ABSTRACT
Abstract

Social Realism is a trend of writing that has become popular now-a-days particularly with Indian playwrights writing in English. It aims to represent the society in its true colours without any romanticizing the things. Literature should reflect the society, its customs, the way of living of people without any idealization. This kind of writing gives a true picture of people, their life-style and their way of thinking in a particular time. Majority of the twentieth century English playwrights followed this tradition of true representation of society, the principal dramatist being G. B. Shaw. Another playwright Henrik Ibsen also dwelt upon the evils in the society through his plays. Indian English dramatists in the earlier period have used mythology, folklore and history as their material which was very much away from the reality. Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar and Mohan Rakesh have written about prevailing social issues during their times.

There are some issues in our society over which people do not want to speak or write about. They feel it obscene to write about these issues though these issues are very much reality of society. People consider it as taboo issues.

Though we live in 21st century, gender equality is still not rooted in our psyche. We are not ready to accept that women are equal to men in every walk of life. Many educated people still indulge in female foeticide.

Communal hatred is still a reality in our country though we have adopted a secular democracy. We, the people of all religions are not ready to live in harmony and it is a great hindrance in the progress of our nation. Our society has been a witness to numerous communal riots and many people have lost their lives through these riots right from the independence and subsequent partition of our country to the present times.

Sexual abuse of children is another evil that we face. The children fall victim to the sexual abuse and the number of such victims is near around half the population of children. Neither parents nor children talk about this topic due to shame, fear, and lack of awareness. There are people in our society who could not
come out of that trauma and shock and could not live normal life throughout their lifetime. People need to make aware about this evil.

A large section of society, i.e., eunuchs is not a part of mainstream society. They are not considered as human beings and are treated insultingly by the mainstream society. These people are neglected their human rights and it persists at government level too; thanks to the recent landmark judgement given by the Supreme Court of creating the 'third gender' status for eunuchs which for the first time gave these people a formal recognition. Though such judgement has been given, we people are not ready to accept eunuchs as part of our society and it needs a long way to go to stop all sorts of discriminations against eunuchs.

Heterosexuality is a considered norm in our society and deviant behaviour is not accepted. Homosexuality is a 'sin' and such sinners don't have any place in mainstream society. The section 377 of Indian Penal Code prohibits any 'unnatural offence' and whosoever indulges in such activity is liable for punishment. There are approximately 4 millions of homosexuals living in India. They cannot come out openly because of their banishment from family and ultimately from the mainstream society. Many homosexuals live double life that is, having homosexual relation as well under the guise of married life. They are forced to do so because society doesn't permit deviant behaviour. Though these laws against homosexuality exist and society's negative outlook persists we see many people practicing homosexuality willingly, some openly and some in secrecy and it is a reality of our society.

Mahesh Dattani is a man with purpose. He has chosen theatre as his medium to reach out to people because he considers it as the most vibrant form. He has written on every contemporary burning issue right from gender equality, religious harmony, same-sex relation, AIDS to sexual abuse of children and continues to write till this date. He has touched upon so called 'taboo' issues; issues which many do not want to talk about or write about. He has put before the audience these issues in society which do exist today though we recognize it or not. He is of the opinion that these issues are very much part of our society, so we should at least try
to understand it, discuss it and should not turn a blind eye towards it. He neither passes any judgement nor is his purpose didactic. He only wants to sensitize the mind of his audience and make him aware about the contemporary reality. This is what the researcher tries to point out through the selected plays of Mahesh Dattani. The selected plays for this research are: Where There's a Will (1988), Dance Like a Man (1989), Tara (1990), Bravely Fought the Queen (1991), Final Solutions (1993), Do the Needful (1997), On a Muggy Night in Mumbai (1998), Seven Steps Around the Fire (1999) and Thirty Days in September (2001). The entire research project is about depiction of contemporary social reality in the selected plays of Mahesh Dattani and the way we look at those realities and the need to change our outlook for betterment of society.

This thesis comprises four chapters. The Introduction forms the Chapter I which starts with the brief introduction, hypothesis, aims and objectives of the research and review of literature. Furthermore, it leads to the definition of drama and the origin and development of English drama. It also discusses the origin and development of Indian drama since Bharat Muni. There is a short section which dwells upon the vernacular form of drama in India. The chapter also takes a brief review of the modern drama right from its beginning in pre-independence period. The post-independence dramatists and their contribution to the Indian Writing in English are discussed in the same chapter. The chapter concludes with a note on life and works of Mahesh Dattani and major influences on him.

The Chapter II explains the concept of social realism. It defines the concepts like realism, social realism and socialist realism. It also stresses the need of realistic representation of people through literature. This chapter further describes the origin of realism and the English writers who followed it. Another section in this chapter is about social realism in Indian English drama. The researcher has tried to show how social realism has become one of the emerging trends in Indian English drama. The detailed historical account of some playwrights writing in the mode of social
realism has been focused upon. The chapter also explains how new Indian drama has been largely devoted to the mode of urban realism.

The Chapter III undertakes the study of social realism in the selected plays of Mahesh Dattani. The social issues which Dattani has taken into consideration have been examined critically. The aspects examined have contemporary relevance and the playwright's aim is to make audience aware about these issues. These issues are religious harmony (Final Solutions), gender equality (Tara, Bravely Fought the Queen, Where There's a Will & Dance Like a Man), Sexual Abuse of Children (Thirty Days in September) and lgbt issues (Seven Steps Around the Fire, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai & Do the Needful). Mahesh Dattani presents before us the reality prevalent in our society as regards these issues are concerned. He has dared to write about these issues which normally people find uncomfortable to talk about. He has become the voice of marginalized sections of society like eunuchs, homosexuals, sexually abused children and women. The plays are studied in detail with focus on the related aspects.

The Chapter IV sets up the conclusion in which observations are noted after critical examination of each play. The chapter also concludes some other aspects of his plays like time technique, stage performance, setting of the plays, language of the dialogues and women characters in his plays. Finally, it is observed that the dramatic canvas of Dattani is coloured with real life conditions and the vivid experiences related with urban cosmopolitan and middle class Indians. Most of the issues taken up by Dattani in his plays are radical, unconventional and contemporary. He prepared the stage for a specific realism on the lines of Ibsen and Shaw.