not a gay. So, when Ed denies of his being gay, Kamlesh pleads; "Ed! You led me on! You made me believe you were gay! Indeed you, Ed, I love you!" (CPII: 206)

In this way, Ed betrays Kamlesh. It is because of this Kamlesh feels anguished and depressed. Later, two other characters namely Ranjit and Bunny also join them at the party. When it is revealed that Ed and Prakash is the same person, everyone is left aghast as all of them know about Kamlesh- Prakash relation except Kiran. Kamlesh requests everyone not to reveal the secret before Kiran for the sake of her happiness. The picture of Kamlesh- Prakash blows due to sudden gust of wind. It remains on the French window for a moment and then wind blows it away. Of course, Ed and Kiran can't see it. Everybody rushes out under one or another pretext barring Kiran and Ed. It is quite amusing scene as all of them give a chase to the moving photograph. Deepali and Ranjit insist Kamlesh to reveal the truth to Kiran. Bunny feels that it will work without creating any problem. So, there is no need to disclose it before Kiran.

Bunny: Don't tell her. It will ruin their lives. If both of them want it then what is the problem? I think it went that way! (CPII: 209)

Ed has become suspicious about the movement going outside. Kiran also feels that something strange is going on. She is highly impatient to know it. She forces Sharad to let her know truth. Sharad is perplexed as how

to reveal truth before her. On her persistence, he is compelled to expose the thing but in a different way.

Kiran: Sharad I want to know I insist.

Sharad: Well, Kamlesh hasn't been entirely honest with you.
(CPII: 210)

Again, Ranjit suggests them to show the photo to Kiran for revealing the truth. Bunny defies this idea as he did earlier. Everybody expresses his /her views over this issue in the following way:

Kamlesh: Don't be silly! We have to let her know.

Ranjit: She loves him!

Deepali: You love him!

Kamlesh: He loves her!

Ranjit: He can't possibly.

Bunny: He can! Let's get the picture first. (CPII: 211)

The idea of liberal minded person is also presented in this play. Bunny considers himself a liberal minded person. He doesn't feel possessive about one kind of relationship. He champions the idea of bisexual. Therefore, he doesn't feel inclined to inform Kiran about Kamlesh- Prakash affair. Kiran wants to know the true reason behind the failure of relationship between Kamlesh and Sharad. Kamlesh tries to convince her saying that it just didn't work out. He asks her not to bother about it. Deepali fabricates a story.

Deepali: (to Kiran and also Ed) It didn't work out because Kamlesh's lover wants to be straight (To Sharad) Sharad wants to be straight. (CPII: 216)

Kiran considers it as an absurd idea. Sharad also approves it. So, it is an absurd idea of turning oneself from gay to straight.

Deepali: (Spelling it out) precisely. That's the whole point. That some people don't see how absurd the idea is.

Sharad: (Catching on) Oh right. Yes, I want to be as straight as a stick. (Immediately speaking more aggressively) I want to be straight. Like a rod. (CPII: 216)

The idea of real man arouses a lot of discussion and deliberation among them. Ed speaks that Sharad "wants to be a man". (CPII: 216) Ed explains that he means a real man. He indicates the people outside and calls them real men and women. He explains that the world outside is the real one. He compares the gay ship as the little bubble.

Deepali inquires into this matter to Ed Whether he has known anyone who has successfully done that way. Ed responds that he doesn't know anyone. He considers it matter of common knowledge. He calls him as 'bisexual'. So Sharad responds back in a humorous way. "No. I am not bisexual. I am as gay as a goose." (CPII: 217) Bunny also throws light on the matter of real man. He wants to say that what people think about him is not real man. People have illusory notion about him.

Bunny: I know. Just as the man whom my wife loves does not exist. I have denied a lot of things. The only people who know me – the real me – are present here in this room. I have tried to survive. In both worlds. Everyone believes me to be the model middle class Indian
CPII: 219)

Kamlesh confesses his love for Sharad. He realizes that his love for Prakash is an illusory thing. As he exclaims to Sharad,

"No.It's true. It took me this moment to realize it. (looking at Ed) I know now that I have been chasing an illusion. Perhaps the man I loved does not exist. (To Sharad) But you do. And I love you. (CPII: 218)

This confession comes as a blow to Ed and upsets him a lot. He feels headache and disturbed. Kamlesh exclaims that the man he loved doesn't exist. Prakash becomes very impatient and insists Kamlesh to let him know truth. When Kamlesh admits that he really loves Sharad. In the bedroom scene, Ed moves to Kamlesh and asserts;

Ed: You don't really love Sharad. You love me. (CPII: 220)

Kamlesh is frozen to know Ed's assertion. Ed also adds that he will take care of both- Kiran and Kamlesh. He doesn't want Sharad as Kamlesh's lover. Ed has become very passionate and possessive for Kamlesh's love. In a rage and resentment mood, Kamlesh grabs Ed by the throat. Ed struggles to defend himself. They fall apart hearing cry of Kiran. She is frozen to see naked photograph of Prakash and Kamlesh produced by the guard. Through the cinematic technique, Kiran's reaction is also shown side by side. It makes the film more effective. The audience is thrilled to see both the contradictory scenes simultaneously.

Dattani's characters gasp under the social compulsions and commitments. It is evident from Ed's behaviour that the gay is his real nature. He wants to change his nature, but he finds difficulty in it. Kamlesh feels enraged and anguished. In a furious mood, he asks Kiran not to marry Ed. Now Kiran has also understood Ed's real being. Ed tries to reassure his love for Kiran. She asks a very subtle question. What do you love about me? (CPII: 222)

Conflict is a very essential element of a drama. Dattani dramatizes the conflict and emotional crisis in the lives of his characters. Kamlesh and Prakash struggles due to the social canons that disapprove their nature in a respectful manner. They are living on the 'fringe' of the social set up and try to occupy as much as space they can. It is attributed:

The film, like the play, looks at the fabric of alternate (read homosexual) relationships. While this might be workable with the play, a movie in

which male lovers fight, kiss, break/ make up ,is somewhat shocking for 'straight' audiences of Indian cinema. In adapting the play into the film, however, Dattani added a few new shades to the

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The play raises a question: Can a gay become a straight? Most of the characters opine negative views. However are some characters like Ed and Bunny who believe that a gay can be turned as a straight.

Seeing the photograph of Kamlesh and Prakash, Kiran is shocked and busted within. Like her brother, she is enraged and anguished. She feels betrayed. She asks Ed to get out of the house informing him about the photograph being found by the watchman. Children saw it and also saw to their fathers and they, in turn, saw it to other men-women. She refuses to marry Ed. When Ed, again, tries to convince her that he can love her, she wants him to test by assigning the task of facing the world outside.

Kiran: Well, if that is true, You have to do one thing for me.

I want you to go outside, meet those people at the wedding. They know you. You met them at my parents'. They know you,

back in here. (CP11: 24)

Ed feels hesitation in acting as per Kiran's challenge. He, encouraged by other, jumps on the bike and drives towards the gate at breakneck speed. Maqsood tries to stop him. He kicks Maqsood at shin and kicks the gate open. He falls from the bike and crawls out under the bike. He looks around in a panic and state of bewilderment. People are laughing at him and some of them go to help him up. He has hurt his leg and feels pain. Helped by Maqsood, he hobbles in through the gateway. The crowd stares at him. At last he turn to Kiran and asserts; "I love you." (CP11: 226) The film ends with Kamlesh throwing the torn bits of the photograph into the pool and Sharad applauding it. Kiran also throws torn bits of her photograph into the

pool. Kiran runs towards the house looking at the torn bits of photograph floating in the water. The future course of her life is uncertain. Kamlesh puts his arm on Sharad's shoulder as they walk towards the house.

Dattani transliterates Hindi words into English language even when English version is quite feasible. Some time, he puts English version of Hindi expression into the brackets keeping in mind foreign readers. Time and again, he makes the code-mixing device by using Indian words in English sentence. Generally when he mixes Indian codes with English expression, he doesn't care to translate them into English. Dattani wants to have real touch to his plays. He knows well that English speaking boss talks in regional languages with their subordinates, peons, watchman, and milkman and so on. He believes that English is his language. So he writes his plays in English. He explains:

Mango Souffle

and *Morning Raga* in Hindi but the fact is it's not my language. English is the language I really think in.¹²

The film reminds us of Indian films like *Kamsutra* and *Fire* dealing with same sex love and thereby aroused a lot of debate and agitation in our society. Most of the characters are gays except Kiran. Initially, she seems little novice and nervous, but emerges as the bold and powerful at the end. It is attributed:

The one heterosexual in the play is a woman Kiran, who initially presents us with the picture of naïve, victimized and weak character, but turns out perhaps to be one of the strongest, basing all her ideas of the self on openness and truth. She seems naïve in her suggestion of gay marriages, but Dattani makes a definite case for the simplicity and strength in her recognition of diversities as diversities, and not aberrations.¹³

Despite the development and fast civilization, there is no much change in our society. Keeping this rigidity in mind, Dattani presents the theme of homosexuality in such a way that it couldn't paralyze the popularity of the film. Moreover, the task of making a film than a theatrical performance offers a lot of challenges and problems. Dattani in conversation with Angelie Multani puts:

It is ten times more difficult to make a film than a play! As far as the language goes, yes it is now getting to be impossible to find funding for Indian English films. No one in India has made a profit out of Indian film. The only successful one in terms of commerce has been *Monsoon Wedding*. The rest have all lost money.¹⁴

Literature is characterized by its suggestiveness. It denotes and connotes meaning. It doesn't state directly. Boyum believes that like works of literature, the film is replete with connotation as well as denotation in terms of meanings. Dattani's works also make powerful suggestions which open new avenues of imagination. In *Mango soufflé*, he doesn't directly state his views about the issue of homosexuality, but he points at the reality which is invisible due to darkness. He just throws light on reality to make it visible. He doesn't take us into world of fantasy and imagination, but he takes us into virgin soil of taboo issues.

I am not sure whether audience acceptance of movie should be a form of censorship on creativity. In any case, being gay or lesbian is not right or wrong, it is reality and we have learnt to accept alternate relationship and live with them.¹⁵

It can be deduced that *Mango Soufflé* is an endearing and appealing attempt to present the theme of homosexuality. Both the play and the film indicate clearly that homosexual relationship is as much possessive and demanding as heterosexual love and affection. Dattani maintains that

there are so many people living with us hiding their gay nature. Under the pressure of family and society, they prefer a person to marry belonging to opposite sex and continue to keep their gay relationship without the knowledge of their betterhalf.

'In Mango Souffle', the lovers swim naked in a pool and the many strands of sexual orientations and

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Dattani is imbibed with immense guts and clarity of ideas. He presents the suffering of the deprived sections of our society on the page, stage and the screen as well and thereby, registers his protest against subjugation and suppression of the subalternity of some sections of our society. He pleads that what is wrong if two individuals of the same sex love each other. It is as natural as love between two individuals of opposite sexes. He goes ahead to plead for the marriage between the two homosexuals. He is analyzing this relationship from various dimensions. He discusses it physically and socially as well as psychologically and religiously.

Morning Raga is his one of the best known screen plays. The most outstanding feature of the film is that music is woven in the texture of the play. While talking to Shabana Azmi, a renowned actress, Dattani puts:

A story that brings together the modern and the traditional, unites the past with the present, Carnatic music with the Western music, fate and coincidence with individual choices.¹⁷

The film was released in India on 29th October, 2004. The international premiere was part of the Cairo Film Festival in December 2004. Shabana Azmi played the role of Swarnalatha and the film was directed by Mahesh Dattani. Like some other plays, the play has no formal divisions into acts. Of course, the narrative of the play takes place through interior and exterior devices. Like most of his plays, flashback technique is used for reviving events of the past. Dattani uses different techniques in different plays

corresponding to the themes and the mental spectrums of the characters. It is observed:

The action in the play split between past and present, floats in order of flashback and flash forward in a symmetrical order corresponding with the flow of consciousness of different characters.¹⁸

It is essential to note here that Mahesh Dattani generally depicts post modern issues in his plays. Most of his plays are deeply rooted in urban issues and milieu. However, some of his plays are located in rural background. *Morning Raga* is one such a play. The play is ingrained in country background which lends simplicity, spontaneity, and naturality to the play. Of course, some actions do take place in the city. The scene moves from a village to a city having carnatic music as the background. It seems that Dattani pleads for the carnatic music in the play. By selecting countryside as the setting and keeping music as a motif, he succeeds in imparting a touch of sublimity and spirituality to the play. Through the delineation of different characters, the dramatist seeks to present different notions and ideas about the music. There is emotional affinity between some characters and music. Shabana Azmi puts: "...An emotional current grips me as I read it, even though it is overstated in places..."¹⁹

The inner movement is very powerful in this play. Dattani tries to reflect them in the behavior.

...I want the inner movements, adding psychological dimensions that manifest themselves in gesture and behaviour. I need consistency in style...²⁰

At the very outset of the play, flashback technique shows that some villagers are boarding on the bus with their luggages. This is the incident of twenty years back. Swarnalatha and her friend, Vaishnavi, are leaving their home village for the city with a motive of music. Both are carrying

their sons of about four years or so. Swarnalatha is having tamburi where as Vaishnavi has a violin in a case with her. On the other hand in a city home, Mr. Kapoor is getting into his car with his briefcase. Mrs. Kapoor and her toddler girl are seen at the front door of the house. He drives out his car and puts on the stereo. Now the car is moving fast into the countryside, leaving the music from the stereo in the background.

In the bus, the people are singing and a good deal of noise is coming out from the fast moving bus. Swarnalatha and Vaishnavi are seen sitting in the bus holding their children and musical instruments. The camera captures happy faces of the passengers, happy children, their mothers along with their instruments. The fast moving car and the bus are appearing from the two opposite directions and collide. Dattani puts collision of the two vehicles in the following manner “.Subject camera shots of car and bus driver in high speed. The music continues as the two vehicles collide. The bus driver sees the collision about to happen. He swerves to avoid the impact. The car hits the side of the bus, sending Kapoor flying out of the windscreen. The back window of the bus shatters on the impact, sending the children and and begins to keel over into the river. Inside we see the passengers world turning upside down even as the morning sun glows through the back of the bus.” (CPII: 339)

This mishap claimed the lives of many, leaving many more injured and affrighted. Mr. Kapoor’s car was overturned the bridge throwing him in a pool of blood. The music from the car continues to play on and the violin is flowing gently down the river. Swarnalatha is survived but her son is died in this unfortunate accident. Her friend Vaishnavi is also died, whereas her son Abhinay is survived. This is the flash back into the past. After twenty years, Abhinay is planning to commemorate the 20th death anniversary of his mother, Vaishnavi by setting up a musical group.

Swarnalatha is living with anguished past. Her son is lost in the accident. Nevertheless, she is more concerned with the death of her friend,

Vaishnavi. She feels that she was taking Vaishnavi with her. Vaishnavi's son Abhinay has strong love and passion for music. He is committed to keep alive the tradition of music and art. Pinkie, originally Priyanka, is a sensitive young girl. She is dedicated to cause of western music. Her father Mr. Kapoor died in the accident while driving the car twenty years back. Her mother, Mrs. Kapoor, is an attractive lady in her mid forties. She runs a boutique shop which has a very fashionable window with high fashion creations on the mannequins. In this way, Swarnalatha, Abhinay and Pinkie share the unhappy common past. All the three have lost their dear ones in the bus-car accident and now all the three are keen to nurture the tradition of music. It is observed:

– Swarnalatha, Pinkie and Abhinay
have a common quest to preserve the tradition of
art and music. Their passion is rooted in their
begotten past but they have a yearning to seek its
outlet in the present life conditions. The dramatic
structure of *Morning Raga* moves in the direction
of breaking the duality of past and present and the
distinction of personal and impersonal. ²¹

Abhinay is looking for his defunct mother's violin. He approaches his father for this at his village home, but his father shows cold shoulder to his inquiry. He suggests him not to waste his time for music, whereas Abhinay is longing for preserving the tradition of music. In fact, Abhinay leaves his home village for the cause of music three years back as his father is protesting the idea of preserving the tradition of music. He is not interested in art and music and passes his time in dalliance. Abhinay expresses his desire for starting a music group before his father. On hearing this, his father retorst, "You have also gone mad! Like your mother! She is controlling you from the other world!" (CPII: 344)

Actually, the father and the son embody two different attitudes towards the music. They are two different stand points of the music. The son has an ardent desire for learning and preserving art of music. The father has

no heart, no respect for the art of music. He hates the music and doesn't wish his son joining it. It generates the conflict between father and son. Abhinay strives to hold back the violin of his late mother, Vaishnavi. The son is eager to have that instrument, the sign of his late mother, whereas the father is disturbed by his son's urge and unyielding passion for music. To father, music is nothing but a waste of time. To son, it is the driving force of life. He is very anxious and impatient in finding out the instrument. Even during night, he attempts to search out his mother's violin. He is persistent in his search of his mother's violin and photograph and his father tries to dissuade him from it. He takes out some of his mother's photographs from a chest. Among these photographs, there is one photograph in which Abhinay's mother is holding a carnatic violin. This photograph is very suggestive. He gets up and goes into the outer room and opens the old trunk of his mother. The old and rusty trunk's noise wakes up his father.

Abhinay: Where is amma's violin?

Father: (not too sure he has heard right) Violin? (Looking at him as if he is crazy). Why do you want it in the middle of the night? (CPII: 345)

Human life is rationed by the Destiny and God. 'Human self' is at constant struggle with the collective forces or selves. What causes the emotional upheaval or turbulence is the encounter between individual self with hostile surroundings. Such conflicts are quite befitting for the dramatic presentation. They are the raw material for the drama. Abhinay finds hostile atmosphere within his own home in the form of his father. His uncompromising passion for music and his father's contempt for music are dramatically juxtaposed in the play. It is aptly observed:

The impatience of Abhinay, the contempt of father and the mystery of violin are three strong situations for the exposition of the plot. It sustains mystery and suspense...²²

Dattani draws his characters from real life. Appa Rau is a minor character of the play. He is both comic and realistic figure. He has a buffalo whose name is Annapoorna which is very symbolic. Annapoorna means goddess of food. Early in the morning, Abhinay happens to meet Appa Rau when the latter is walking with his 'Annapoorna'. Abhinay inquires him about the violin.

Abhinay: Such a small village and you don't know where a violin went ?
The whole village will know what I ate for dinner but you don't remember where my mother's violin is?

Appa Rau: Everybody knows. But we forget. We forget all that we want to forget. Why remember all that which brings you pain ? (CPII: 346)

In this way, Appa Rau tries to explain Abhinay how people of the village have come out from the past shocks and suffering. They don't want to refresh their wounds by recalling them. His words also showcase the strong emotional content. The dramatist has externalized such strong emotion bearing situations which easily grips the souls of the play goers making play an enjoyable and educating experience.

Like Abhinay, Pinkie is also a very sensitive girl of early twenty and wants to perpetuate the memory of her deceased father by preserving the tradition of western music, as her father was passionate lover of western music. His passion for western music and Vaishnavi's urge for carnatic music are the two dimensions of one tradition of music. Like Abhinay, Pinkie also goes to the village where accident took place. Pinkie lost her father in that dreadful collision and Abhinay his mother. Pinkie goes to the village with a view to paying homage to her deceased father. She feels that her mother shows no sign of feeling and sympathy for her defunct father. She wants to prolong her father's voice. So her passion for music is her sentimental quest. She doesn't pay much attention to her mother's boutique. Pinkie informs her mother that she went to that village last month. She wants her mother take

interest in keeping her father's voice alive, but her mother shows indifference to it. She blames that her mother didn't love him.

Pinkie: You didn't love him, did you? All you care about is yourself.

Mrs. Kapoor: (slamming the stuff in the sink) Pinkie that's unfair to me. You are being very very unfair. (CPII: 365-66)

Pinkie charges her mother for being unfair with her and her father. But in reality, she did love her father. Pinkie blames that her mother hated her father. When it is beyond endurance, Mrs. Kapoor reveals the truth before Pinkie.

Mrs. Kapoor:

od
memories of him.

Pinkie: Tell me.

Mrs. Kapoor. He used to beat me up.

Mrs.Kapoor:

I did. Pinkie, that's all that mattered to me. That you didn't see any of it. I don't want you to hate your father. He was sick, but- he loved you a great deal. He did.

Pinkie is deeply grieved to know the ill treatment meted out to her mother. She feels that she couldn't realize the pain of her mother. She wants to know the real cause of the accident.

Pinkie:

Mrs.Kapoor: He-he was responsible for it. He was drunk. He killed those villagers. (CPII: 366)

Thus, Mrs. Kapoor reluctantly breaks Pinkie's illusory notions regarding her father by presenting the truth. Pinkie is greatly shocked to know the harsh reality unknown to her for these many years. Her consciousness is

rocked again. It reminds her of the old woman's curse at the village. She is left aghast and anguished. She is unable to bear all these and intends to decrease the angst by making candid confession before Abhinay. Here, both Swarnalatha and Pinkie feel guilt consciousness for the death of Vaishnavi. Pinkie is quite young and expressive. She is keen to reduce the mental agony by confessing before Abhinay, whereas Swarnalatha suffers all alone within by suppressing it in her heart. She carries the burden of guilt on her heart. She observes the silence which intensifies her pain and suffering. She is having the violin of Vaishnavi. Actually, she feels panicky and cursed. So she doesn't handover it directly and makes confession to Abhinay. Later on, she sends the violin alongwith a carnatic note that Swarnalatha sang at the riverside through postal service. Abhinay is highly thrilled and felt elated at the rediscovery of violin with which he wants to revive the art of carnatic music. The dramatic narrative presents this incident in the following way. "Abhinay holds the violin in his hand, a sense of excitement building up inside him as he feels the texture of the violin. We see the picture of his mother bathed in moonlight transforming into a memory of Abhinay's mother, (CPII: 370)

The violin is not merely a musical instrument, but it is also the metaphor connecting son to his mother. It is also very essential for preserving carnatic music. The play depicts the emotional upheavals in the life of Abhinay. It has been assumed:

Morning Raga is the only original screen play from the pen of Dattani and therefore beyond the limitations of stage and theatre, he delicately presents the emotional crisis of an individual in whose life music is a passion, a creative art and a question of his identity.²³

With the rediscovery of violin, Abhinay rediscovers his identity. He tries to define meaning of his life through carnatic music. He goes to Swarnalatha's house for persuading her to participate in the music group

which he has been longing to start for commemorating the 20th death anniversary of his mother.

Swarnalatha: What do you mean?

Abhinay: I am starting a music group and I want you to be a part of it.
(CPII: 372)

Despite her prompt refusal, Abhinay is determined to convince her for participating in his music group. He insists her that she has to come with him to the city for parttaking in it. Actually, Swarnalatha is the true worshipper of music. She wants to carry on the practice of music and to keep voice of Vaishnavi alive as well. However, her will is controlled by the society which doesn't appreciate her interest in music. There is a conflict in her mind resulting from her undying urge for music and discouraging familial environment. Critically, the clash or tension is born out of conflict between individual 'choices' and 'social commitment'. One more thing that prevents Swarnalatha from the joining with Abhinay is self realization of her accountability for Vaishnavi's death. She derives acute pain at the realization of this. It functions as a tense chord of violin.

Abhinay wants to preserve the tradition of carnatic music initiated by his mother with the help of Swarnalatha. Therefore, he insists Swarnalatha to teach him what has been taught to her by Vaishnavi. When Swarnalatha excuses herself on the ground that she doesn't go to city, Abhinay directly hits her conscience by saying.

Abhinay:

want to return the favour because she is dead and it doesn't matter anymore? (CPII: 380)

This generates waves of speculation and thoughts in her mind. Her conscience is divided into two. Firstly, she is suffering from a sense of guilt consciousness for the tragic demise of her friend Vaishnavi. Secondly, her mind undergoes intense conflict for restricting her passion for music. To

make matter worse, she is blamed for showing ingratitude. She is unable to bear charges made by Abhinay. It's not a question asked by Abhinay to her, but it is an accusation made by him for showing a sense of ingratitude. She is neither thankless nor passionless lady. It serves as a challenge to her identity. She decides to sing for him. Her suspended passion for music starts revitalizing. She rediscovers her passion for the carnatic music. That is to say, by preserving the violin of Vaishnavi, Swarnalatha preserves music of Vaishnavi.

The horrible accident keeps on haunting Swarnalatha's mind. She has lost her son in that accident. However, she is concerned much about the death of Vaishnavi. She feels pangs of guilt. It seems that her nerves are weakened. Whenever she sees anything related to Vaishnavi, she gets disturbed and distraught. Abhinay comes to her for learning music with Vaishnavi's violin. She is perturbed to see that violin.

Swarnalatha: Why do you bring your mother's violin here?

Abhinay: Don't you like it? (CPII: 380)

Swarnalatha is also quite aware of allegation put on her by Abhinay's father. Abhinay's father has a lot of contempt for music and also for her. He doesn't want Swarnalatha teach music to Abhinay. One day outside the temple, Swarnalatha bumps into Abhinay's father.

Abhinay's Father: I hear my son is learning music from you.

Swarnalatha: May be.

Abhinay's Father: Please leave him alone. Music will take him nowhere
(CPII: 381)

This allegation falls like a brick on her head. She is already in pain inwardly. Abhinay's father has increased her pain by this negative remark. Moreover, her decision of singing is not welcomed and appreciated by other people of the village.

Appa Rau: (to Annapoorna) Here is some news that will get rid of your
the city to sing!
Yes, I heard it only this morning. That boy Abhinay has asked

(CPII: 382-83)

Swarnalatha's condition is highlighted through interior and exteriors dramatic devices in the play. In this way, she has internal as well as external barriers in joining with Abhinay's musical group. Both the past and the present are non-corresponding to her suspended passion for music, to her desire of playing for Abhinay. Despite these, she agrees to go to city for singing in a banquet. After a long time, Swarnalatha starts her journey in the crowded bus. She feels a panic to see the child drawing a pattern on the dusty window panel. A small group begins to sing. Moreover, the bus is approaching the bridge. All revives her past. The present sinks in the past. Swarnalatha sees the past accident in her mind's eyes. She starts screaming and asks to stop the bus. She gets off with her bag from the bus and goes back home.

Everybody is anxiously waiting for her at the banquet hall. Balaji and Munna begin their instrumental sections. Abhinay strikes the first chord. He says, (Looking at Pinkie) “ ...” (CPII: 389) Abhinay is highly troubled. He feels that Swarnalatha has let him down. He can't sing without Swarnalatha. Despite being different persons and having different social identities, both are depending on each other for the fulfillment of their ambition. The music is common search between both of them. They visit the past and derive pain. Time and again the past bumps into their present and changes the course of their actions. It is attributed:

The consistent projection of the images of the past is a strong dramatic device to present the life on the stage. Dattani develops the thesis that past and present are not fragmented notions but they

are collectively integrated in human consciousness.²⁴

Abhinay is still hopeful and comes to see Swarnalatha at the village. He meets her and makes direct accusation.

Abhinay: You let me down.

Swarnalatha: I-I am sorry but I am helpless. There are some things I can't do

Abhinay : (Sighing) It's the same with me.(After a while) I can't play without your voice.

Swarnalatha: (CPII: 391)

Swarnalatha has been avoiding music for twenty years. The violin has been mute for all these years. Swarnalatha's 'silence' symbolizes the silent violin. Vaishnavi's voice is silenced with her death. Abhinay wants to rediscover her voice by revitalizing Swarnalatha's passion for music. The musical instrument is nothing if there is no passion for music. Vaishnavi's violin remains useless because Swarnalatha has suspended her passion for music. It is very necessary to instill passion in the heart of Swarnalatha for stirring the music in Vaishnavi's violin. Abhinay takes the initiative to make Swarnalatha's passion for music alive. He is impatient to break the long observed silence of Swarnalatha by rejuvenalizing her spirit for the music.

Abhinay: You don't have to say anything now. I will wait. Think about it. But remember, I am waiting for you to sing for me. I know you will. You want to sing. And I can help you fulfill your ambition. I am not leaving the village till you agree. (CPII: 391)

Pinkie also tries her best to bring Swarnalatha out of her depressed state of mind and make her sing for them. She succeeds in convincing Swarnalatha to sing for them.

Swarnalatha: (after a while) Thank you. I want to help you and Abhinay.

Pinkie: Looks like we all want to help each other but don't know how.
(CPII: 393)

Thus, all the three have common quest i.e. music. They try to interpret their identities through the image of music. They pass through emotional crisis which creates strong theatrical environment. Such condition motivates the dramatist to construct the plot of a play with music as motif. As Swarnalatha becomes ready to teach carnatic singing to Pinkie and Abhinay, she inquires;

Swarnalatha: How long have you been singing?

Pinkie:

Swarnalatha: Then it won't be too difficult.

Pinkie: What?

Swarnalatha: To teach you Carnatic singing. (CPII: 393-94)

Pinkie is overwhelmed to know that Swarnalatha intends to teach them carnatic music. Pinkie, like Abhinay, is very sensitive young lady and very curious to learn music from Swarnalatha. Moreover, she is feeling guilt consciousness. She wants to help Abhinay, Swarnalatha and the villagers as well. She carries the weight of the responsibility of her father for the accident. She is so impatient to learn music that she bluntly refuses duties at her mother's boutique shop.

Pinkie: And you are doing all this for me, I know. Mom, I have helped you enough. Now I want to do something that will help both of us.

Mrs. Kapoor: Which is?

Pinkie: Helping those people in the village. (CPII: 395)

Swarnalatha gradually develops courage and decides to teach Abhinay music anyhow. She rediscovers her spirit and passion for music.

Earlier, she avoids to see Abhinay's father's and Vaishnavi's violin. Now she has changed to gusty. She goes to Abhinay's village home to invite him to come over her home. She speaks to his father.

Swarnalatha: And bring your mother's violin.

Abhinay's father is stunned into silence.

Abhinay: I'll be there.

Abhinay goes in.

Swarnalatha :(to his father) I can teach him raga. I can teach him tala. Let us see whether he has inherited some bhava from his mother.
(CPII: 395-396)

Pinkie and Abhinay come down to Swarnalatha's home for learning carnatic singing. She makes them do a prayer to the idols of goddess Saraswati and Lord Ganesh. She sings a traditional Saraswati or Ganesh sthotram. It is followed by Abhinay and Pinkie. Abhinay follows it on violin. Pinkie follows Swarnalatha with a western voice. Later on, Swarnalatha offers a valuable insight into the carnatic style.

Abhinay's spirit is doubled with Swarnalatha's revived passion for music. Motivated by this, he decides to hold a concert by borrowing loan from the mortgage of his apartment. His father opposes his idea of investing money in music. Abhinay is not worried about the return of the money so invested. It is something beyond material investment. He wants to come out of the guilt and establish his identity as an individual. He also wants to help Swarnalatha to come out of the guilt. A change is also seen in Mrs. Kapoor's life. Like her daughter, she comes to the village and tries to help the old woman and others by purchasing their handloom sari at high price.

Old Woman: This one sari will cost you three hundred rupees.

Mrs. Kapoor: Nonsense!

Old Woman: Madam, we are all poor people. Okay give us what you think is best.

Mrs. Kapoor: (Pretending to be businesslike) Well, if you change the border the way I want it, I could give you seven hundred for a sari. Not one rupee more. (CP11: 401-02)

All the women, gathered over there, were excited to know her generosity. As a matter of fact, she tries to lessen their trouble by helping them in a best possible way. It suggests that she also feels the pangs of guilt.

The singers have arrived at the village. It is really very amusing and interesting scene in which Pinkie, Balaji, and Munna sing a song in the field. The villagers laugh and make fun of these city people and their mania for the music. Abhinay's father accuses Swarnalatha for this embarrassing moment.

Abhinay's Father: They are laughing at my son, because of you !

Swarnalatha: They are laughing at your son today. Tomorrow they will salute him for his talents. But then he will be Vaishnavi's son. (CP11: 403)

Swarnalatha's suspended passion for music is revived fully. She teaches one by one raga to Pinkie and Abhinay. Now she is going to teach Sindu Bhairavi raga to them. That is the morning raga which belongs to Abhinay's mother Vaishnavi.

Swarnalatha: This is the name of the raga I am going to teach you now. It's a morning raga. It's- very special to me. It was Vaishnavi's

(Collecting herself) please note down the ascending and descending scale. (CP11: 405)

It is very interesting to see the way they learn the raga. Pinkie makes notes in her book as Swarnalatha sings it. Abhinay heard this raga

when he was young. His mother used to play the scale on the violin and he moved about there. So when he listens to it, he quickly speaks out:

Abhinay: That's it!

Swarnalatha stops playing.

That's the raga I want! That's what I was looking for, don't you see! (To Pinkie) My mother never played that for me! She only played it for her. (Pointing to Swarnalatha) (CP11: 406)

Both Swarnalatha and Pinkie are shocked at this remark. This comes as an accusation to Swarnalatha disturbing her a lot. Perturbed by this, she gives a sad smile saying that she took his mother away from him. She feels that she is a cursed woman. With the flashback into the past, Swarnalatha beholds scene of Vaishnavi holding tanpura in her hand and feeding Abhinay as a child. Abhinay tried to convince her that he didn't intend anything else. Pinkie also tries to draw her out from the pain of the stroke that hits at the core of her heart. Swarnalatha is not in a condition to come out. She also realizes that the past is not the past but it is the part rather integrated part of the present. She slowly recovers strength from the assumption that present is constituted with the past. One has to face it, whether good or bad. In this way, she derives consolation from this and gathers courage to live in present. In a flashback, Swarnalatha sees the past bus accident and the bus keeling over. The day after accident, bodies were retrieved and shrouded. It was the most horrible day for Swarnalatha as her husband accused her for the death of their son.

Mr. Shashtri: You killed my son!

Abhinay's Father: (to the other villagers) These lives were lost because of that woman! (CP11: 408)

Even today Swarnalatha feels the pain and agony of her fault. Pinkie tries to convince her that it was not her fault. But Swarnalatha is not convinced. Therefore she says;

I wish you all the best. I won't give you my blessings. Since they would be more of a curse. But please believe me. I want you to be happy. I do. (CP11: 408)

Again Abhinay expresses his sincere apology for his unknowingly accusation made by him. At that time, Pinkie comes forward and tries to falsify their notions. She is restless and desperate. She wants to share something with them. She exclaims:

Pinkie: You are wrong. You are both very wrong. There is something you ought to know. (CP11: 409)

Pinkie has made up her mind to disclose the reality. All the three get into Pinkie's car. She puts the car in top gear and drives towards the bridge. Swarnalatha gets panicky and pleads her to stop the car. The car speeds towards the bridge and the truck passes by at high speed. The car crosses the bridge. Pinkie stops the car.

Pinkie: You see. Nothing happened. It is not a curse on you! I knew that nothing would happen, because you are not to blame. Look at
Pinkie holds Swarnalatha so that they are looking into each other's eyes. Abhinay joins them on the edge.

(CP11: 410)

Both Swarnalatha and Abhinay are dumb founded. They are left speechless. Pinkie further says;

I- was too small
then to know that. I thought he was happy. He loved me. He really loved me. I know that. But he

(Pleading now) I know that if he were alive he would

If
you cannot forgive him, at least don't blame yourself for what

(CP11: 410)

Thus, Pinkie exposes the reality of the dreadful past event and awaits the forgiveness from Swarnalatha and Abhinay. Swarnalatha feels relieved and relaxed. She views the bridge in a new light. She takes a deep breath and gets in courage to speak. New light and new spirit starts stirring inside her.

It doesn't matter whose fault it was. The truth is that your mother is gone and so is my son. Can any force bring them back to us? Can any force bring back her father? No. (CP11: 410)

This is new spirited and enlightened Swarnalatha. She is filled with practical wisdom and moral guts. She understands the true nature of the worldly things. She is encouraged and elevated to face the harsh reality of life. She motivates them to face the present constituted with the past. Abhinay is also filled with strength and understanding. He tells -

(CP11: 411)

This remark frees Pinkie from the pressure of past guilt of her father. It seems that music appears to be a character or a controlling force in the play *Morning Raga*. Sindu Bhairavi or Morning Raga seems to be the source of inspiration and strength in the lives of Swarnalatha, Pinkie and Abhinay. Morning Raga instills a lot of spirit and zeal in the life of Abhinay. As stated earlier, he has decided to organize a concert in the city. He sends an invitation card to Swarnalatha. Mr. Shastri opens the card which has an image of mother and child. Since, Swarnalatha's hands are soiled, her husband reads to her.

Mr.Shastri: (reading) 'You are wrong. There are forces that can bring back your son and my mother to us. I hope one day I can help you understand how proud your son would be if you sang for him. I don't know how to make you see that, but I will keep trying.'
(CP11: 411-12)

Abhinay is the most energetic and optimistic character of the play. He has got both talent and proper understanding. For him, music is a powerful force that can make impossible possible. Swarnalatha decides to join him at the concert. Mr. and Mrs. Shashtri are driving across the bridge. This is for the first time; she appears to be joyous at the bridge site. They reach at the auditorium. Abhinay is little nervous due to the scarcity of the crowd. However, soon, he is cheered to see the stream of villagers coming into the auditorium. Mrs. Kapoor informs him that she sold some tickets when she was there. Anhinay's father has also arrived with the villagers. When Anhinay sees Swarnalatha, he rushes to her beaming. He bends down and touches his guru's feet. Balaji, Munna and Abhinay are on the stage. Abhinay checks on the violin on the stage. Pinkie also appears on the stage as the curtains open. They are greeted with a loud applause. They are going to play Morning Raga. Pinkie; being busy in conversation with Swarnalatha, appears lately on the stage. She informs her that they are going to play Morning Raga taught by her. Pinkie also informs her that her dream of singing in the city is going to come true.

Suddenly Swarnalatha feels inspiration and makes a decision to go to the stage and sing Morning Raga. She comes forward and touches the stage with her hand in salutation. She begins to sing Morning Raga going into intricate patterns. She receives warm applause from the audience. She feels that her dream has come true. She is so enthralled and elated and encouraged, she goes to the mike and declares: "Thank you. It has been a difficult raga for me to learn. Twenty years is a long time.' Music is a never ending journey. *Abhinay and Pinkie look on.* It has been my dream to sing for an audience such as you. But Finding it difficult to get the words) tonight, I will sing this song for my son who, like my music, has returned after a very long journey. (Looking at Abhinay) Abhinay, I sing this raga for you- my son." (CP11: 416)

Abhinay is highly touched by her statement. If Swarnalatha has got back her music and son, Abhinay has got back his mother after twenty years. It is the force of the music that brings him back his mother, Vaishnavi

and Swarnalatha her son. The music triumphs over the forces that control human life. Through flashback, Abhinay imagines his mother Vaishnavi singing and playing with him. In flashback, Swarnalatha imagines singing this song for her son, while singing, in flashback, Pinkie imagines her father rocking her to sleep. In this way, the trio of the singers consisting of Swarnalatha, Abhinay and Pinkie come together in one spot. It is no more music coming from the scales of the violin, but it is the music coming out of the scales of the human souls. It is enhancing and elevating music. It crosses the physical and mental spaces and attains the glorious height. The song ends to a thunderous applause. The music opens up new avenues in human life.

Ek Alag Mausam is a celebrated screen play dealing with the pain and suffering of HIV positives of our society. It is a thematic innovation in the field of Indian drama in English. The film *Ek Alag Mausam* was released in India on 4th February, 2005. It was produced and directed by K. P. Sasi, supported and presented by Actionaid India.

Mahesh Dattani takes the pen against the forces that suppress the call of humanity. The play is an attempt to respond the call of humanity beyond the socio medico territories. The plot of the play deals with emotional and existential crisis in the lives of Aparna and George, the two HIV positives. It is generally considered as the love-saga of the two HIV positives Aparna and George. Beena Agrawal appreciates it in a newer light.

Ek Alag Mausam is a play with a message, it is not a question of the love of the two people but it is a question of love with life. Dattani takes the place that the misfortune of being marginalized as being

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Dattani's theatrical art depicts the real life experiences corresponding to the human conscience. He is very innovative and quite daring in the presentation of human experiences on the stage. He doesn't

allow his presentation of theatrical art rationed by any norms or conditions of dramaturgy. He believes:

Unless you reflect the ethos of the people, it is going to be an elitist theatre; or it is going to be a museum piece intended to satisfy curiosity. On the other hand, if you widen your audience, the only thing you can do is to write more about them.²⁶

Thus, Dattani reflects the ethos of common people by mirroring their experiences associated with their conscience. His theatre tries to reach to those people who are silenced by the various customs, myths, conventions, misbelieve etc. of the society.

The play *Ek Alag Mausam* focuses on fundamental thrusts of human beings such as to survive, to belong and to live life in an honourable way. It also brings out the forces that thwart human being from fulfilling these thrusts on various pretext and grounds. The play shows us attitude and apathy of society towards the ill-fated HIV positives who lead life with pity and disgust and dies in the shame.

Like many other plays, *Ek Alag Mausam* depicts incidents of past and present in the lives of Aparna and George. The story is told in time present and time past. The actions are revealed through the flux of conscience of Aparna, the heroine of the play. When the play begins, Aparna decides to put Paro in Panchgini boarding school. Paro's mother was died due to the virus infection. She was brought up like a daughter by Aparna. Aparna did her best for well-being of Paro. Now she feels that she can't continue her support as usual. Before sending her boarding school, she has worked out according to future requirements of Paro. Paro feels filial affection and affinity with Aparna. So disappointed by Aparna's decision, Paro pleads, "Why? Why are you sending me away?" (CP11: 473)

Dattani has made effective use of flashback technique in this play. The most of the actions are shown through flashback device. Aparna is

very sensitive and sensible lady. Her heart is filled with human sympathy and compassion. They are driving in the car, on their way to the school. Paro accuses, “

George.” (CPII: 474) Moved by Paro’s allegation, Aparna sinks into the past and the past course of action issues out from the flux of her conscience. In a surrealistic situation, she sees the picture of George driving a truck. The whole past emerges from the flux of her conscience. Suddenly, the truck approaches at high speed. She manages to avoid the accident and pulls over to the side. The horror of past appears one after another before her eyes. The memory of George driving truck is very fresh and powerful. Again, truck passes by honking madly. She again shifts to the past and recalls the past phone call of Rosalynd Cooper who was a volunteer nurse at the central

(CPII: 476)

Aparna is expecting a baby. She informs her husband about the Cooper’s telephonic talk and requests him to accompany with her hospital. She puts “It’s something about our baby. I am scared Suresh. I want you with me.” (CPII: 476) She is greatly hurt as her husband is not keen to accompany her. So, she is compelled to go to the hospital alone. At the hospital, Cooper advises her to give up her baby. Aparna strongly objects to this idea by asking “Why? What’s wrong with my baby?” (CPII: 478) Aparna wants the child anyhow. She doesn’t understand what doctor and nurse mean to say. Dr. Sanyal explains, “Look here. I think it is better for you to come with your

(CPII: 478)

Dr. Sanyal also informs her that her blood samples were sent to them for some routine tests. Aparna is anxious to know about the results of

heard of HIV?” (CPII: 478) Aparna is unconvinced and laughs a little at this question. She tries to argue without understanding thing properly. A little later, she realizes what is being indicated. She is deeply traumatized to know that she is HIV positive. This is quite unexpected and inconceivable for her.

Therefore, she importunes, "It's not possible. How could I be HIV positive?" (CP11: 478) Despite the doctor's confirmation of her being HIV positive,

but my husband, I haven't had any blood transfusions, I always make sure the

of test? That's more accurate? (CP11: 479) Both the doctor and nurse try their best to reassure the validity of the finding of the test. Cooper convinces her that they have even done the Western Blot. Moreover, she is a trained counsellor. So there is no shadow of the doubt about the truthfulness of the report. Dr. Sanyal even declares that Aparna got the virus infection from her husband.

Her conscience receives a great jerk at the disclosure of her husband being HIV positive. She is left wonder struck and broken within. She

(CP11: 479) Aparna seems to be vulnerable completely. She is frightened at the idea of loss of the unborn baby as she pines to have the child. She is divided into two distressing ideas. Besides, the loss of the unborn baby, she is also worried about her husband. She feels that she is losing on either side. She is feeling an acute mental agony and her soul falls to pieces at the prospect of losing the baby. She still keeps on arguing that she wants the baby alive. Dr. Sanyal makes final assessment:

And either your baby or you will die soon." (CP11: 480) The doctor is presenting curt truth without understanding motherly sentiments of Aparna. Aparna is helpless and left dumbfounded. There are two spaces of her sufferings. She is paining physically because of virus infection. Apart from this, she is greatly worried about the pain that results from social stigma. When she comes out, she realizes that some people were looking at her with a mixed feeling of pity and disgust.

Besides the existential crisis, the play presents Aparna's maternal crisis. She is a woman and to be the mother of a child is the bliss in every woman's life. Her privilege being mother is shorn of and destroyed. It is more of internal crisis than of external one. It is observed:

reality that it has to the mother who harbours it.²⁷

Aparna knows no ray of hope for rescuing her child. She has become miserable creature. She goes back to her home and makes a call to her mother. But the grief grips her so strongly that she can't speak even a single sentence to her mother. It indicates mental agony and suffering prevailing in her mind. Her husband expresses his repentance for not accompanying her at the hospital. She convinces him that he knew about the infection. She enquires of him how he has got the virus.

Aparna: All those business trips! Those late nights. How many women have you infected so far?

Suresh: I don't know!

Aparna: You are too drunk to know.

Suresh: What are you going to do now? (CPII: 482)

By asking this question, Suresh puts her in a more miserable and pitiable condition. This question has got impersonal significance. All the affected are questioned in the similar way. Aparna is beseeching him for helping her. She is unable to make the decision. She implores, "I don't know.

(CPII: 482) The playwright remarks that Suresh is frightened at the prospect of making this decision. Aparna pathetically accuses him that he has ruined her life. She needs help from him. She doesn't want to lose her baby as advised by the doctor. Her husband is also sailing in the same boat which is going to sink very soon. He is unable to help her. His helplessness is revealed in the way he replies. "How can I help you? I am dying too." (CPII: 482)

He tries to escape from the shame and danger that involve the disease. He leaves the city with guilt ridden soul. Aparna makes vain efforts to hold him back and talk a little in an hour of crisis.

Aparna: Suresh, stay for a while! Just talk to me for a while!

Suresh: (CPII: 482)

He, in fact, has neither capacity nor courtesy to help her. Aparna feels a sense of uprootedness and insecurity. In her desperate mood and vulnerable condition, Aparna lets go her child. She is weakened in both body and will. She breaks down sobbing. She pathetically asks her mother, "Mother! Please come here! I am dying! I am dying, mother!" (CPII: 484) This is the most moving and pitiable scene of the play. She is deserted by all and supported by none in the hours of crisis. Her husband has deserted her so infected and afflicted. Moreover, the infection is killing her physically as well as socially. The pain is both interior and exterior. What fears the most is the social stigma attached to the disease. Forced by the fate and family, ailing Aparna seeks refuge at Jeevan Jyoti Hospital. Gradually, she feels that Jeevan Jyoti is her new and true home. It is observed:

It was a new dawn in her life with message of the shadows of death, can't be overpowered, can at least be lingered with the positive thrust of life. If HIV is the preface to death and social shame, Jeevan Jyoti is certainly the light of life.²⁸

When she goes to the hospital, the group therapy session is going on. Aparna hangs around the door and observes the session. Dr. Machado moves around with grace and energy while addressing the inmates. Dr. Machado (moving around) " Aren't we all dying? Isn't everyone in this world dying? (Pausing for effect) I am not HIV positive. But I am also dying. But do I think about my death all the bloody time..." (CPII: 486)

Dr. Machado tries his best to lift their spirit and shake off their fear of death. The people are encouraged and cheered by his attempt. Aparna is moved by Dr. Machado's slogan "Keep fighting. Seize the moment" (CPII: 487) He infuses positive attitude into the minds of the people infected with virus. It is evident that death is not more dreadful than the process that leads

towards death. The social disgust, exclusion and avoidance are more horrifying than the horror of death. Dr. Machado is very impressive and optimistic in his presentation. He appears to be a subtle souled psychologist. He invites them to share the positive experiences. Encouraged by Dr. Machado's words, Manoj, one of the boys, shares his experiences with two different dentists. He needed gum surgery to save his teeth and went to a dentist and told the truth of his being HIV positive. So, the doctor didn't attend him. After this unhappy experience, he went to another dentist whom he didn't tell the truth of his having virus infection. The dentist did the surgery. His gums are perfect now. Later, he sent him a letter informing that he was HIV positive. This provides sort of amusement to the people. It indicates that social myth is more powerful than the individual's rationalism. This incident is full of humour and satire. Dattani ridicules the society where even a doctor, a man of science, is carried away with the tides of social myths and irrational notions and increases the suffering and pain of the people instead. The social humiliation and spiritual pain is killing Aparna bit by bit. She tries to solace herself by helping other victims of AIDS.

Death is an inevitable phenomenon in human life. Dr. Machado approves that none can avoid the death. However, cheerful atmosphere makes one's journey a little easier. Before approving her services, Dr. Machado tries to test her by giving a very difficult job of entertaining Ramnath who is dying. It was really an acid test for Aparna. She goes to the room to find the man who is all skin and bones. She is quite horrified and bewildered to see him. Some people including Manoj are playing a game of cards around him. Manoj encourages the dying man to play one more game, but Ramnath disapproves his action.

Man A: Yes you can. Come on. Try to beat us.

Manoj: You can't beat death. But you can beat us. Try! (CP11: 492)

This is unbearable for Aparna. The man looks at Aparna. His breathing gets more and more desperate. He deals the cards and wins the game. And suddenly his breathing stops. He loses the life. Aparna rushes out

petrified to the doctor's office admitting, "I think I have failed, doctor." (CPII: 493)

Aparna's encounter with George is very significant thing in her life. His relationship inculcates the sense of belongingness and lifts her from the depression. Aparna first mistakes George as the doctor. Later on, she comes to know that he is both an owner and driver of the truck transporting the dead bodies at Jeevan Jyoti. Aparna is very candid and kind lady. She admits that she is not doing any philanthropic or charitable task. Aparna's candid confession impresses much to Dr. Machado. When Dr. Machado inquires what she would like to do. She promptly replies that she would like to work with the children at the earliest. It is quite clear that she wants to work with children because she wants to redress her lost motherhood. It is fitness of the thing to say that she tries to define the meaning of her meaningless life by working with the children. Gradually, she feels good and looks forward for a new way out of her perpetual suffering. George is very emotional and energetic volunteer. He understands Aparna in a proper way. She also develops emotional bondage with the children and George. She starts taking interests in their lives. Aparna inquires him about his truck driving business. She is curious to know about him. George explains, "Your first day here and you are asking so many questions! Who do you think takes the bodies for cremation? The municipality van won't even enter the compound. Before me they had to bury or burn them all right here. So be careful. If you come here often enough people will think you have AIDS also." (CPII: 497)

Aparna is very apologetic. She is bewildered at this suggestion. Initially, both Aparna and George are quite ignorant of each other's being HIV positive. George comes to know about Aparna's having HIV positive through Dr. Machado. After meeting the children, Aparna feels that her sufferings are less than the children. There are so many people who are sicker than her. As she tell

(CPII: 498) Her statement highlights the world of suffering and pain at the hospital. It creates cathartic impact on her mind. She feels a little relaxed knowing people with more sickness.

Dattani tends to say that social apathy doubles the pain and suffering of the diseased people. Human love and warmth can help in forgetting pain if not cure it. Aparna has been suffering acutely. She starts forgetting her suffering and pain in the emotional company of George and the children. Dattani always focuses on the root cause of the problem for generating awareness among the audience. Like a scientist, he analyses 'cause and effect' of the problem. In this play, he throws light on the cause and the effect of the issue of HIV positives. He examines and demonstrates that the virus infected people have two kinds of suffering one physical and second mental resulting from the social apathy. The diseased people are more scared of social stigma than that of death which is imminent. The sign at Jeevan Jyoti hospital 'Leave Your Prejudice Outside' is very suggestive and significant. Dattani believes that social myths, convention, prejudice, apathy etc. have made the lives of many people worst than the hell. If society shakes off apathy and deep rooted prejudices, the life will become easier journey.

George tries to make Aparna happy and cheerful enabling her knows the reality of life. She is highly sensitive lady. Initially, she fails to learn the harsh realities of life. After working with children for days at Jeevan Jyoti, Aparna goes back her home and decides not to return. Aparna is resented that the children showed no much interest in her. The scene in which George and all the children visit Aparna's home is quite dramatic and provides a lot of amusement. It focuses on the theme of craving for the interpersonal relationship. Aparna is adamant in her decision of not coming back to the hospital. The children insist her to come back and teach them that song. As Suraj requests Aparna, "Aunty. Please come. We all want to learn that song you were teaching us." (CPII: 509) Her mother requests them to eat the ladoos, but they refuse to eat them. Suraj asserts, "First aunty must agree to come to Jeevan Jyoti again." (CPII: 511) Touched by the love and affection displayed by the children, Aparna's mother assures them that Aparna will come there again.

The play *Ek Alag Mausam* celebrates the joy of life rather than mourning on the death. It encourages how to fight against suffering. Here

everybody is in love with life. The play depicts love for life. Once, Aparna complained that she should have been informed about Suraj's deceased parents. George puts it in a very subtle way. "Death is not news over here. Life is." (CPII: 504). Therefore, Ramnath was encouraged to play cards even before few seconds of his long breath.

Dattani maintains that nothing can rout 'innate blood consciousness'.³⁰ No condition or clause hinders the expression of human sentiments. Under the evil impact of the social prejudices and myths, people are forced to live lives at the peripheral level of society. They cause social exclusion of the weaker sections of the society. Nothing can stop man's longing for human love and interpersonal relationship. They can degrade the human prestige, position, and dignity etc. Human soul and sensibility are out of their reach. The lake washing scene is fine example of this. George is in the lake washing himself. Aparna, passes from there. George, slowly, steps out of the lake. Suddenly Aparna sees him. She is transfixed as he slowly emerges from the water. He is wearing only small *langot* around his waist. Aparna realizes the impact of his wet body shining a golden yellow in the morning sunlight. Suddenly George notices Aparna staring at him. He becomes aware of his wet body creating sensational effect on Aparna. He picks up the towel to wipe himself and shakes off water from his hair. Watching this, Aparna is flustered. She promptly goes back to her car and drives off without saying anything,

Again on another occasion, while hitting nails, Aparna hits his fingers. George is waving his fingers in pain. She is frightened and holds his finger and is about to suck it. As soon as she realizes his masculinity, she is frozen. George stops yowling due to warmth and care displayed by her. This scene encompasses the pain, sensation and laughter. The pain can be reduced by the human warmth and care.

Once, George and Aparna along with Suraj go to George's home to collect wooden soldier. Aparna is relieved to find wooden soldier as it is more needful than medicine for Suraj. In her excitement, she hugs George.

The same is reciprocated by George with more feeling. As Aparna feels stiffened, George breaks away. Soon after this, George goes to her and kisses her tenderly. Both have become passionate and emotional. George, feeling strongly, confesses. "Aparna. I love you. (CPII: 519) But Aparna gently breaks away and makes fragmented utterance "I- (CPII: 519) George knows well that she is refusing on the ground that she is HIV positive. So George completes her sentence by asking counter question: "Because you are HIV positive?" (CPII: 519) She looks away. Not to know what to say. "

(CPII: 519)

She is greatly shocked to know his being HIV positive. She runs to the car and speeds away leaving behind George shouting "What is wrong in it? Tell me what's so wrong?" (CPII: 520) George seems to assert that one shouldn't run away from the reality of life. Everyone has got right to express his/her feelings despite the social /legal prohibition. No social or state's law can suppress expression of human sensibility permanently. It seems that George is the mouth piece of his creator who speaks through George's mouth. The playwright suggests that if you want to live life happily, face it rather than running away.

The question that arises in our mind is that why doesn't Aparna reciprocate feelings to George? The reason is that George's revelation of his being HIV positive reminds her husband who infected her. She is ignorant of real cause of George's infection. Therefore, she feels that George is shameless than her husband who buttoned his lips after knowing his being HIV positive.

The inset story of Rita and her brothel is also a very bold dramatic attempt of Mahesh Dattani. Through the character of Rita, Dattani throws light on the illicit sex going on in our society. He also throws light on the fact that such unlicensed sex business is managed by the men and women are the victim of it. It is understood that corrupt sex is the cause and carrier of the AIDS disease.

At the exterior level in present, Aparna and Paro moving in the car singing a Hindi film song. Suddenly Paro asks Aparna how she first met her mother, Rita. Aparna replies that she is thankful to George for that. With this, scene shifts again in the past and George, Manoj, and Shyamu are seen creating awareness against AIDS. They have converted the truck into a makeshift stage. So many sex workers have assembled around the makeshift stage. George is addressing them in a question answer method. It is concluded that HIV doesn't spread through human touch, living, eating, and sleeping with an infected person. Nor doesn't it spread through mosquitoes and flies. It can be spread through unprotected sex, infected blood, contaminated injection needles and from infected mother to newborn.

Suddenly, they saw a woman being beaten and dragged out of her house along with her five-year old daughter. Actually, she was employed at the brothel as a sex worker by some people. It is revealed that she has got virus infection on account of her involvement in illegal sex business. They want to drive out her from her house as they are losing customers due to virus infection. Her name is Rita and her daughter's name is Paro. Rita is marginalized as an AIDS infected person and her existence is doomed. She has no hope for her life. It doesn't matter to her if she dies there. Therefore, in a desperate mood, she makes a plea to George for saving her daughter.

Rita: (pushing her child into George's arms). At least take her away. I will die here. But put my daughter in some orphanage. (CPII: 527)

Like post-colonial writers, Dattani is concerned about the problems and suffering of the marginalized people. He tries to justify them by putting their voices on the page, stage, and also onto cinematic screen. He attempts to articulate the voices of those whose voices have remained inarticulated so far.

George informs Rita that they are taking them to Jeevan Jyoti hospital where she will be looked after without giving anything in return. George assures her that hospital will take care of her along with her daughter.

Rita is so relieved that she feels happy to have virus. She pathetically speaks, "oh! Thank God I have Aids" (CP: II-528). At the hospital, she was separated from her daughter for the safety of her daughter. Though, Rita is a sex-worker, her motherhood is intact. She is all the time thinking about her little daughter. It is quite touching when she asks Aparna to allow her daughter stay with her only for one night. She requests "Let her stay with me just for one night please" (CP: II-529) Despite doctor's suggestion, Aparna allows her daughter stay with Rita. This is a very suggestive and significant thing. Both Aparna and Rita are women as though different in social background. They are same at one point i.e. undying desire for motherhood. It is observed:

Aparna and Rita are from two distinctive social status, but both of them possess equal quest for motherhood. It signifies that human sentiments, human sympathy and human sensibility is associated with the universal human experiences, irrespective of externally imposed restrictions.³⁰

The longing for human love and relationship is the main theme of the play. George and Aparna, being HIV positives are destined to end up like many other HIV positive very soon. Nevertheless, they want to make every moment of life meaningful. George wants to enjoy the life on the devouring face of the death. Joy and happiness is the gist of his existence. He can't defeat death, but he can rout pain by being cheerful and happy. George also wants Aparna to be like him. That is why he asks Aparna "don't deserve happiness?" (CP II: 532)

George has courage of conviction that he has right to be happy and enjoy life like everyone. The virus cannot restrict her zest of life. His assertion imparts dramatic environment to the play. Aparna feels happy and comfortable at Jeevan Jyoti. She identifies her suffering with the suffering of the people in the hospital. It is the sublimation of her pain. The hospital lights new life in her. She has derived satisfaction through the realization of others'

pain; whereas George is deriving happiness through realization of accountability of inter personal relationship.

Aparna believes that Jeevan Jyoti lives on forever. She has nothing else to like for. She doesn't know that the lease of the land is going to be expired and the landlord won't renew it. George doesn't bother about his future; but he bothers only about the present. She feels happy by helping to the needy people. It is a new start to work for the cause of the virus infected people. Aparna is little suspicious about being happy. She puts, "To watch each other die? I see my mother observing my every move. My every cough, my every sneeze is painful to her. I can see the terror in her eyes when she is thinking this is the beginning of the end. I can't do this to anyone else. And what makes you think that just because we are both HIV positive, we will be happy together?" (CP11: 533)

Actually, George wants her forget that they are HIV positives and things related to it. He thinks only of their lives together. She is unable to forget all that. George teaches her to live life heroically. He teaches everyone the same. He encourages other to live like a soldier. He believes that zest of life is very necessary for the sustenance of existence. One can survive and also enjoy against the backdrop of perpetual pain if he is possessed with strong will power. Therefore, he reproaches Aparna;

You have branded yourself AIDS, AIDS, AIDS! You have put a big red stamp on yourself. I thought only an uncaring, unfeeling society would do that to us. But no. We don't have to worry about society. We are doing it to ourselves! I refuse to brand myself. All I know is that I love you and I want to marry you. (CP11: 533)

The character of George reminds us heroic will of Earnest Hemingway's Santiago who asserts; "Man can't be destroyed.No one can destroy my will to complete my journey!" Aparna is feared of at the prospect of horrors that AIDS involve. She loves George but she doesn't want to undergo the pain that involve in it. She keeps on avoiding confession on one or

another ground. Her mind is full of doubts and fears as well as confusions and queries. George makes relentless efforts for clearing them up. In her accusation of not knowing her, George convinces her in the following words:

George: (hurt) How can you say that, Aparna. That is totally untrue! I know your every mood, your every movement. I know your fears of death. I have seen you with the children. You want to be close to them; but any demands of affection and you are suddenly as distant as the stars. I can see the fears in your eyes and also the desperation to love something without the fear of causing it harm. Yes. I know you, Aparna. I think of you all the time. I want to think of ways to make you feel happy. I have never felt this way about another woman before. (CPII: 533)

The way Aparna retort is very painful and hurting. He is anguished and angered when Aparna insults him saying that he is merely a truck driver. It is easy to understand the cause of his infection. She can't marry the person who has also infected many other women. She calls him shameless person. He is highly agitated and distressed. He wants to reveal the truth- the cause of his illness. He makes a plea to explain himself as he implores, “

Aparna! I can't lose both Jeevan Jyoti and you!” (CPII: 534)

George is the most innocent character, but he is punished beyond endurance. He is infected, rejected and insulted for no fault of his own. All the same, he survives and sustains against all the odd forces that consume his self-esteem and existence. He endures all these because he has got inward strength and courage.

Jeevan Jyoti is a new life for all the HIV positives. Aparna and George also feel that Jeevan Jyoti is not a place but something more than that for them. It is not only healing clinic for virus infected, but it is real home for them. It is the only place where they feel associated and needed by others.

Condition of George is more pathetic and tragic than Aparna. He is on the verge of losing both Jeevan Jyoti and Aparna. To make matter worse, he is repelled by his own parents. The scene in which he is rejected by his parents is very tragic one. After a long, George goes back to his home. His mother is happy to see him after a long time. Suddenly a group of villagers came there asking George to leave the village as he is HIV positive. His parents try their best to pacify the annoyed crowd, but they couldn't succeed in it.

Villager 1: (picking up a stone). I said stay away from us. (To the rest of the crowd.) We all heard what Sukhiya had to say! He swore on his mother, it is the truth. (CP11: 536)

This is the worst example of social apathy and myth. AIDS is an organic disease. It is improper to interpret it in terms of morality. By relating it to moral aberration, the society does grave injustice to an individual. It is an unfair mode to hinder the call of humanity. George's mother breaks down and cries in despair. He is struck dumb to see his mother's grief-stricken face. His father collects himself and speaks, "You may live for another seven years. But you have killed us before we have entered our graves. What face do we have left in this village? (with great effort) Don't come back. Leave. Go George! (making a gesture as if to a beggar) Go." (CP11: 537)

It is apparent that the flood of social apathy sweeps away the filial love and piety. His parents are weighed down under the weight of social stigma. His mental and physical pain is subsided against the horrifying social shame. They are left with the feeling that a curse has fallen upon the entire family. George tries to make everyone understand the AIDS in a proper way. He moves one place to another educating people about the incurable disease i.e. AIDS. Unfortunately he meets with a little success. Even, his parents are carried away with the waves of irrational myths of society.

The play *Ek Alag Mausam* may be deemed as a tool to evolve social protest against the social myths and misbelieve about the dreaded disease. Jeevan Jyoti is the makeshift home for the people with HIV positive,

but it becomes real home for them. It is going to cease due to the shortage of fund. Aparna is organizing a charity show on the 2nd December, world AIDS Day, for generating resources for saving the place from the crisis. She has encouraged the children to make posters for the world AIDS Day concert. She makes relentless efforts to get these children to prepare some painting which they could sell. Rita's daughter Paro has also drawn a wonderful painting which Aparna intends to send to UNICEF. George wants Aparna deriving satisfaction from the idea that she managed to save Jeevan Jyoti. Infact, George sold all his trucks and godown to pay for the lease agreement of Jeevan Jyoti. When Aparna comes know about this at the auditorium, she insists him to stay with her. She implores,

(CPII:

545)

George advises Aparna to look after little Paro and intimates her. He says, "It's your duty to make the world understand that." (CPII: 545)

George is right that the AIDS is not the result of someone's conscious act. It seems that the dramatist, through the character of George, strives to create understanding and love for HIV positive. It is irony that Aparna herself is infected with the virus. She is unable to appreciate the condition of George. Like others, she thinks that he is infected due to his involvement in unlicensed sex. One thing should be noted that she, gradually, is deriving courage to assert like George. She doesn't feel shame in confessing that she is HIV positive even in public. On the stage at the concert, she speaks, "I too am living with the fear of losing someone whom I love. And I too am not ashamed" (CPII: 546)

At the exterior level on the road in present, Aparna and Paro are enjoying the music in the car. They call on Dr. Machado at his house out of courtesy. This visit proves to be a turning point, opening up a new dimension in her life. During their conversation, Dr. Machado brings up the issue

between George and Aparna blaming her for running away and breaking his heart. Aparna contention is that she did so because he was HIV positive like her husband. Dr. Machado inquires if he didn't tell how he was infected.

Aparna: Was there any doubt? He wasn't a drug user. And being a truck driver, it was very clear to me.

Dr. Machado: My child, you have been very foolish. So foolish. He didn't get it through a prostitute. (CP11: 598)

Dr. Machado shocks her saying that George got virus from his son Joseph. He explains, "This man – Joseph was my son. He died of AIDS seven years ago. I started Jeevan Jyoti in his memory. My son and Joseph

with some anti social elements from Bombay. He became a drug addict. It was George who dragged him to th

they were coming back in George's truck. The truck fell into a ditch. George was seriously injured. Joseph escaped unhurt. George needed blood. Joseph gave him his blood, And- unknowingly- " (CP11: 549)

Aparna is traumatized at this revelation. He adds that she never gave him a chance to tell her truth. However, he suggests that it is not too late to reciprocate her feelings. Aparna is self-reproachive for being selfish and foolish. Soon after this, Aparna and Paro arrive at Panchgini School. Quite dramatically, Dr. Machado comes there bringing George with him. The area is surrounded by hills and mountains. Paro and George go to climb the mountain nearby. Dr. Machado and Aparna remain at the school campus waiting for the turn of the admission. During this time, Dr. Machado promotes Aparna to reciprocate her feeling for George without further delay. Encouraged by Dr. Machado, Aparna runs in the direction pointed by the doctor. The play ends at the exterior level on a hill showing Aparna and George in each other's arm and Paro blowing bubbles on them. With immense mental strength and exceptional power of understanding, the character of George triumph over the man made and nature made maladies.

Dattani circulates some ideas like 'live and let others live', 'understand and love', 'giving up myths and prejudice' etc. Aparna creates a web of illusion and allows herself live in that manner. Eventually, George breaks through illusion presenting the reality. George does his best to inculcate the idea of understand and love in other. The play *Ek Alag Mausam* may be seen as a response to call of humanity. It is a sincere and genuine attempt of creating awareness against the social myth and apathy that are more dreaded than the most dreaded disease AIDS. At the end, the dramatist attaches a disguised message by way of Dr. Machado's speech. At the interior level in the school hall, Dr. Machado addresses the school children as follows, "On World AIDS Day. Let us remember the lives of those who died of the virus and respect the dignity of those who are living with HIV. Today's enemy is not other human beings from another country or people of another religion or race. The real enemy today is a tiny invisible creature a virus. The AIDS virus knows no barriers of caste, creed, religion, age, gender, and race. It is not prejudice, fear or ignorance that will win the battle against the AIDS.

" (CPII: 556)

This extract may be seen as the epilogue of the play. Dattani seems to be missioned at working for the cause of the deprived and marginalized. He strives for doing the justice to the people who have been denied love and justice. He dramatizes the emotional crisis resulting from the lack of understand about the dreaded disease AIDS very skillfully and artistically. It renders immense prestige and popularity to the play.

Theatre and film are often judged as the method of spreading the ideas among the people of society. Despite its limitations, it has evolved powerful means of communication and cultivation of ideas aiming at a change in the attitude and aptitude of the society. The picturization of the play *Ek Alag Mausam* opens up new avenues for disseminating message of understand and love for the AIDS infected community. Terry Almeidee, the chief executive of Action AIDS Indian Society, aptly observes:

It is a film that will make people sit up and start thinking about the issue seriously so far. We have only seen marginalization of such people. Through *Ek Alag Mausam*, we hope to put the problem in a different perspective and help audience to understand the issue better. We used the film medium to reach out to not only HIV positive people out there who are feeling isolated, but also a large cross-section of people.³¹

Dattani is well known for investing images and symbols in his works. He often weaves his ideas with the threads of images and symbols. It speaks volume of poetic exuberances and craftsmanship. He uses different symbols and images to express certain views. Wooden soldier is a very rich and meaningful symbol. The soldier fights against the enemy of the country without fearing the death. Here virus is an enemy to human body. George teaches children to fight like soldier without keeping fear of death. In soldier's life, fight is important. So, Suraj wants to be a soldier and fight like a soldier to beat it. When George asks how their soldier is doing, Suraj replies;

Suraj: (holding the toy soldier up). Attention! The soldier will kill all enemies of the country.

George: Live like a soldier, die like a soldier (CPII: 506)

Thus, the play champions the idea of inculcation of courage and strength in the virus affected people. To live bravely is one of the tones of the play. The dramatist depicts socio-medico issue with philosophical twist. The play *Ek Alag Mausam*, being a screen play, spared from the theatrical restraints and constrains and thereby helps the issue in a variety ways and angles. In this regard, the observation of Pudorkin, a Russian director, is worth mentioning here:

The theatrical producer works with real reality, which though he may always remould, yet forces

him to remain by the laws of real space and real time. The film director on the other hand has his material the finished, recorded and celluloid. This material from which his final work is composed consists not of living men or real landscape, not of real, actual stage sets, but only of their images, recorded on separate strips that can be shortened, altered and assembled according to his will.³²

Aparna's love and care for Paro, George's affection for the kids, all the HIV positives and feelings for Aparna, and Dr. Machado's undying paternal care and consideration are the way to redress the gaps carved in their lives by social apathy and fate. The stroke of AIDS cut off their relationship from their loved ones for good. Aparna is separated from her husband and has to let go the unborn. There is a strong desire for the filial love. George has to leave his parents due to the virus infection. The lack of parental love enhances him for the love of Aparna and others. Dr. Machado lost his son Joseph due to the virus infection. This deficiency keeps on flowing the brook of paternal care inside him. All these things have got universal significance and therefore the play got wide popularity. There is a meaning all across the spoken words.

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Chapter-V

Conclusion

Indian English Literature has become an independent and outstanding credal writing in the Commonwealth Literature. Earlier, fiction and poetry had been highly fruit-bearing literary endeavors and drama was less profitable pursuit. Over the last few decades, Indian English Drama has also started to blossom like fiction and poetry in the field of Indian English literature. The theatrical art is called the “fifth Veda” and is regarded as something holy and religious activity since its inception. It speaks beyond the region, race, rank, position, class, caste, gender etc. It decodes the message and defines meaning of life.

Drama is the prominent form of literature. Its success depends more on the performance than on its written counterpart. It articulates message for the viewers largely through its stage performance, marked by its distinctiveness like pluralism and dynamism. It breaks the web of illusion and ignorance developing understanding and perception of the people.

Indian English drama beyond the limitations of imitation, amateur, translations, and proper patronage has immersed as a potent one to make a representation of the dilemmas of human existence expressed in terms of gender inequalities, caste ridden practices, social discrimination and all pervasive moral depravity deriving strength from its structural compactness and ability to bridge up direct communication between the sensitive soul of the artist and the audience.

The Indian dramatists are reflecting upon the issues that beset human race for a long. The 20th century witnessed radical and rapid changes and alteration in number of fields of human interests and investments. There has also occurred a radical and rapid shift of values and notions. It demanded urgent need to address the shifting values and notions in our society. Stirred by this situation, the dramatists of our time grabbed the opportunity of

addressing the pains and misery, suffering and subjugation of the unreached and unprivileged sections of our society.

Drama is perhaps the most touching medium of representation of human life. It has power to surface the conscience of the audience. What is very essential is the active participation of the audience. The dramatic experience is like touching a bare electric wire. The drama, being dynamic medium, depicts the dynamics of human experiences acquainting us with character's veiled and intricate pattern of human consciousness.

The need to address human misery and consistent mechanism of humiliation compels the dramatists to deviate from the traditional path and reshape the conventional canons and concepts of stage art and craft capable of creating spaces for registering remonstrations against the mortification of humanity as a whole. Some leading dramatists like Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar and a host of other dramatists have dealt with various issues that have been lashing out human beings for ages. They have mirrored the problems and issues of contemporary Indian society. However, none of them has ever made them an essential part of their dramatic art.

Mahesh Dattani has been making conscientious efforts to showcase the issues and problems of contemporary Indian society making them the integral part of his dramatic credo. He is not merely a creative genius dealing with human sensibility and human experience, but he is also a celebrated actor, director, and film producer.

Dattani's dramatic world projects something that is challenging and new which differentiates him from the other Indian playwrights and places him to a higher level of competence. He has his own style of saying what he wants to say. His dramatic world presents human sentiment and sensibility par excellence. The call of humanity is at the centre in all his plays. The close look at his plays shows that Dattani endeavours to synthesize social realism with his theatrical art like G.B. Shaw and Ibsen. He is found committed to present suffering and sobbing of the marginalized people especially residing

in our urban area with a sense of uprootedness, anxiety, insecurity, and unrest.

Dattani's plays are marked by high degree of stageability and humanistic approach towards the subjugated colonized sections of our society. He discovers new territories of themes and issues which are, generally, unnoticed or overlooked by other dramatists. He has depicted newer (queer, as some call them) themes like homosexuality, child sexual abuse, victims of dreaded disease like AIDS, the problems of eunuch in our society and lot many other issues. Apart from these radical issues, his dramatic world presents the issues like communal tension, plight of the women in our society, problem of career and marriage, socio-political exploitation, politics of patriarchy, gender politics, a shift in value system, and people grieving under the stroke of destiny, etc.

Moreover, there are some plays where he seriously muses on the themes of dance and music and depicts the problems pertaining to them in our conventional and conservative society. *Dance like a Man* and *Morning Raga* are the fine examples of this.

Dattani takes a lead to represent commoner's voice which did not find due expression on account of conventional theatrical canons and devices. He has been constantly striving to explore the position of the marginalized sections of our society for relocating their positions and defining their identities in our society. In this way, he partakes in a process 'a way of decolonizing of theatre', as called by Erin Mee. He within the framework of theatrical structure and strategies surfaces the evils of discriminations based on gender and religion, socio-political exploitations, social myths and conventions hampering the response to the call of humanity, the predicament of human destiny, the marginalization of the people due to lack of understanding of AIDS, false notion regarding art, music, dance etc. By doing so, he has expanded the new dramatic horizons in the field of Indian English Drama.

Dattani is a leading serious dramatist in contemporary era. He is always careful to maintain serious tone in his plays. He differentiates his dramatic art with unconventional approach, deviating from the water-tight dramaturgy, taking psycho-philosophical probe into the human mind and heart, presenting more or less cultivated areas of human life. He strives to decode human experience on the stage with variety of ways and that even in an effective way. In the hands of Dattani, theatre ceases to be the mere artistic expression and becomes a means to realize life. His theatrical creed highlights the dynamics of social and interpersonal relationship with vehement focus on human experience. He has proved that theatre is a potent vehicle to present the gamut of human experiences along with social dynamics.

Dattani, a powerful craftsman and devout humanist, delves deep on the depiction of the suffering and subjugation of those who, still today, dare not to voice their pains and problems. Moved by social ailments and maladies, he tries to justify them within the array of his theatre. Women, children, eunuchs, minority, transsexual, and ailing people constantly maintain his attention. He carries on his theatrical business in such a way that it enlightens audience's minds with better understanding and enables them to appreciate the suffering of an individual resulting from the rigid codes and scheming nature of the society. To free theatre from the grip of rigid dramaturgy, he adopts stage mechanism dexterously poisoning the actors and the audience at the same wave length.

Drama is performed on stage aiming at going inside and across the human mind and sensibility. Since life is changing at jet speed; the drama has to change its dramaturgy for keeping pace with the changing scenario of life. Being quite aware of this, Dattani is constantly making experiments and innovations in his theatrical performance. His art and craft are coming up with newer and newer modifications and alterations every time.

His theatre vehemently asks us not to discriminate among the people on the basis of caste, gender, country etc under the evil influence of

social myths and conventions. His theatre stirs the wind of rationalism and humanism in the minds of the audience.

His power of observations seems to be very keen and minute. His familiarity with contemporary urban Indian society is very great and profound. Some are of the opinion that Dattani has restricted his theatre to upper middle class especially dwelling in the urban parts of the country. It is not true. At the most, it is the partial truth as he also presents human predicament of rural India in some of his plays. It is true that he mainly portrays the people coming from upper middle class. His theatrical art effectively represents human sensibility and experiences irrespective of class, gender, religion, race etc. Critically, Dattani writes about all those who have been compelled to drag unhonoured and shabby lives on the periphery level of society. They survive on fringe averting the agony of social myth and apathy. He captures the ugly and clumsy scenes from the rut of the urban social milieu.

Dattani's theatrical credo is characterized by the realistic tone and humanistic approach. That is to say that Dattani, swayed by Galsworthy, Bernard Shaw and Ibsen, synergies the dramatic credo and stark reality of life. He tries hard to diminish disparity between the page and stage enabling theatre as the instrumentation in articulating the voices of the subaltern. He neither follows the established notions of theatre nor does he propound newer principles of theatre. He innovatively employs theatre to make it closer to life itself. To him, theatrical presentation is manifestation of the 'human self'. Therefore, he dramatizes the stark reality of life without much romanticizing the idea. He dramatizes truth of human life as revealed through human experiences. He means to say that theatrical art can be enhanced and enriched by affiliating it to the truth of real human experience. Therefore, his drama is called 'life' itself. He observes human life very closely and interprets it through his theatrical performance. He has an inborn love and passion for drama. He has rightly been acclaimed as a dramatist of substance.

Creation of truth and beauty are the twin aims of literature. The art or literature attempts to create harmony in the society by presenting truth and beauty. Dattani's dramatic art unveils the truth and beauty hunched under the falsehood, hypocrisy snobbery and ugliness that has veiled universal merits of truth and beauty. Of course, his dramatic art presents the truth of real life experiences by using corresponding techniques and strategies vis-à-vis experiments and innovations.

A close study of his plays reveals that his plays are the protest against the imposition of restraints and constraints as well as forces of social myths and conventions that offer dehumanizing treatment to others. He is an absolute humanist who takes his pen against all the maladies and malpractices of the society. He disapproves all kinds of power controlling system except love and respect. His theatrical creed strongly suggests that he is a thinker and devoted humanist. At times, he philosophises the issues and problems under consideration. He is not a preacher nor is he a philosopher.

The play play *Dance like a Man* deals with the age old clash between tradition and modernity. The play explores how convention-bound society hampers the unperturbed flourishing of art and dance. Ratna and Jairaj Parekh are the *bharatnatayam* dancers. They have failed to attain the status of celebrity as a dancer. Therefore, they are striving for their daughter Lata's great success as a dancer. The actions of the play move between the past and present times. In a flashback, the play is sunk into the past time in which Amritlal Parekh, the father of Jairaj, appears advocating the patriarchal authority and conventional outlook. He disapproves his son's learning dance and taking dance as a profession. His son Jairaj has natural passion and love for dance. Amritlal views this something degraded activity especially for a man. Along with social and gender issues, Dattani has given philosophical twist to the play. Jairaj's revolt against his authoritative voice and his later submission before his father is quite dramatic. The play dramatises conflict resulting from the individual interest and social commitments.

His theatre focuses on the ills of the society which makes human life quite miserable generating conflict between individual self and accepted and established norms of society. In *Dance like a Man*, Ratna and Jairaj are victimized by unhealthy patterns of society which impedes the growth of their individual 'self'. As a result of this, they are forced to take rebellious steps against the patriarchal head of the family, Jairaj's father, Amritlal. The failure in their efforts prompts disappointment and dejection in them. They suffer inwardly being unable to bear the weight of the false established notions of the society. It is very essential to indicate that the pre-determined schemes of the society do not only cause the pain and suffering in the lives of the women, but also in the lives of the men.

In *Where There's a Will*, both men and women of the Mehta family suffer considerably due to the patriarchal authoritative head of the family. *Bravely Fought the Queen* portrays the plight of the women resulting from the unjust patriarchal norms and conditions. However, the play also shows women's uprising against the scheming and cruel society. In *Tara*, the girl Tara suffers acutely due to the scheme of the society for giving preference to a male child. The play shows how women are crushed cruelly under the pre-determined evil designs of society which subscribes patriarchal devilish pattern. Bharati Patel, her husband Mr. Patel and their son Chandan undergo acute mental pain and agony for the past guilt which can be deemed as a response to the scheme and pattern of the society.

Dattani's dramatic creed offers plenteous plays which are dealing with many diverging themes and issues. In *Thirty Days in September*, he comes up with a quite new and challenging issue of child sexual abuse within the range of familial relationship. Both Mala and Shanta are victimized women by the nearest kindred. Mala feels anguish and anger towards her mother as she doesn't rescue her from the crisis. However, the revelation of Shanta's own victimization is more shocking and repulsive thing in the play.

Dattani is regarded as the daring dramatist of the modern India. He traverses where others dare not to go. He is committed to bring out the

odds and oddities of the society for liberating individual self from the evil grip of the contriving social patterns. Homosexuality relationship is one such issue which is prohibited and dismissed as something unnatural and undesirable. It is considered as the taboo issue. It is necessary to mention here that the Indian Penal Code 377 deprives the people from the freedom of choosing life partner. It forbids people to choose partners from their same sex. Of course, following the opposition to this by some thinkers and writers, the government has made some amendments in this section and sanctions permission for choosing life partner irrespective of sex/gender. The question is What about the established norms and notions of society? Does it accept the same sex marriage? Dattani is dramatizing all these questions and shows his protest against the marginalization of the people in the name of culture, customs, community, gender etc. The manifestation of gay issue challenges the established and accepted social patterns. He brings this theme home to audience in some of his plays. On a *Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Do the Needful*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, and *Mango Soufflé* have central motifs of homosexuality. He doesn't pass any judgment over the issue. He just discusses it as it happens in our society. He shows how established norms of society suppress and repress individual urge and passion causing mental agony to the person concerned. In *Muggy Night in Mumbai* and its film adaption *Mango Soufflé*, Kamlesh is suffering greatly due to gay relationship with Prakash who breaks away from him and develops relationship with Kamlesh's sister. In *Do the Needful*, Alpesh has failed to fulfill familial expectations on account of his homosexual nature. His first marriage is broken and forced to remarry a girl named Lata who is in love with someone else. However, they find out midway for fulfilling their parental and social expectations.

It is noteworthy here that Dattani has dexterously dramatized the issue of homosexuality in all the three dramatic modes- Stage Plays, Radio Plays, and Screen Plays. He disdains the idea that gay love offends our sensibility and perverts people ethically. He is presenting reality as it exists in our society. He neither approves nor disapproves the marriage between the

people of the same-sex. He is just unmasking the truth shrouded under established tradition of heterosexual relationship. His treatment to gay theme is quite convincing and realistic. In this way, he has expanded and explored new portholes in the realm of Indian English theatre.

Final Solutions is really a gripping drama dealing with communal hatred and mistrusts. The play bears psychological significance as the dramatist wants to convey that communal hatred is the result of the prejudice that we develop in our minds for the members of the other community. Here, the dramatist analyzes and demonstrates the cause of communal discord. The problem can't be solved until and unless people wipe out prejudices dwelling in human psyches. It is the prejudice which causes negative feelings and propensity to discriminate against the people of other community. One can overcome from this if treated with love and trust. The dramatist maintains that creation of mutual trust is necessary for eradicating the demon of communal hatred. Through the effective use of chorus device, he shows what causes resentment and hatred between the members of the Hindu and Muslim community.

Dattani doesn't deal only with repeated themes like communal disharmony, gender discrimination, homosexuality and the like, but he also deals with quite newer themes like communal discrimination on the part of government officials, natural calamities etc. In the play *Clearing the Rubble*, he depicts the pains and problems of the minority community arising out of communal discrimination in providing relief to the earth quake affected people in Kutch region of Gujarat. He treads on the ground that discrimination in any form makes the lives of the people hellish and horror some. He displays deep concern for the issues which force human being to lead painful existence. The people are aching under the stroke of earthquake. To make matter worse, the members of the minority community are not justified while undertaking rescue operation. Dattani has made effective investment of voice-over technique in this play. By using it, he gives vent to the agony and suffering of the people in a touching way.

In *A Tale of Mother Feeding Her Child*, he indicates at the problem of caste-based discrimination in providing water-supply along with the main issue of self guilt. The dramatist artistically unearths the miserable conditions of lower caste people in Saurashtra region of Gujarat .One can evaluate the play with idea of 'guilt' and 'redemption'.

Dattani always attempts to explore serious areas especially those which make human life unbearable. He even depicts the theme of crime and investigation. His trilogy entitled *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, *The Swami* and *Winston* and *Uma and Fairy Queen* unveil the world of crime and conspiracy. Uma Rao, the common female protagonist of these plays, unveils the curtain by presenting reality. Ignoring the restriction imposed upon her, she embarks on finding out the truth. Her investigation presents how people are slain brutally for gratifying personal motives. At the end, she solves the murder mystery of three different cases displeasing her husband, a police officer. The way she reinvestigates the crime cases is quite interesting and convincing.

In *Swami and Winston*, Dattani focuses on pseudo-philosopher and fundamentalist. Again, Uma Rao is investigating the murder mystery of English lady who was killed during her visit to India. Lady Montefiore comes to India with her dog Winston in search of her brother who, swayed by swami's philosophy, has become full time ashramite at swami's ashram in Karnataka. Before she meets her brother Charles Montefiore, she is killed in a very mysterious way. In the beginning, her brother is wrongly alleged to have his hands in this murder. Later on, Uma Rao jumps into this inquiry finally unveiling the mystery over the murder case. Eventually, she unmask the real faces of fake philosophers and spiritual practitioners who exploit the innocent people for gaining money and power. Dattani treads on the ground here that religious fundamentalists are as dangerous to society as the anti-social elements.

Uma and the Fairy Queen, the third in trilogy is also dealing with the murder mystery of Michael, the British actor. The play depicts a very

complicated problem and involves the nationals of three countries namely India, Pakistan and England in the course of actions. Following the murder of Michael, the police has started prompt investigation for reaching to real criminal. As in real life, the police fumble in wrong direction and Uma finds out real murderer, Nila, the wife of the murdered Michael. Nila, Pakistan descent, remarries to Michael. Again, her conjugal life was not happy. She demanded divorce, but her husband denied of her demand. In a fit of anger and wrath, she guns him down. The dramatist also highlights the pain of being childless through Uma's character with the main issue of lust and wrath. Dattani excels in thematic device. While dealing with main breakthrough, he deals with some other thematic issues in his plays.

The dramatist attempts to present abstract ideas into concrete images by using suitable procedure of stage performance. Dattani has got ability to comprehend living life experience and power of perception of presentation. With his dexterous art and craft, vision and ability, he reconstruct real life experience on the stage. The experience scribed on the page has no life, but he fills life in it through his skills and techniques while enacting it.

The dramatist should be endowed with the power of comprehending 'human relationship' and the 'dynamics of social order' for the successful delivery of meaning and impression. He should be able to manage balance between 'form and content'. The proper linguistic investment is also very necessary on the part of the dramatist. However, it is to be noted that language holds little significance in the matter of stage performance of the drama text. Therefore, Dattani stresses more on stage performance than on worded expression. He prefers day-to-day language to high astounding expressions.

The play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* satires the society practicing double standards. The eunuchs are forced to live outside the mainstream of the society. It is the irony of the situation that the same untouchables are acceptable and desirable on the occasions of marriage and

birth for blessing the married couple and newborn respectively. In this play, he traverses on the untravelled path i.e. secret marriage with an eunuch and our cruelty towards them. The minister's son Subbu falls in love with Kamla and marries secretly with her. Agitated and annoyed by this, Subbu's father got Kamla killed sending Anarkali, another eunuch, behind the bars. Dattani is one of the few writers who have dared to write about problems and suffering caused by our social prejudices. Within the canvas of theatrical framework, he seeks to explore the identities of the oppressed and suppressed whose human identities are distorted rather denied. The play makes successful psychological inquiry into the minds of the members of the eunuch community namely Kamla, Champa, and Anarkali.

Apart from being highly intellectual, Dattani is also a realist and rational. His realism has multifarious shades. His mode of characterization sounds quite reasonable and realistic. His selection of the setting is also exceedingly real and genuine. He sounds quite authentic and convincing in his thematic treatment. His plays provide invaluable insight in the lives of the marginalized sections of our society. Most of his plays are serious in tone. They are reformatory and corrective.

In *Thirty Days in September*, he contemplates on the most serious issue of incest. He deals with the problem exercising meticulous care and specific peace. The play presents emotional crisis resulting from a feeling of betrayal. The stage mechanism and linguistic device are employed in such a way that it can keep pace with emotional upheavals and turmoil of Mala's mind. Adhering to the framework of dramatic domain, he explores the sexual oppression and exploitation of the children within the familial range in a realistic and remarkable way.

Morning Raga is a wonderful play having Carnatic music as the major motif. Rural backdrop and music as a major breakthrough lends the exceptional simplicity and neutrality as well as sublimity and spirituality to the play.

Dattani has a large number of themes to discuss with audience. In *Ek Alag Mausam*, he presents the catastrophic condition of HIV positives in our society. In this play, he puts forward the quite newer and real problem of the people who have been marginalized being HIV positives. The social shame that dissects from the virus infection is extremely excruciating for the AIDS infected people. The play is an argument in favour of celebrating life against the backdrop of perennial troubles and tribulations. It voices problems and suffering of the hushed prey par excellence to social apathy and ignorance. The play protests against the irrationality of the society which kills 'self' bit by bit before actual death. The victims are not those who have done any crime or mistake consciously. The society has neither right nor reason for making their lives appalling and atrocious. Dattani seems to assert that the society can't marginalize an individual out of ignorance and irrationalism. The play depicts the socio medico problem with exceptional care and sympathy justifying them on psycho philosophical ground. It shows how social stigma, associated with AIDS disease, fills human life with perennial affliction and agony. Despite this, the play succeeds in exhibiting the human emotions and sentiments intact amidst the sea of suffering and humiliation by depicting the love saga of George and Aparna, two HIV positives. The play is a remarkable work of art. It has fine fusion of form and content as well as meaning and impression.

Dattani is the most loved and honoured theatrical personality in the realm of Indian English Drama. He neither blindly nurtures the conventional theatrical tradition nor imitates the western models. He has an unyielding drive for capturing the reality of modern life especially rooted in urban soil of India. Right from the production of his first play *Where There's a Will* to till date, he is found consistent in making innovations and experiments either in terms of stage craft or of thematic devices.

Dattani has been striving to articulate the 'voice of the woman' in our society. He has no specific agenda of feminism. However, women have always drawn his attention to reflect upon their predicament. He portrays women character with due care and consideration.

His plays externalize emotional crisis and psychological pain of women of our society. He depicts inner world and thoughts of the women who have been denied of respectable existence and intellectual entity. She is not loved and honored in true sense of term. Her urges and impulses have never been understood in a respectable manner. It is to be noted here that the presentation of women in Dattani's plays are real and natural in the world of shifting value.

Dattani's contention is that the position of women in our society is still not heartening. Only thing that discourages the image of ideal ancient woman is that she has started to reflect and react upon the issues that are threatening her existence as a respectable and ingenious human being. She has learnt how to retaliate to the injury done to her basic self and identity.

Ratna in *Dance Like a Man*, Bharati Patel and Tara in *Tara*, Dolly and Alka in *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Smita in *Final Solutions*, Mala and Shanta in *Thirty Days in September*. Sonal, Kiran and Preeti in *Where There's a Will*, Uma Rao in three consecutive plays *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, *Uma and the Fairy Queens* and *The Swami and Winsoton* are the some of his women characters who contend against socio-political oppression of the women in our society. Dattani launches a campaign for creating awareness against injustice patriarchal authority and false myths and convention of the society. He has created his women characters with the courage of contending back.

Dattani seems to assert that women are endowed with high sense of self esteem and pride as well as courage and commitment. They have got strength and audacity to grapple with social forces that fosters the evil tradition of gender discrimination. He attempts to revamp and redefine the image of womanhood in our society. Through his theatrical art, he provides impetus to women for articulating their voices against the oppressive forces of society aiming to improve their position in the society. He has presented a wide range of women characters in his dramas.

It is, strongly, critically assumed that Dattanian plays present the meek and submissive women characters turning into volatile women. His women characters are emotional and also competent. The way he depicts women characters in his plays shows his exceptional sensitivity to feminine psyche and his power of perceiving internal struggle and thoughts of women. The synthesis of artistic perception and extra-ordinary understanding to feminine psyche enables him projecting interesting, original, and appealing women characters in his plays. There is no exaggeration in saying that Dattani is one of the few male creative writers who have given a fresher and authentic insight into the women's consciousness. His women are imbued with high degree of susceptibility to their suffering and courage to protest against the ill treatment meted out to them and ability to encounter jibes of animosity. Dattani approves, confirms and encourages women's rebellion which is, in fact, uprising against the conventions bound society. By fostering women's protestation against the society that nurtures the false convention and notions of oppressive patriarchal authority, he engineers the process of a change in the established and accepted notions and conventions regarding the family and society. He seems to assert that only women's protestation can improve their position in our society. Therefore, he attempts to justify unconventional path chosen by women in the form of protestation. He is developing theory of 'protest and prevent'. He is convinced that women's rebellion or protest can prevent themselves from being subjugated.

Thus, the projection of women in Dattani's plays is quite different. He is not trying to define the concept of ideal woman of Indian culture. Nor does he try to present the model of new woman who is quite assertive and bold. His perception regarding women is socio-cultural and psychological as well. The women in Dattani's plays are neither conventional nor archetypal. They can be divided into two categories. The one is passive sufferer and the second being emphatic and assertive. She possesses a will of her own to resist the forces endangering to her survival. She can also fight back to keep her identity intact and her basic self safe and sound.

Theatre is the life-blood for Dattani. His theatrical creed is impatient for seeking the truth of real life. Therefore, he dives deep into the inner recess of his characters, appreciates their experiences, understands their anguish and anger, analyzes their problems, scribes them on the page and fills lives in them with on-stage invocation. He has carved his own niche by making his blood and sweats one for the enrichment of Indian theatrical tradition. He has given distinguished and distinct identity to it. He has proved that Indian English theatre is capable of capturing sensibility of Indian soil. He is true Indian playwright who presents the authentic pictures of modern Indian society in a very innovative, that even in an original way.

'Time' feature is also a very prevailing aspect of Dattani's plays. Most of his plays are torn between the image of past and present. They oscillate between the time past and time present. Dattani is convinced that past is not just past, but it is integrated part of the present continuously affecting the course of action of present. In fact, persistent images of the past generate a sense of 'guilt' in the mind of the character creating mental upheavals and emotional turmoil. Therefore, his plays present the emotional crisis in the lives of the protagonist of the play. The continuous memory of the past events in present reshape the future course of action making a character realize of self-guilt. The characters undergo psychological journey passing from self realization to self resistance.

Dattani doesn't stick to one particular tradition of drama. He infuses various traditions into one making his theatre true and authentic representation of real life experience. Through this process, he incepts a new tradition of drama which is quite innovative, authentic, and capable of representing the spirit of Indian soil. Therefore, his plays are the real life stories. His original and genuine approach impresses one and all at once. His plays have ability to lift the audience into modern world which is full of angst and woes. Unlike Girish Karnad, he dramatizes the urban angst rather than revisiting myth and history. In fact, he presents the history of human suffering and problems. It is not the history of human deeds but of human soul. His play record the injustice meted out to the women, children, transsexual, minorities,

homosexual and other people belonging to marginalized sections of our society.

Dattani is fascinated by the 'voice of his personae' articulated by the performers on the stage. Therefore, after writing script of the play, he immediately performs it on the stage with a view to arrive at the desired effect. What matters much to him is the performance not the verbal script. Performance finalizes the text of the drama. Thus, his final script is prepared after the stage performance with necessary additions and omissions. He sets his play in such a way that it becomes an organic whole rather than disintegrated bit. It is because of this, his plays are being performed to the critical and public acclaim placing him in the realm of dramatists of first rank in Indian English Drama.

Dattani has unyielding drive for the experiments and innovations. He has been constantly experimenting with his 'form and content'. Every time, he unearths newer issue and presents it with the befitting stage mechanism. His stage mechanism is ever-changing like the fast moving society. Firstly, he appreciates the dynamics of society and finds suitable devices and techniques for the stage production of his play accordingly. He understands the true nature of the issue under discussion and then produce on the stage for the public discussion in ground-breaking way.

'The proper usage of language' renders a great help in presenting realistic views of life on the stage. It is true that language in drama doesn't hold as much importance as it holds in a novel and poetry. Dattani invests plain prosaic utterances. At times, his plain prosaic expression flows like poetic expression. The beauty of the drama arises out of the 'natural flows of the dialogues'. It should not be prompted by its creators. The drama is always action oriented and the language should be natural response to it. The plain and direct prose also helps in avoiding any hindrance in communication process. The drama is consisted of various parts like 'plot', character, setting, 'thought' etc. The language does play an important role in them. However, they are not outcome of worded expression but of collective response.

Since the drama is the reconstruction of life on the stage, it requires several other things along with language. Swayed by the naturalism, Dattani resists the usage of embellished and ornamental language. The simple and lucid expression helps in creating the illusion of reality.

Dattani spares himself from the rhetoric expression or embellished languages. He uses the language spoken by his characters in their routine lives. He makes a big success in the matter of effective usage of conversational language on stage. One can judge the characters position and status by their register of English. They use spoken words. The poetic or ornamental language is likely to create ambiguity in the minds of the audience. He seriously endeavors to reach to people by a variety of ways and the simple linguistic investment is one such way to reach out the audience.

His 'dialogues' are brief and subtle. His dialogues are very effective and display meaningful depth and naturalness. They are quite suitable to his characters. His characters are remarkably realistic. They display wit and vivacity of the characters. They divulge characters' psychological and emotional spectrum. His unyielding drive for the innovation and experiment prompts him to invent newer dialogue technique. He invents 'double dialogue' technique to decode inward and outward behavior of the characters. Under this technique, he has made bifurcation of the dialogue into two groups: 'thought' and 'speech'. Reality is expressed through the 'thought' device and what character speaks under the circumstances is called 'speech'. In this way, he makes use of innovative technique of double dialogue for revealing character's first reaction and forced reaction sacrificing the conventional dialogue pattern.

Besides, double dialogue, Dattani uses 'injected dialogues'. In *Where There's a Will*, there are two different remarks about the same character. Actually, this dialogue mechanism is very comical and ironical. Instead of using 'aside' device, Dattani's use of injected dialogue device is really commendable experiments. He has revolutionized many theatrical devices to bring themes home to audience. The novel dialogue device helps

the dramatist combine the irony and humour in an effective and interesting way. Apart from, brief and crisp dialogues, the dramatist has also used long monologues in some of his plays. *A Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child* is fine example of this. The narrative of the play develops through dramatic monologue of Anna Gosweb, the English lady who revisits India after twenty years to rescue her Indian friend during the drought.

Dattani's prose is quite plain and easy to comprehend. He uses brief dialogues, incomplete sentences, speeches, natural cadences, and conversational language in almost all his plays. He tries to liberate himself from the burden imposed as a part of language politics. He directly writes his plays in English. So, his theatrical creed may be questioned on the basis of 'Indianness' and a part of language politics. Actually, he captures the sensibility and spirit of Indian soil in a language that originally doesn't belong to this country. Dattani has both ability and understanding to present the emotional upheaval of the characters without using metrical composition or poetic language. He captures internal conflict and emotion crisis of the character in prosaic form very successfully. He has got power and prowess to write play in English and get them performed successfully on the stage. Despite linguistic barrier, his plays are making great success at home and abroad.

The language is used in a variety of ways. Dattani excels in taking multifarious tasks through language. His language is quite ease and appropriate to occasions and moods, urges and emotional outburst of his characters. He deals with radical themes like suffering of eunuch, child sexual abuse, homosexuality, communal hatred etc. The use of language, while dealing with such themes, is a challenging task. He has successfully used subtle but simple English for communicating crucial dramatic situations. It is, indeed, a praiseworthy thing that he manages to communicate sexual preferences, to present flux of conscience, agitated state of mind, emotional crisis etc. through simple and plain English phrase. Versification doesn't count if it fails to capture the rhythm of life.

Dattani has also made ample 'use of technical modern tools' like telephonic talk, TV news etc. Moreover, speeches like public, occasional, and conversational are used as and when need arise. The audience never feels that expressions or dialogues are prompted by the creator. The presentation of flux of conscience of the personage is also done in a genuine manner by way of using brief dialogues and faltered expression. He never intervenes or prompts the expression that emerges naturally from the flux of conscience of the character.

Dattani profusely uses words from Indian languages like Gujarati, Kannad and Hindi in English sentences. It makes his dialogues sound authentic and original. It also makes his characters quite expressive and communicative. The characters hailing from the poor or unaccessed background have their own ways to use language. Dattani lets them use their own words and accent. There are so many servants, workers, attendants, vendors, drivers, constable characters in his plays. His plays admit their variegated speech style and mode of expressions of regional languages.

An appropriate 'dramatic situation' is very necessary for the richness of the drama. Dattani employs multifarious techniques and devices for bringing themes and ideas home to the audience. He carries out the befitting procedure of presentation of them retaining originality and authenticity. He stresses much on dramatic structure to literary skills. He believes that understanding of human relationship helps achieve a compact dramatic structure. He is very powerful in conception of plot and delineation of characters. All these dramatic qualities put Indian drama in English to the level of world drama.

'Family' occupies a paramount space in the dramatic firmament of Mahesh Dattani. It is oft repeated setting in most of his plays. The almost all his stage plays are entrenched in family locale. Critically, family unit is the epicenter of his theatrical world where most shocks and jerks are experienced. It is interesting to put here that seeds of the problems are lying in outside actions. However, tensions and troubles are always experienced in

the family. The dramatist has interwoven family tales into the fabric and texture of the drama. The plots of the plays like *Where There's a Will*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Dance Like a Man*, *Tara*, *Final Solutions*, *Thirty Days in September*, *Do the Needful*, and *Morning Raga* revolve around the pivot of family unit. His plays dramatise the battle being fought on the family landscape. *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *Tara* are the most tragic and terrible family tales.

So far the 'poetic justice' is concerned; Dattani admits 'natural law of justice' in his dramatic universe. He neither punishes nor rewards any of his character. It doesn't mean that there is no moral order. Like psycho-philosophical, ethical undercurrents do prevail in his plays. He treats his characters with due care and consideration. Of course, he exposes the vice and vindictive characters in such a way that the audience easily understands prevalence of moral code. He never scales the justice to the character directly like a moralist. The way he handle the whole spectrum sounds realistic and genuine.

The 'symbols and images' convey concrete meanings and impression. Most of his plays have telling symbols and images. He has used wide and varied symbols and images. In *Final Solutions*, the music is the most striking symbol. There are oft repeated references and allusions regarding the music of Noor Jehan, Suraiya and Shamshad Begum. The play depicts religious tension and turmoil. Music transcends the boundaries of class and country and reach to one and all. It knows no barrier of caste, creed, culture and community. It also symbolizes the true function of every religion which teaches and preaches a song of love and humanity. Moreover, there is an air of tension and turbulence due to communal riots. Music is used to lessen the terrifying and panicky atmosphere of communal hatred prevailing in the drama. Thus, extended metaphor of music is really innovative and original approach of Dattani to the play which is full of troubles and tension. It helps the playwright understand the reality hidden behind the mask. Moreover, the play *Final Solutions* also encompasses strong and suggestive images of animals like rat, mouse, pig, swine which symbolizes the theme of communal

disgust and hatred. The introduction of mob also symbolizes religious blindness and hostility.

The play *Bravely Fought the Queen* has also rich symbols like bonsai plant, face mask, *thumari* wheel chair etc. They are very appropriate and quite meaningful, corresponding to the social and psychological conditions of the characters. Dolly takes every possible care for keeping mask intact. She avoids even laughing lest it should crack it. All the same, at the end, it gets cracked as the dramatist surfaces the dark secret. Baa's wheel chair is never used. It indicates something beyond the Baa's invalid spectrum. The play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* has two powerful and distinctive symbols i.e. fireworks and *barat* (wedding party). These symbols throw light on the psychological movements going inside the minds of the characters. Most of his plays have symbols which enable audience/ readers know their real worth. Briefly, Dattani has used powerful and pointed symbols which can easily correspond with the thematic shades of the plays.

Before Dattani, the major dramatists like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya were tended to philosophical musings and poetic fervors. They failed to capture the commoner's feelings and emotions in their works. One can say that they tried to nurture theatre in isolation. So, it couldn't flourish and develop further. Even in post modern period, the dramatist like Girish Karnad showed much inclination to reinvest myths and history. However, he has made notable contribution in the development of Indian Drama in English. Dattani shows much inclination to public voice, feelings, issues, problems. His theatre has successfully articulated the voices of colonized sections of our society. His theatre works beyond the conventions and canons as well as customs and codes.

As a matter of fact, the artistic appeal, visual quality and the thematic device are always counted and considered as a matter of supreme worth. Dattani constantly thinks of man and woman of humble beginning and

their pains and sufferings. Therefore, his presentation of post colonial issues and problems has generated greater effects and larger appeal.

Like Shakespeare, Dattani deals with Indian issues with humanistic approach. His presentation of individual experience attains the value of universal significance transcending the limit of time and place. His concern for human values is revealed again and again in his plays. Though he writes about contemporary urban issues, he is highly applauded and appreciated at home and abroad. His theatre voices the issues rooted in urban milieu in a clear and convincing way. He brings to the fore the grievances and problems afflicting to the many subordinate sections of contemporary Indian society. Actually, Dattani is gifted with far sight of focusing angst and agony through his theatrical cult. He also possesses an ability to perceive angst and agony in the affairs which are termed as the sensational issues. After viewing them, audience undergoes to cathartic process. His plays are the lively representations of voices of the colonized and sidled by the privileged sections of our society. His plays display his feministic and humanistic approach.

Dattani excels in 'stage art and craft'. Introduction of multi level sets is an innovative and original stage device of Dattani. In *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, he has enriched and given psychological dimension to theatre by way of inventing a new device called 'mental space'. The invention of newer device like mental space is a landmark dramatic achievement of Mahesh Dattani. This device helps characters realize their inward thought process. Actually, he has indomitable will to visit virgin soil of the eunuchs, homosexuals, HIV positives, physically challenged etc. Hence, he strives to create stage devices which can help him surfaces the inner-most thoughts and feelings of the characters.

Moreover, Dattani is greatly appreciated for his concern for the 'fair sex'. His theatre is drenched deep in humanism and equality in our society. He is not interested in reinvesting the tales from the myths and

purans. He is interested in depicting issue that beset society beyond endurance.

The most eye catching trait of his plays is fine fusion of 'feeling and form'. Feeling and form go hand in hand in his theatrical framework. It lends a play special significance making it an artistic piece or work. T. S. Eliot uses term 'Emotional Equivalent' for such works. Feeling can only be well expressed if it is clubbed with proper form. Actually, both of them are complimentary to each other. With his artistic vision and craftsmanship, he maintains well balance between feeling and form. What people feel under the pressure of social expectations and established patterns is presented in a proper form. He is a gifted artist who can handle feeling and form in a praise worthy way. It is because of this, his theatre dwells on the summit of success. He always pains to make experiments for the successful transmissions of the views and ideas. He has considerably helped Indian theatrical tradition to reach greater heights.

With his artistic perception and lively theatrical vision, Mahesh Dattani has constructed a well organized edifice of theatrical tradition in India. It is also evident that his vision is preoccupied with the totality of human experiences instead of following a track of fragmentation. His sensibility is rooted in socio psychological spectrum of human predicament and, therefore, he has adopted the identical themes for different types of dramatic presentation. It can lead to a revolution in the scope and commitment of theatrical activities in India.

He has done yeoman service to Indian English Drama through his wonderful dramatic creations with innovative theatrical approach and original thematic device which ensures thumping success to his plays. His plays are characterized by innovative stage mechanism and burning issues of contemporary society.

Dattani is an authentic theatrical voice in the world of shifting values and changing phenomenon. He doesn't provide any theory of drama. His knowledge of human nature and human relationship as well as his

knowledge of problems and sufferings of the people are extensive and profound. He has drawn his characters from real life situation. Stirred by the suffering of the weak and minor, he has made his theatre capable of capturing sensibility of the soil. He contemplates on the issues that beleaguered individual self beyond endurance. His theatrical premises are built up with innovative techniques and novel themes. His plays stand testimony to his ability as an artist and craftsman. They bear unmistakable imprint of his profound thinking and humanist approach. With his churning imagination and innovative drive, he presents human pathos and suffering in every appealing and original way. What constitutes of his personality is artist craftsman, thinker, devout humanist, exceptional sensibility to human woes and wounds.

With the distinct and diverse dramatic modes of full length stageplays, radio plays and screen plays, Dattani have explored the possibilities to integrate human sensibility and virgin issues. It has been a distinction of his arts that with his distinctive theatrical perceptions with the spaces for the shift of dramatic scene defining in terms of time and space have inaugurated a new era of Indian English Theatre beyond the canons of imitation and translation as well as classical and western traditions.

He is a natural and authentic theatre of India. With his vivid imagination and uncommon theatrical ability, Dattani beyond cultural diversities and linguistics variations succeeds in pushing ahead his theatre with and without the country. His theatre reflects the spirit and sensibility of the Indian soil. He is embarked on theatrical voyage with a view to reaching out the lay man. He is convinced with the dramatic ideology that drama is capable enough of representing human sensibility and new dynamics of interpersonal relationship in a very live and appealing manner. Assimilation of theatrical art with real life experience is the quintessence of his theatrical creed and cult which breaks the web of illusions and ignorance. He, who has sipped drama to the sediment, has imitated none; but will be imitated by many in the years to come.

❖ **Scope for the Research Extension:**

Dattani's plays are diverse in themes and forms as well as structures and techniques decoding various messages, meanings, impressions, appeal etc. An aspirant researcher can explore and investigate them further in the lights of the following perspectives.

- Feministic approach
- Postcolonial approach
- Queer theory approach
- Socio-cultural approach
- Psycho-philosophical analysis
- Humanistic approach
- Naturalistic Study

❖ Appendix

An Interview with Mahesh Dattani by the Researcher

The Researcher had, via email, the following interview with Mahesh Dattani on 17th January, 2011.

Researcher: What encouraged you towards play writing business?

Dattani: The business of play writing happened quite by accident. It was only when I started receiving enquiries from professional companies in Mumbai and abroad that I took it up as a possible business.

Researcher: Your plays voice concerns for the downtrodden and the subalterns like hijras, HIV positives, gays, etc. Have you stayed among them for a period of time? Have you ever been admitted by them for voicing their feelings?

Dattani: It is very difficult to win trust from any closed society. I did succeed in some instances and at others I failed.

Researcher: To what extent do you think drama an appropriate vehicle to articulate and spread social concerns and their solutions?

Dattani: I think it can help to a great extent in focusing attention on social conflicts. Remedies and reforms are really best left to society to work out.

Researcher: Do you believe that dance is associated with the theatrical art?

Dattani: Yes, absolutely. Dance, drama and music are integrated in our traditional performing arts. The word Natya is used for both drama and dance.

Researcher: How did you feel when you wrote your first play *Where There's a Will?*

Dattani: Very good. I had a sense of accomplishment.

Researcher: Most of your plays have family as a locale. Will you please explain a little why do you keep it at centre?

Dattani: It is a reflection of the Indian way of life. The family and family values are hugely important in Indian culture.

Researcher: You are one of the few Indians who have been commissioned to write plays for BBC Radio. Tell me something about your experience as a radio play writer.

Dattani: It is a difficult medium to write for. I believe, of the three mediums I have worked in (stage, screen and radio) the medium of radio drama has been the most challenging.

Researcher: Have you ever tried to outnumber the cinema-goers for your stage plays? My Point is: have you attempted in such a way that the audience would prefer to watch your drama being staged rather than watching their film versions?

Dattani: Yes. More people have seen my play *Dance Like a Man* than its movie version.

Researcher: *Thirty Days in September* is one of your most serious dramas. What prompted you to write this play?

Dattani: I was commissioned by an NGO called Rahi based in Delhi to write a play on the theme of CSA (Childhood sexual abuse).

Researcher: Plot is the soul of tragedy, said Aristotle. How much importance do you attach to it in your plays?

Dattani: Very much. Plot is essential to revealing character.

Researcher: *Final Solutions* bagged you the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award. How do you feel about it?

Dattani: Very proud.

Researcher: Have you noticed any visible change upon any strata of our society after they have watched your stage-plays dealing with such themes as mentioned in the previous question?

Dattani: Yes. There is more debate and invisible issues such as CSA do get talked about after the play is performed.

Researcher: Do you see yourself as an activist? Whether “Yes” or “No”. Please, detail your answer.

Dattani: Yes and No. I am an activist like many socially responsible citizens. That doesn’t necessarily mean it spills into my writing.

Researcher: Do you think that you administer poetic justice to your characters properly in your plays?

Dattani: Am not sure I attempt it.

Researcher: Do you find any difficulty in capturing internal conflict and emotional crisis of the character in prosaic form?

Dattani: No. Otherwise I wouldn’t be a dramatist.

Researcher: Bonsai plant, idol of Lord Krishna, wooden soldier, mango fruit, etc. are some of the rich symbols and images in your plays. How much they help to your poetic exuberances and craftsmanship?

Dattani: Images are very important in theatre as it is a visual medium as well as an auditory medium.

Researcher: Don’t you think that you have developed a tendency of using Gujarati settings in your dramatic works?

Dattani: Yes. I didn’t develop this tendency; it is there from my very first play.

Researcher: Considering majority of your plays being rooted in urban milieu, you are labeled as the writer of modern Indian urban society. How do you react to it?

Dattani: I am urban and Indian, so the definition is correct.

Researcher: Being a Gujarati fellow, I am proud of a Gujarat born writer Mahesh Dattani. Presently, Gujarat is undergoing a tremendous change. This transition emphasizes more on economic status of the state in the country. Much transition is still in wait for the concerns like education and social hierarchy. What can be done for that? I would wish that you could pen some of these concerns at clash in Gujarat. Have you any plans for that?

Dattani: No plans as such but then the kind of changes I write about will definitely reflect the transitions in Gujarat as well! I am as much a Gujarati as I am an urban Indian, and proud of it all.

Researcher: What is your ongoing activity now?

Dattani: I am currently busy with my recent productions of Paolo Coelho's *The Alchemist* and also renovating my new flat!

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