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 remonstration 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 as 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 poising 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 Souflé 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 Souflé, 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 earthquake 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 investing 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 unmasks 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 traverse 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 reformative 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 betrayed. 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 Winston* 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 imbibed 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 comingle 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 cracks 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 conniving 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