

The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E-Journal in English

Disclaimer: For Any kind of confirmation and Authentication visit the website of the journal.

Biological Diseases and Harmonious and Emotional Treatment in the Service of Humanity

Vinod Kumar

Research Scholar,
Department of English,
R. R. P. G. College Amethi,
Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Awadh University,
Ayodhya, Utter Pradesh, India

Dr Om Shiv Pandey

Professor and Head
Department of English
R R P G College, Amethi
Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Awadh University,
Ayodhya, Utter Pradesh, India

DOI: 10.53032/tcl.2020.5.2.15

Abstract

Mahesh Dattani was among the few Indians who attempted to write plays in English during the post-independence period. His dramatic creations encouraged a new creative motivation for theatre aspirants who later exploited the nuances of the several Indian varieties of English on the stage. Dattani's theatre group Playpen was formed in 1984 and he has directed several plays ranging from classical Greek to contemporary works. He wrote plays on new themes about body-that is not love but disease, a diseased body and mind. Crime, communal disharmony, misbehavior towards serious disease personalities and violence too find place in his plays. But he is not always looking at the dark aspect of life. His themes have variety and what's more important is that they are innovative. He is very serious in dealing with diseases like AIDS, cancer and disability openly. In the plays *Ek Alag Mausam*, *Tara*, and *Brief Candle* Dattani says that the same body which is the object of sexual desire is also subject to decay through disease and disability, Dattani seems to have considered. That is why he has written plays on diseases like AIDS, cancer and has shown the debilitation of human body by

The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E-Journal in English

Disclaimer: For Any kind of confirmation and Authentication visit the website of the journal.

physical disability. In *Ek Alag Mausam* he deals with a biological disease, AIDS, and presents harmonious and emotional treatment in the service of humanity.

Keywords- Disease, disharmony, misbehavior, innovative, AIDS, treatment

Mahesh Dattani is universally acclaimed as a great playwright and his plays are admired both for their thematic content and their potentiality for living performance. As a playwright he has decided to write on contemporary social themes highlighting the problems of contemporary India. He has ignored race and class and highlighted gender and body in his plays. His success as a playwright encouraged him to try his hand in radio and screen plays. He has written seven radio and four screen plays. The noteworthy contribution of Mahesh Dattani in the field of Indian English drama is that he has created new aesthetics for theatre. His plays deeply explore the minds of the characters and successfully depict on the stage the conflict between their fears and fancies, thoughts and imaginations and between the self and the society. On account of his long experience of the theatre Dattani has been successful in presenting the inner psychological self of the characters on the stage. The sensitive dramatic self of Dattani is a fine synthesis of a dancer, director, actor, playwright, audience and commentator moving collectively towards a single direction. (Agrawal, 2009, 24) He has sharp theatrical insight and a sharp artistic perception that looks through the happenings going around.

AIDS is a denounced disease which is a cause of social exclusion like the neuter sexuality in the contemporary society that Dattani shows very sympathetically in the screen play *Ek Alag Mausam* which was released in India on 4th February, 2005. The film was produced and directed by K.P. Sasi and was supported and presented by Actionaid India. Anupam Kher, Nandita Das, Renuka Shahane and Rajit Kapur are the actors who played the key roles in the screenplay. Dattani has written this play on the latest dreadful disease AIDS that makes a heart touching discernment of the HIV positives who lead a life impending death counting their days compounded by the social expatriation they suffer. The most significant aspect of the play is the reaction of the common people to the HIV patients who are treated as untouchables and are socially excluded.

The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E-Journal in English

Disclaimer: For Any kind of confirmation and Authentication visit the website of the journal.

Through this play *Ek Alag Mausam* Dattani tries to aware the people that AIDS doesn't spread by touching, eating, sleeping and living with the HIV and AIDs patients. But it may spread by unprotected sex, infected syringe, blood transfusion and from the infected mother to the child. But the immediate reaction to the people towards AIDS victims is very shocking and disappointing. They are marginalized to the point of social outcast and forced to endure pity and disgust. They are destined to lead life in 'guilt' and 'shame'. The cold and apathetic attitude of the people towards the HIV patients is represented in the voice of George's father when he says:

You may live for another seven years. But you have killed us before we have entered out 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 begger.*) Go! (CP II 537)

In the play Dattani shows how a father refuses to accept an HIV positive son. The gravity of the situation is quite discernible in the face of the predominance of social myth regarding this dreaded disease among the masses. The HIV positive Manoj's experience with two different dentists for the medical aid is a good example how the social myths ruin the rational faculty of man. It is very ironic that even a doctor is not free from the effect of myths in the post modern era and he fails in doing justice to his profession.

In this play *Ek Alag Mausam* Mahesh Dattani has tried his best to unmask the hidden reality veiled in myths. Dattani has used the play as an instrument of social protest to express the 'silence' of the marginalized who are the victims of social apathy and cruelty of fate. The play can be described from two different perspectives. Firstly it's a play about the HIV positives who die a thousand deaths in their short lives in the midst of indifference, apathy and seclusion in the society and are left to meet their tragic ends in shame and isolation for the reasons that are beyond the conscious control of man. Their mental sufferings are caused by the lack of social recognition and that touch of human love they long for. Thus, their mental torture gives the play a rare touch of universality. On the study of the deeper level it is found that the play makes an assertion of human life even if it is short lived. The sense of belongingness, love, care and strong optimism of the play lend it a thrust forward to overpower every social stigma. Beena Agrawal comments, "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." (2008, 140)

The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E-Journal in English

Disclaimer: For Any kind of confirmation and Authentication visit the website of the journal.

In the play *Ek Alag Mausam* Aparna and George are the protagonists who are HIV positives. They are suffering from this terrible disease without the fault of their own. Aparna's husband, Suresh, is a HIV positive and she got the disease from him. George got it through the transfusion of blood from his friend Joseph who is also the deceased son of Dr Machado, the founder of Jeevan Jyoti hospital. On the revelation of HIV positive the reaction of Aparna to the disease is quite shocking and the irony of fate is that the woman who has so much of awareness about AIDS falls a victim to this awful disease. It is a matter of sorrow that the social stigma attached to the HIV positives doesn't secure a bed for her in the hospital and she is looked at with the mixed feelings of pity and disgust even by the lab technician and the nurse. Thus, Aparna's first exposure to the harsh reality overfills her heart with the fears of existence for HIV patients resulting in the unwilling abortion of her unborn child and the final separation from her husband.

After the abortion and separation from Suresh, her husband, Aparna becomes very desperate and upset. So, she decides to go to the Jeevan Jyoti hospital to do something for the HIV positives. On reaching the hospital, she gets there a new lease of life, a new reawakening, a realization of self dignity and the rekindling of human love. The affection, feelings and love that she gets there dispels the darkness of despair and doom. Under the paternal care of Dr Machado, Jeevan Jyoti instills a new vision of life in her to identify with the people there who are living constantly under the shadow of death. She is enlivened again when she says, "I want to be of some use to people with . . . people who have the disease" (CP II 490).

In the Jeevan Jyoti hospital Aparna meets George who is a HIV positive. He also takes care the HIV positive with Dr Machado. He is very popular among the children. He is a man of zest and very helping nature. Her contact with George in Jeevan Jyoti stirs a renewed enthusiasm and zest for life in her. George, the truck driver's positive attitude to life inculcates fresh energy in Aparna and motivates her not only to develop self confidence but also to make human relationships with the true warmth in it. The transformation in her character from gloom and despair to bounteous optimism and the enthusiasm to live and let live creates a positive impact on the mindset of society for a wide acceptance of the AIDS victims with love, care and understanding. In fact it is the transmutation from suffering, shame and isolation to comfort and confidence that raises Aparna to a stronger character. Thus, through the characters of Aparna and

The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E-Journal in English

Disclaimer: For Any kind of confirmation and Authentication visit the website of the journal.

George the play *Ek Alag Mausam* exhibits Dattani's portrayal of the power of love to make purposeful human relationships beyond all the earthly limits.

The dramatic narrative of the play shows how George and Aparna are suffering from the same terrible disease without the fault of their own. When the sufferings of these two are compared, it is found that George suffers much more social stigma than Aparna. But his assertion and confidence of life counterbalance all his pains and sufferings and make him the most powerful character in the play. He is the symbol of life: the very cause and purpose of it. It is George who helps Aparna in bringing back her courage, confidence, self-respect and the passion to live. His abundant love and passion towards Aparna and the willingness to marry her even on the point of death summarizes all that he stands for- the positivity of life. No fear of death and no social apathy can deprive him of his zest of life. He lives his life with the fullest joy. Through his character Dattani intends to give a message to the society that AIDS is a physical disease, not a moral aberration that is to be stigmatized. Dattani creates a new situation in the play towards the end when Dr Machado appeals insisting upon changing our attitude to HIV positives to defeat AIDS. He says:

Today the world over doctors and scientists are trying to find a cure for AIDS. In the interest of mankind we hope they succeed. While waiting for the cure to be invented or discovered, let us not forget - that miracles are known to happen. (CP II 556-57)

To conclude, it can be said that this play focuses on the suffering and plight of the HIV/AIDS patients with a view of harmonious treatment. Dattani puts the problem before the audience and then leave it for the individual to ponder over it. For dattani, theatre is not a place for cheap entertainment; it is for the sensitisation of the audience to the prevalent issues of the society. He brings the margins to the centre and leaves it for the spectator to decide the right and the wrong. This play seems to uphold the idea of courage and strength in the virus affected people. To live bravely without caring one's disease is the message of the play. Disease is the matter of physical body not of heart and mind. If one is mentally healthy, the viruses like AIDS and COVID 19 can't do any harm to such person. Thus, in this play Dattani has presented a socio-medico issue with a philosophical twist.

The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E-Journal in English

Disclaimer: For Any kind of confirmation and Authentication visit the website of the journal.

Works Cited

Agrawal, Beena, Mahesh Dattani's *Plays A New Horizon in Indian Theatre*, India: Book Enclave, 2008.

- - -. "Dattani's Theatrical Art and Tradition of Indian Theatre". *The Dramatic World of Mahesh Dattani: A Critical Exploration*, Edt. Amarnath Prasad, Sarup Book, Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 2009.

Dattani, Mahesh. *Collected Plays. Vol. II*. Penguin Books India, 2005.