CHAPTER FOUR

The fourth chapter explores Mahesh Dattani’s acute penetrative vision for a liberated self of women. In both the plays analysed in this chapter, Dattani lays emphasis on the fact that liberation for women can only be attained when they question the stifling and biased codes of conduct laid down by patriarchal setup. Dattani’s women protagonist Mala in *Thirty Days in September* (2001) and Aparna in *Ek Alag Mausam* (2005) openly question the accepted norms and attain a defiant attitude towards the stereotyped image of woman, thereby, developing a feminine sensibility against the feminine consciousness that has prevailed earlier. Sheila Rowbotham has aptly commented in her book *Women, Resistance and Revolution*:

One of the compelling facts which can unite women and make us act is the overwhelming indignity or bitter hurt of being regarded as simply ‘the other’, ‘an object’, ‘commodity’, ‘thing’. (98)

The women protagonist in both the plays of Mahesh Dattani have begun to see themselves as individuals with an identity of their own and refuse to mould themselves according to the set roles which have helped them to rise against the conventional roles and limitations imposed upon them by the patriarchal society.

The chapter analyses the factors that lead to the objectification of feminine body as explicated by Bartky in *Feminity and Domination* where she uses Marx theory of Alienation to explain the objectification that results from women’s preoccupation with their appearance. According to Bartky:

In the regime of institutionalized heterosexuality women must make herself ‘object and prey’ for the man…women lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal other. (73)

This tendency to see and treat themselves as objects to be gazed and decorated has been one of the factors which have lead to the exploitation of female body over the centuries.
Thirty Days in September is a powerful portrayal of love and treachery that treats the insightful and generally taboo issue of child sexual abuse. The play endeavors to lift the veil of silence which surrounds child sexual abuse and addresses the issue unflinchingly. Kate Millet in Sexual Politics writes:

The male isn’t buying sexuality, he is buying power over another human being. It demonstrates the relative position of male and female in patriarchal society – he is a master, she is a slave. (93-94)

The play is built on the trauma of Mala who lives with the haunting memories of her abused past. Her abuser is her uncle who subconsciously lives with her all the time, as part of her dirty reflections. He damages her natural growth, deters her from pursuing her love interests beyond the ominous thirty day period and scars her soul every now and then. As Mala withers under the psychological pressure exerted on her by the abuser, her mother watches silently, living her own pain and suffering mutely.

Mahesh Dattani depicts the trauma of child sexual abuse and raises convincing concern by trying to create a world of optimism where the wrongs can stand corrected and resurrection of brutalized faith is possible. Finally, there is no way but to come up, face the wrongs and dare to correct them. The play ensures that by marking a daring departure from the conventions and norms, we, as a society, should no longer seek ease in the routine of uttering word incest in gutless undertones. Our only way to fight danger is to distinguish it and smash it with liberal doses of brutality lest we should be ready to denounce innocence to lifelong death.

The play brings home the horrors and pains of a very identifiable mother-daughter relationship who are the victims of incest and child sexual abuse. Blume gives a conceptual description of the violence which according to him does not require force:

Incest, as sexual abuse and abuse of power, is violence that does not require force….It is abuse because it does not take into consideration the needs or wishes of the child, rather meeting the needs of the
‘caretaker’ at the child’s expense…incest can be seen as the imposition of sexually inappropriate acts, or acts with sexual emotional overtones, by or any use of a minor child to meet the sexual or sexually emotional needs of one or more person who derive authority through ongoing emotional bonding with that child. (Secret Survivors 4)

_Thirty Days in September_ is a heart rending portrayal of the darker side of child sexual abuse which results in fragmented relationships. The title of the play signifies how incest destroys the emotional as well as psychological well-being of a woman. That’s why; the protagonist of the play, Mala does not carry on in any relationship with a man beyond thirty days. The act can be seen as a result of her mental disorder or a revenge taken by her against each and every man. Patriarchy as a system of power relations stunts the individuality of women as a critic writes:

Systemic deprivation and violence against women, rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, female foeticide, infanticide, witch killing, sati, dowry deaths, wife-beating, high level of female illiteracy, malnutrition, undernourishment and continued sense of insecurity keeps women bound to home, economically exploited, socially suppressed and politically passive (Lerner 13).

The play portrays the issue of incest through Mala and her mother, Shanta. Both the daughter and the mother are sexually molested in their infancy by the same person Vinay, who is Shanta’s own brother. The sexual molestation has different consequences for both the victims as Shanta is dragooned into bearing it mutely due to social pressure and taboos and Mala revolts against it in her own way. The aged, weary, timid-looking Shanta; the young, aggressive, modern and sexy-looking Mala; the handsome, young, soft spoken Deepak; and the old, fierce-looking Uncle portray every day, typical working class adults of the real world which sends a message that anyone could be Shanta or Mala in reality. Looks are often deceptive and Mala who is portrayed as a very successful young career woman, shows how people’s personal background may be hidden behind their demeanor, their personalities and many more.
The play begins with Mala’s conversation with the counselor which reveals her perplexed and mystified state of mind. Dattani unveils the variance of Mala’s conscious and unconscious mind through the counseling and recorded voice on tape. Mala holds her mother accountable for the disaster which shattered her dream of a settled life and her attitude to life has changed. She is a victim of sexual exploitation in her early youth and before reaching her puberty. Moreover, she feels betrayed at the hands of her mother. That’s why, she becomes indecisive about her action and doubtful about her identity. Mala is shown shaky and unconfident when the play begins. She is afraid to even utter her name. She hesitates to tell anyone what is bothering her and she does not even know that she is a victim. She stammers out her sentences:

I—I don’t know how to begin . . . Today is the 30th of September . . . 2001, and my name is . . . I don’t think I want to say my name . . . I am sorry . . . I know it is all my fault really . . . It must be. I must have asked for it . . . it’s not anybody’s fault, except my own. Sometimes I wish that my mother . . . (CP II 9)

Mala not only bears the pain of sexual assault in her childhood but also equally suffers the emotional hurt caused by her mother’s silence against her molestation which exists in her unconscious mind. Here the dramatist shows how patriarchy shrinks women to their bodies which are conceived in functionalist and reductionist conditions. Men are able to use their superior power position to treat women as objects, primarily as sex objects, rather than as human beings. Geetha in her book Gender has pointed out that:

Men tend to control and regulate the sexuality of those women who are within the familial network, while remaining appreciative and lustful of female promiscuity directed at them from outside the family. (133)

Mala’s disturbing experience of physical exploitation and her mother’s apathetic attitude towards it starts coming to the surface ensuing in a lifelong conflict between
mother and daughter. The awareness of betrayal on her mother’s part has unnerved her when she interrogates her mother:

Where were you when he locked the door to your bed room while I was napping in there? Where were you during those fifteen minutes when he was destroying my soul? Fifteen minutes every day of my summer holidays, add them up. Fifteen minutes multiplied by thirty or thirty-one or whatever. That’s how long or how little it took for you to send me to hell for the rest of my life! (CP II 53)

Shanta represents that section of women who are bludgeoned into silence and submission by the burden of patriarchal authority. Being a submissive mother whose husband has left her alone with the responsibility of a daughter, she tries to stay away from the horrors of the exposition of the dark reality which she feels will destroy her daughter’s life. As a critic, Wandor aptly writes,

The dominant male culture imposes the language of silence on women. A woman's fragmentation, isolation and lack of identity make it impossible for her to relate her own situation to that of any other oppressed group or to seek a way out. (The Body Politic 7-8)

Shanta deliberately ignores Mala’s situation and always tries to divert Mala’s mind by calling her horrifying experience a fabricated story. The casual attitude of her mother intensifies Mala’s anger and she retorts:

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. (CP II 25-26)

Women like Shanta in *Thirty Days in September* feel secure by lending their lives in the hands of the gods rather than speaking against the atrocities that they are facing. Mala’s anger towards her mother becomes more violent when her mother, instead of talking to her, escapes to the pooja room; Mala detains her from taking shelter in the image of God, “Tell me. No don’t look at your God, look at me, look me in the eye and tell me — yes, that is all that you are talking about” (CP II 25).

Mala and Shanta have a communication gap between them and Mala, therefore, becomes contemptuous and accuses her mother of ignoring her feelings. She criticizes her mother for stuffing her with food instead of consoling her, Mala expresses her mother’s insensitivity to her pain:

Oh yes, you would remember that I always like alu paranthas 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 with food. I couldn’t speak because I was being fed all the time, and you know what? I began to like them. I thought that was the cure for my pain. That if I ate till I was stuffed, the pain would go away. Every time I came to you mummy, you were ready with something to feed me. You knew. Otherwise you wouldn’t have been so prepared. You knew all along what was happening to me . . . (CP II 24)

Mala’s concealed desires against her mother’s wrap of silence were given a vent in the form of rebellion and she cries out, “I won’t let you get off so easily. There is only one way I can make you listen to me” (CP II 26). She goes to the pooja room and throws the portrait of the God out. It breaks Shanta’s patience and she accuses Mala of her willing participation in sexual pleasure. Ultimately Shanta is forced to accept that it was the financial assistance which kept her silent. Mala cries out, “He bought your silence. So that you can never tell anyone what he did to your daughter!” (CP II 52). Thus, after her mother’s revelation of the fact she felt humiliated and she feels that along with her
body, her spirit, her privacy and her innocence is also raped. The economic dependency coerces women into dependence upon those very men who threaten them like in the case of Shanta. Anita Singh comments on the multi-faceted violence that women face:

It is often subtle and insidious and hard to recognize, presented as it usually is in the guise of respect, idealization, concern or protectiveness. (Genealogy of Gender 67)

The playwright here has tried to focus that the exploitative physical relations which signify man’s victory over woman can ruin her life completely. Thus, Mala’s anguish and pain is intensified from her realization of her mother’s silence and betrayal. In this regard, Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri observes:

Child sexual abuse spans a range of problems, but it is this complicity of the family through silence and a lack of protest that is the ultimate betrayal for the abused. (73)

The sexual assault on Mala in her childhood and betrayal at the hands of her mother not only affects Mala’s psyche but also develops a sense of guilt consciousness in her mother. Shanta in order to compensate for her guilt of being silent to the injustice meted out to her girl, requests Deepak to marry Mala but Mala turns down Deepak’s proposal for marrying her arguing that they would not be attuned. She becomes physically vulnerable and has started seeking the company of men for sexual gratification. As a critic aptly avers:

Because women have traditionally been denied control over their bodies, some women try to prove that they have secured control over their life, including their body, by indulging in a liberated and free sexual life. (Wandor 11)

When Deepak proposes her for marriage, Mala fingers at the man sitting at the table next to their’s and complains against his staring at her, which enrages Deepak and he starts beating him but in the meantime Mala takes Deepak back to their table and
reveals that it is not true; she made it up and she did it just to gain his attention towards her which would enliven her. She says, “... If he had looked at me, I would have felt—I would have felt truly alive” (CP II 31).

Mala’s dance with the “Man” in the party and grasping him in the presence of his fiancée, Radhika highlights her fractured psyche. When “Man” denies her proposal to take her to his room, she becomes restless and says: “Do whatever you want with me, but take me with you now” (CP II 21). In the play, Dattani has given the uncle and other men the nomenclature “Man” to show them as potential exploiters of women. At the end of the play, after the revelation of the reality that she was molested by her maternal uncle, Deepak asks her to come with him but she refuses and says:

You don’t understand! You don’t understand!! I cannot love you because I see this man [her uncle, Vinay] everywhere. I can never be free of him. Even if I was, I am not sure whether I have the ability to love anyone . . . else. (CP II 54)

Her molestation is ingrained in her mind to such an extent that she can rationalize all arguments except her guilt. She speaks boldly:

By staying silent doesn’t mean I can forget! This is my hell. . . . It is your creation, Maa! You created it for me. With your silence! You didn’t forget anything, you only remained silent! (CP II 54)

In this way, Mala fails to reconcile the reality which has ruined her femininity and keeps haunting her mind, and becomes more intense with the realization of her mother’s silence against her exploitation. Shanta feels herself guilty of Mala’s pitiable plight and she reveals the reality of her life. She accepts the reason for her keeping herself quiet:

I was six, Mala. I was six. And he was thirteen . . . and it wasn’t 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. I lost myself in Him. He helped me. He helped me. By taking away all feelings. No pain no pleasure, only silence. Silence means Shanti. Shanti. But my tongue is cut off. No. No. It just fell off somewhere. I didn’t use it, no. I cannot shout for help, I cannot say words of comfort, I cannot even speak about it. No, I can’t. I am dumb. (CP II 55)

It is Shanta’s silence which creates misunderstanding between them and they start distrusting each other. Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex highlights the impact of the othering process in the patriarchal society when she says:

In her eyes, man embodies the Other, as she does for man; But for her this Other appears in the essential mode and she grasps herself as the inessential opposite to him. (353)

Shanta’s silence is the result of the inessential position of women in the society as compared to the essential “Other”. When the silence is broken, they find each other on the same surface. Her mother’s revelation of the fact that she also suffered the molestation for ten years by the same person when she was six shatters Mala and she regrets “We were both struggling to survive but—I never acknowledged your struggle” (CP II 58).

Through the silence, Dattani has tried to highlight the degenerating Indian morality on the one hand and the stereotypical image of women which present them as objects of sexual pleasure. Men are granted the power to define, interpret, judge and represent the world on their own terms, while women are to be defined, interpreted, judged and represented by the standards set by men. Spacks in The Female Imagination comments on the passive nature of women in the patriarchal society:

Man reserves for himself the terrors and triumphs of transcendence, He offers women safety, the temptation of passivity and
acceptance; He tells her that passivity and acceptance are her nature. (16)

Shanta portrays the image of a traditional Indian woman who bears the pain by keeping her voice silent whereas Mala is a girl with modern sensibilities who revolts not only against her mother’s silence but also challenges the institution of marriage which thrives on male supremacy.

Vinay represents the male chauvinistic aspect of society. His involvement in the gruesome act of abusing Shanta and Mala reflects the male hegemony over female. Towards the end of the play, Dattani has shaken the citadels of male domination by depicting the liberation of Mala, thereby, symbolizing the death of the molester. The final words of Mala, "I wish he were here now, so I could see his face when I tell him I have nothing to hide. Because I know it wasn't my fault . . . (CP II 69) symbolizes her victory.

The second play under analysis in this chapter is an eminent and thematic innovation in the field of Indian English drama dealing with the pain and suffering of HIV positives of Indian society. Against the love-saga of the two HIV positives Aparna and George, the plot of the play deals with poignant crisis in the life of Aparna who has to wage a fight both at personal and social front. The play is a heart raching story of two women who are doubly marginalized and traumatized due a disease which they receive from men. Here, Dattani highlights the ethos of women like Aparna by mirroring her experience, who is silenced by various customs, myths, conventions and misbelieves of the society. Beena Aggarwal has aptly commented in this context:

*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 HIV positive, cannot crush the urge of life. (*Mahesh Dattani* 140)
In this play, the playwright focuses on fundamental urge of human beings to survive, to belong and to live life in an admirable way depicting incidents of past and present in the lives of Aparna and George. When the play begins, Aparna decides to put Paro in Panchgini boarding school because Paro’s mother died due to the HIV infection. Paro witnesses filial liking and fondness with Aparna and was disappointed by Aparna’s decision and pleads, “Why? Why are you sending me away?” (CP II 473). Aparna is moved by Paro’s allegation and Aparna sinks into the past from the flux of her conscience. The horror of the past emerges one after the other before her eyes and she recalls the past phone call of Rosalynd Cooper who was a volunteer nurse at the hospital.

Aparna is expecting a baby and informs Suresh, her husband about the Cooper’s telephonic talk and requests him to accompany her to hospital. She pleads and ask him, “It’s something about our baby. I am scared Suresh. I want you with me” (CP II 476). She is greatly hurt as her husband is not keen to accompany her and she is compelled to go to the hospital alone. Cooper advises her to give up her baby at the hospital and Aparna strongly objects to this idea by asking, “Why? What’s wrong with my baby?” (CP II 478). Aparna wants the child to survive and expressed her anxiety, “Am I going to lose my baby?” (CP II 478). The revelation of her being HIV positive shatters her completely and she utters, “It’s not possible, how I could be HIV positive?” (CP II 478).

When informed by the doctor that Aparna received the infection from her husband, Aparna is jolted to realize the bitter fact of her shallow marital life. Here, Dattani depicts the grim reality of the institution of marriage where men have always exerted power over women inside and outside the marriage. Simone de Beauvoir’s words, “The woman’s body is an object to be purchased; for her it represents capital she has the right to exploit” (456) further establishes the fact.

Aparna’s realization of being cheated and above all the loss of her unborn child makes her a victim of self pity and disgust. She goes back to her home and makes a call to her mother but the misery grips her so sturdily that she can’t speak even a single sentence to her mother. It indicates mental anguish and agony customary in her mind. Dattani has highlighted the notion that the individuality of the wife is subsumed in the
person of the husband through the words of Aparna when she enquires 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? (CP II 482)

Aparna pathetically accuses him that he has ruined her life and she is in dire need of his help. Marriage is a means of legalizing the power relations between the sexes and it establishes the power of husband over his wife. Greer in *The Female Eunuch* while commenting on the acquiescent position of women in marriage writes:

The housewife is an unpaid worker in her husband’s house in return for the security of being a permanent employee hers is the *reduction ad absurdum* of the case of the employee: who accepts a lower wage in return for permanence of his employment. (272)

Aparna’s illusionary sense of companionship is further shaken by the interrogatory words of Suresh which further puts Aparna in a vague condition, “What are you going to do now?” (CP II 482) She doesn’t want to lose her baby as advised by the doctor. Aparna implores for the help of Suresh but he confessed, “How can I help you? I am dying too” (CP II 482). Suresh leaves the city and Aparna makes futile efforts to hold him back and begs her, “Suresh, stay for a while! Just talk to me for a while!” (CP II 482).

Aparna undergoes a sense of uprootedness and insecurity in her desperate mood and vulnerable condition. Aparna loses her child and she is undermined both in her body and will. The breakdown of marriage when Suresh deserts her, the deadly disease and
above all the social stigma attached to the disease makes her life miserable. Nevertheless, unshaken by all these, Aparna seeks refuge at Jeevan Jyoti Hospital and gradually she feels that Jeevan Jyoti is her new and true home. Beena Aggarwal 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. (Mahesh Dattani 143-144)

When she goes to the hospital, the group therapy session is going on and Aparna 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... (CP II 486)

Dr. Machado tries his best to elevate their strength 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” (CP II 487). He infuses positive attitude into the minds of the people infected with virus because the social disgust, exclusion and avoidance are more horrifying than the horror of death.

Dattani here presents the myths associated with the disease on the one hand and the zeal to fight for the liberation of self by the women on the other. The episode of Manoj where even a dentist doesn’t attend him after knowing his ailment reflects the marginalization which HIV Positives have to face in the society. However, Aparna’s fight is twofold: to fight against the disease and to fight as a woman. Her conduct in the hospital and her selfless service to the patients shows her strength of character.
The play *Ek Alag Mausam* celebrates the joy of life rather than mourning on the death. When 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” (CP II 504). Ramnath was encouraged to play cards even before few seconds of his long breath. Dattani maintains the notion that under the evil impact of the social prejudices and myths, people are forced to live lives at the peripheral level of society and cause social exclusion of the weaker sections of the society.

The lake washing scene illustrates Dattani’s notion of female sexuality which is viewed with disrespect. The feelings which emerge in Aparna’s heart on watching George’s wet body are suppressed by her. Female sexuality is a locus of anxiety in patriarchal discourse and male control of the female body is culturally endorsed. Male sexuality is celebrated and female sexuality is usually subsumed in reproduction. N. P. Kumar in his book, *Writing the Female* has aptly commented about the patriarchal endorsement of man’s sexual urges, “Though woman is defined by her sexuality, she is restrained from enjoying her sexuality” (41).

The episode of “wooden soldier” when Aparna hugs George and the same is reciprocated intensely where George reflects his ability to see beyond the common belief. George, feeling strongly, confesses, “Aparna. I love you” (CP II 519). But Aparna gently breaks away and George knows well that she is refusing on the ground that she is HIV positive. George completes her sentence by asking counter question: “Because you are HIV positive?” (CP II 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?” (CP II 520). George seems to assert that one shouldn’t run away from the reality of life.

Dattani in this play juxtaposes the plight of HIV positive wife on the one hand and HIV prostitute on the other. Rita represents the darker side of HIV positive prostitutes who are used, abused and reduced. Kate Millet in *The Prostitution Papers* calls prostitutes ‘political prisoners’ of a patriarchal society. In short, the core of prostitution is sexual politics (119). Dattani through another women character Rita in the play highlights the unlicensed sex business that is managed by men, in which
women are reduced to functional thing and an object of appetite for men. Rita was employed at a brothel as a sex worker and was infected because of her involvement in illegal sex business. She along with her daughter Paro was driven out of her brothel as she was losing customers due to virus infection.

Dattani is concerned with the problems and suffering of the marginalized people and he tries to justify them by putting their voices on the page, stage and also onto cinematic screen. George informs Rita that they are taking them to Jeevan Jyoti hospital where she will be looked after without giving anything in return and assures her that hospital will take care of her along with her daughter. Rita is so relieved that she feels happy to have virus and pathetically speaks, “Oh! Thank God I have AIDS” (CP II 528). Rita is a sex worker but her motherhood is intact and is all the time thinking about her little daughter. It is quite touching when she asks Aparna to allow her daughter to stay with her only for one night and requests “Let her stay with me just for one night please” (CP II 529). Aparna and Rita, both women belong to different social background but they have the same undying desire for motherhood. Beena Aggarwal 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. (Mahesh Dattani 147)

Dattani in this play 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 understanding about the dreaded disease AIDS very skillfully and artistically. 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 child.
Mahesh Dattani is deeply conscious of woman’s muted and invisible existence in the male supremacist society where her subjugated position is the order of the day. Aparna in *Ek Alag Mausam* and Mala in *Thirty Days in September* voice a strong feeling experienced by women in general; the feeling that they are not fairly treated by men. Their act of self-assertion has given them self-confidence, self-respect and self-motivation. Mala and Aparna in both the plays are not deterred by the discouraging attitude of society and they have evolved different strategies not exactly to grab male space but to assert their own individuality and act independently with a sense of freedom and conviction in the patriarchal set up. These characters prove that women can empower themselves by eschewing patriarchal power constructions and they are determined to make their presence felt as an individual. A. Dworkin in his book *Pornography* comments on the male’s control of women’s body as a means of dividing and controlling women:

Male domination of the female body is the basic material reality of women’s lives and all struggle is for dignity and self-determination is rooted in the struggle for actual control of one’s body. (205)

Dattani’s women characters have realized that only by willfully refusing to play their destined roles and making their own intellectual and sexual choices they could locate their self in the oppressive patriarchal system.