Chapter: IV

A Critical Study of Mahesh Dattani’s Screen Plays

Mahesh Dattani’s dramatic genius is quite diverse and distinctive. He is regarded as one of the best screen play writers in Indian writing in English. Apart from stage and radio plays, he has also ploughed the field of screen plays very successfully creating autonomous aesthetic position to his screenplays. As a dramatist, he carries on simultaneously three pronged career namely stage play writer, radio play writer, and screen play writer in a remarkable way. His screenplays bear the unmistakable imprint of his innovative theatrical art in terms of theme and technique. The present chapter covers up Dattani’s three screen plays for full length critical exploration and elucidation. They are:

- Mango Soufflé
- Morning Raga
- Ek Alag Mausam

Lately, the screen play writing has evolved as an independent and separate genre from that of stage plays writing and also of radio plays writing. Actually, it is inter-related with two art forms, the drama and the film. So, it is also called inter-genre touching up poetics of the drama and the film. According to Oxford English Dictionary, screen play is “The script from which a motion picture film is produced; formerly the film itself.” While, The Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary defines the term screen play elaborately as, “The written text for a film, with dialogues, stage directions and descriptions of characters and setting.”

Thus, screen play may be called textual version or manuscript for a film. It can also be deemed as merging of theatrical and cinematic media into one. It is true that theatre and film overlap at certain levels. There are some differences between them. About the film, it is observed:
It is a sensory medium with a strong emphasis on the visual component; colours and use of light are significant. Art direction is a special category which is as important as cinematography. The director’s job is really in bringing it all together to serve the script. 3

The narrative is done in the form of visual presentation in the film. It relates visual and verbal. It is attributed:

The motion film gives us objects and persons moving and enacting in a visual system of narration, which combines the powers of poetry and painting in an extraordinary synthesis. 4

The film requires a lot of accessories, actors, actresses, singers, choreographers, technological tools etc. Hence, it involves more expenses than a play. Briefly, film adaption of a play is a very huge and challenging enterprise. Pudorkin points out that conversation or words are very useful for illuminating relationship between human beings. Moreover, the film admits the responsibilities of connecting the animate and the inanimate.

In a sense, a film is technologically enhanced and updated manifestation of theatrical performance or a narrative art. The film has some advantages over the theatre. It can explore possibilities of employing lighting arrangement, retake, and sound effect. The theatre presents real situation and events, whereas the films ‘create virtual presents’. 5 The visual component matters much in case of a film. The story is presented with the help of the sounds and pictures. Thus, film is the most powerful and popular means of mass communication and entertainment. One must mention thing here that despite all these facts, screen play has not inspired wide and vibrant criticism which hinders the process of the recognition and popularity of the screen play as an art form in the field of literature.
Mango Soufflé is a famous screen play dealing with post colonial theme i.e. homosexuality. It is a film adaption of stage play On a Muggy Night in Mumbai. It is the debut film of Dattani. Directed by Mahesh Dattani, the film was released in India on February 2002 and bagged the best motion picture award at the Barcelona Film Festival in the same year.

Both the play On a Muggy Night in Mumbai and the film Mango Soufflé depict the theme of same sex love. The title of the play is very symbolic and meaningful. Mango symbolizes the human passion. The mango fruit incites desires passion etc... It incites the desires of love and friendship in the film. The most of the events take place at the family farm house in the vicinity of mango orchard. This fruit gets ripened during the summer season. The hot atmosphere outside and strong passion inside are suggested through the title Mango Soufflé. “Mango as you know is the fruit of passion just as the Apple is a fruit of temptation in the Christian World.”

Besides these, it is also regarded as the king of fruits. It is interesting to note that Sharad, a gay character, wants to be the king like mango fruit. He puts;

wife, I can have children, who will all adore me simply because I - a real man. Now why would I want to give it all up? So what if I have to change a little? If I can be a real man I can be king. Look at all the kings around you, look at all the male power they enjoy, thrusting themselves on to the world, all that penis power! Power with sex, power with muscle, power with size. Firing rockets, exploding nuclear bombs, if you can do it five times, I can do it six times and all that stuff. Power, man! Power!” (CPII: 217)

Since, Mango Souffle is a cinematic reproduction of On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, there is no change in characters, themes, etc. Kamlesh, Sharad, Kiran, Ed/Prakash, Deepali, Bunny, and Ranjit are the common characters in both the works. The locale of living room of Kamlesh in Mumbai
is replaced by the farm house of Kamlesh in Bangalore in the film. The theme of homosexuality finds no alteration in the film. Dattani reflects on the contemporary issues in his plays in an honest and subtle way. He doesn’t attempt to show himself as a scholar. So, he adopts all those techniques and devices which impart a touch of reality and universality.

Dattani, being experimentative and enterprising dramatist, presents the issue of the homosexuality on the screen in a very daring and interesting way. Perhaps, Mango Soufflé is the first attempt of screening radical issue like same sex love relationship. Dattani had an intense desire to direct such a film and On a Muggy Night in Mumbai struck a chord. “Mango Soufflé is a product of two intense desires-my desire to make a film and Mahesh’s to direct one.”

The dramatic narrative of the play is brief and swift in this play than the original one. It is necessary to pinpoint here that the dramatist has discarded certain elaborations or events in the cinematic version of the play. In original play, he mentions a good deal of information about the past-unsuccessful life of Kiran. Moreover, in stage play, the guard is paid for sex by Kamlesh, but it isn’t clear in the screen play. Actually, Mango Soufflé has created powerful effects on the audience. It is the great cinematic success due to certain omission and addition done by the dramatist while converting stage play into a film. Asha Kuthari aptly avers;

There is, even in the play, the element of separation in terms of spatial reality: the plot unravels on the top floor flat that looks down at the ‘normal’ wedding – which is set at a ‘safe’ distance, which is also evoked in the film, once they are within the precincts of the farm. The film in a sense actually makes the ‘other’, the outside, palpably visual, with cuts of the marriage next door. This is the subtle way in which the translation into the cinematic version evolves: this is a
narrative that entails different space-time complexities, and the resonant emotional quotient that works wonderfully on stage would be completely static on the screen. 8

The narrative of the play takes place through interior and exterior devices in the play. Soon the scene shifts from Kamlesh’s parental home to his farm house. The conversion of setting of apartment into a farmhouse helps significantly explore the possibilities of screen play. In the place of muggy night, the dramatist presents hot day in a summer. Sanjeev Shah mentions:

Mahesh and I had several discussions on the script as he agonized to make the play more cinematic. The clincher was changing the setting of a muggy night in a Mumbai apartment into a summer day in Bangalore at a sprawling farmhouse (where I incidentally lived). This opened up many cinematic possibilities and suited our budget. 9

Dattani divides stage into different sets and uses various techniques to show mental ‘space’ and ‘space’ of time. In film, he exploits flashback / forward to show the past and present events. There is a flashback which shows us the past party in which Ed and Kiran are seen dancing. Soon Kamlesh arrives at his family farmhouse. There is a sign ‘Mango Grove’ at the gate of the farmhouse. After the black out of the six months, at the exterior level in the mango grove, the watchman is seen necking his girlfriend in the mango grove. The fruits are seen on the trees. After hearing Kamlesh’s voice, the watchman goes in the farmhouse. Kamlesh is expecting some guests. So, he wants the watchman fetch some drinks and foods.

Kamlesh is suffering from depression. He is passionately in love with Ed who has deserted him. Kamlesh is greatly concerned about his sister Kiran who loves Ed, his past lover, and intends to marry him very soon.
After the departure of Ed, Kamlesh develops relationship with Sharad, another homosexual, who lives with Kamlesh for some time. However, Kamlesh doesn't get on well with Sharad as his love for Ed is very strong and passionate. Kamlesh sacrifices his own happiness for the sake of his sister. However, the problem is that he can't take out thoughts of Ed/Prakash from his mind completely. He is distressed and depressed inwardly. So, he has invited his friends with a view to counseling him and treating his depression. He wants the help of his friends for overcoming from this enigmatic condition. In the beginning, Sharad arrives at the farmhouse. Kamlesh informs him that his sister is going to marry Ed. Sharad inquires back, “Ed? That’s it? Your sister fell in love with an Ed? Is he sexy or just husband material?” (CPII: 176)

Nobody knows the reason for convening the meeting so suddenly. So Sharad tries to know the reason for sudden invitation asking whether it has to do with Prakash. Kamlesh is annoyed at the very mention of Prakash’s name.

Kamlesh: How dare you bring that up?

Sharad: came up. You know I still love you. (CPII: 177)

Since Sharad has been living with Kamlesh for some time, he is quite familiar at Kamlesh’s bedroom and Kitchen. Later on, he left the place as they didn’t cope up properly with each other’s expectations. Hence, the relationship between them is at stake at present. However, Kamlesh tries to reassure Sharad that he still loves him.

Kamlesh: I love you too.

Sharad: [angry] Oh! Spare me the lies! You could never love anyone because you are still in love with Prakash! (CPII: 177-78)

Kamlesh wants to realize Sharad that despite misunderstanding, he is having soft corner for Sharad. Actually nobody knows that Ed and
Prakash is the same person except Kamlesh. Kamlesh admits that he needs Sharad's help to forget Prakash. On Sharad's inquiry, it is revealed that Kamlesh tore all the photographs of Prakash except one which he brings out.

Like the play, the film also shows marriage going on at the next door. Next to Sharad, Deepali arrives at the farm house. She is also a lesbian character of the play. Outside the farm house, the marriage ceremony is on and the bride is being taken to the shamiana. She has to wait for the crowd to disperse. She also asks Kamlesh why he has invited them. Kamlesh replies that he would disclose after everybody has come there.

The guard comes back bringing refreshment material, while Kamlesh is in the kitchen. Sharad notices a bruise on the watchman’s neck. So, he becomes very apprehensive and inquires of guard about the bruise. The guard replies that it’s just a bruise nothing else.

Sharad: *Kamlesh saab ke pas bahut si dawayian hain aise chot ke liye.*  
(Master Kamlesh has a lot of remedies for such bruises)

Maqsood: [going to the door]  
*Ji- ji nahin. Main theek hoon. Ye rahan saabka bill Aur ye Chutta.* (Er-no sir, I am fine. This is Master’s bill and his change)  
(CPII: 181)

Sharad thinks that Kamlesh is having sexual relationship with the guard. Kamlesh disapproves it and says; “I did not sleep with him. He is heterosexual.” (CPII: 182) In the stage play, it is crystal clear that Kamlesh is exploiting the guard for the physical pleasure.

The film shifts into the past time and again. The dramatist dexterously surfaces the hidden desires of the characters in the play. Most of the characters are the homosexual – either gay or lesbian. The film is a daring documentation of human desires for same sex love. Dattani broods over urban angst and issues in his plays. The people who are thrown at the peripheral level of society catch his attention again and again. His theatre or film projects invisible issues like homosexuality, eunuch, child sexual abuse,
social apathy towards the marginalized etc. The film makes the characters more communicative and expressive about their problem and constraints. Since it is English movie, target audience is not middle class people or regular film goers. They are the urban people. In fact, the issue of the homosexuality deals with the urban life. It can't find much expression openly in rural background. It is attributed: “The movie is targeted at urban audiences since it is all about urban life and urban relationships.”

The strong urge for same sex love is depicted skillfully in the play. Ed wants to marry Kiran retaining his relationship with Kamlesh. He is gay rather bisexual like Bunny Singh, a TV artist. Despite being gay, Ed asserts that he is not a gay. So, when Ed denies of his being gay, Kamlesh pleads; “Ed! You led me on! You made me believe you were gay! Indeed you, Ed, I love you!” (CPII: 206)

In this way, Ed betrays Kamlesh. It is because of this Kamlesh feels anguished and depressed. Later, two other characters namely Ranjit and Bunny also join them at the party. When it is revealed that Ed and Prakash is the same person, everyone is left aghast as all of them know about Kamlesh-Prakash relation except Kiran. Kamlesh requests everyone not to reveal the secret before Kiran for the sake of her happiness. The picture of Kamlesh-Prakash blows due to sudden gust of wind. It remains on the French window for a moment and then wind blows it away. Of course, Ed and Kiran can't see it. Everybody rushes out under one or another pretext barring Kiran and Ed. It is quite amusing scene as all of them give a chase to the moving photograph. Deepali and Ranjit insist Kamlesh to reveal the truth to Kiran. Bunny feels that it will work without creating any problem. So, there is no need to disclose it before Kiran.

Bunny: Don’t tell her. It will ruin their lives. If both of them want it then what is the problem? I think it went that way! (CPII: 209)

Ed has become suspicious about the movement going outside. Kiran also feels that something strange is going on. She is highly impatient to know it. She forces Sharad to let her know truth. Sharad is perplexed as how
to reveal truth before her. On her persistence, he is compelled to expose the thing but in a different way.

Kiran: Sharad I want to know I insist.

Sharad: Well, Kamlesh hasn’t been entirely honest with you. (CPII: 210)

Again, Ranjit suggests them to show the photo to Kiran for revealing the truth. Bunny defies this idea as he did earlier. Everybody expresses his/her views over this issue in the following way:

Kamlesh: Don’t be silly! We have to let her know.

Ranjit: She loves him!

Deepali: You love him!

Kamlesh: He loves her!

Ranjit: He can’t possibly.

Bunny: He can! Let’s get the picture first. (CPII: 211)

The idea of liberal minded person is also presented in this play. Bunny considers himself a liberal minded person. He doesn’t feel possessive about one kind of relationship. He champions the idea of bisexual. Therefore, he doesn’t feel inclined to inform Kiran about Kamlesh- Prakash affair. Kiran wants to know the true reason behind the failure of relationship between Kamlesh and Sharad. Kamlesh tries to convince her saying that it just didn’t work out. He asks her not to bother about it. Deepali fabricates a story.

Deepali: (to Kiran and also Ed) It didn’t work out because Kamlesh’s lover wants to be straight (To Sharad) Sharad wants to be straight. (CPII: 216)

Kiran considers it as an absurd idea. Sharad also approves it. So, it is an absurd idea of turning oneself from gay to straight.
Deepali:   (Spelling it out) precisely. That’s the whole point. That some people don’t see how absurd the idea is.

Sharad:   (Catching on) Oh right. Yes, I want to be as straight as a stick. 
(Immediately speaking more aggressively) I want to be straight. 
Like a rod.  (CPII: 216)

The idea of real man arouses a lot of discussion and deliberation among them. Ed speaks that Sharad “wants to be a man”. (CPII: 216) Ed explains that he means a real man. He indicates the people outside and calls them real men and women. He explains that the world outside is the real one. He compares the gay ship as the little bubble.

Deepali inquires into this matter to Ed Whether he has known anyone who has successfully done that way. Ed responds that he doesn’t know anyone. He considers it matter of common knowledge. He calls him as ‘bisexual’. So Sharad responds back in a humorous way. “No. I am not bisexual. I am as gay as a goose.” (CPII: 217) Bunny also throws light on the matter of real man. He wants to say that what people think about him is not real man. People have illusory notion about him.

Bunny: I know. Just as the man whom my wife loves does not exist. I have denied a lot of things. The only people who know me – the real me – are present here in this room. I have tried to survive. In both worlds. Everyone believes me to be the model middle class Indian  

Kamlesh confesses his love for Sharad. He realizes that his love for Prakash is an illusory thing. As he exclaims to Sharad,

“No. It’s true. It took me this moment to realize it. (looking at Ed) I know now that I have been chasing an illusion. Perhaps the man I loved does not exist. (To Sharad) But you do. And I love you. (CPII: 218)
This confession comes as a blow to Ed and upsets him a lot. He feels headache and disturbed. Kamlesh exclaims that the man he loved doesn’t exist. Prakash becomes very impatient and insists Kamlesh to let him know truth. When Kamlesh admits that he really loves Sharad. In the bedroom scene, Ed moves to Kamlesh and asserts;

Ed: You don’t really love Sharad. You love me. (CPII: 220)

Kamlesh is frozen to know Ed’s assertion. Ed also adds that he will take care of both- Kiran and Kamlesh. He doesn’t want Sharad as Kamlesh’s lover. Ed has become very passionate and possessive for Kamlesh’s love. In a rage and resentment mood, Kamlesh grabs Ed by the throat. Ed struggles to defend himself. They fall apart hearing cry of Kiran. She is frozen to see naked photograph of Prakash and Kamlesh produced by the guard. Through the cinematic technique, Kiran’s reaction is also shown side by side. It makes the film more effective. The audience is thrilled to see both the contradictory scenes simultaneously.

Dattani’s characters gasp under the social compulsions and commitments. It is evident from Ed’s behaviour that the gay is his real nature. He wants to change his nature, but he finds difficulty in it. Kamlesh feels enraged and anguished. In a furious mood, he asks Kiran not to marry Ed. Now Kiran has also understood Ed’s real being. Ed tries to reassure his love for Kiran. She asks a very subtle question. What do you love about me? (CPII: 222)

Conflict is a very essential element of a drama. Dattani dramatizes the conflict and emotional crisis in the lives of his characters. Kamlesh and Prakash struggles due to the social canons that disapprove their nature in a respectful manner. They are living on the ‘fringe’ of the social set up and try to occupy as much as space they can. It is attributed:

The film, like the play, looks at the fabric of alternate (read homosexual) relationships. While this might be workable with the play, a movie in
which male lovers fight, kiss, break/make up, is somewhat shocking for ‘straight’ audiences of Indian cinema. In adapting the play into the film, however, Dattani added a few new shades to the

The play raises a question: Can a gay become a straight? Most of the characters opine negative views. However, are some characters like Ed and Bunny who believe that a gay can be turned as a straight.

Seeing the photograph of Kamlesh and Prakash, Kiran is shocked and busted within. Like her brother, she is enraged and anguished. She feels betrayed. She asks Ed to get out of the house informing him about the photograph being found by the watchman. Children saw it and also saw to their fathers and they, in turn, saw it to other men-women. She refuses to marry Ed. When Ed, again, tries to convince her that he can love her, she wants him to test by assigning the task of facing the world outside.

Kiran: Well, if that is true, You have to do one thing for me.

I want you to go outsides, meet those people at the wedding. They know you. You met them at my parents’. They know you, back in here. (CPII: 24)

Ed feels hesitation in acting as per Kiran’s challenge. He, encouraged by other, jumps on the bike and drives towards the gate at breakneck speed. Maqsood tries to stop him. He kicks Maqsood at shin and kicks the gate open. He falls from the bike and crawls out under the bike. He looks around in a panic and state of bewilderment. People are laughing at him and some of them go to help him up. He has hurt his leg and feels pain. Helped by Maqsood, he hobbles in through the gateway. The crowd stares at him. At last he turn to Kiran and asserts; “I love you.” (CPII: 226) The film ends with Kamlesh throwing the torn bits of the photograph into the pool and Sharad applauding it. Kiran also throws torn bits of her photograph into the
pool. Kiran runs towards the house looking at the torn bits of photograph floating in the water. The future course of her life is uncertain. Kamlesh puts his arm on Sharad’s shoulder as they walk towards the house.

Dattani transliterates Hindi words into English language even when English version is quite feasible. Some time, he puts English version of Hindi expression into the brackets keeping in mind foreign readers. Time and again, he makes the code-mixing device by using Indian words in English sentence. Generally when he mixes Indian codes with English expression, he doesn’t care to translate them into English. Dattani wants to have real touch to his plays. He knows well that English speaking boss talks in regional languages with their subordinates, peons, watchman, and milkman and so on. He believes that English is his language. So he writes his plays in English. He explains:

*Mango Souffle*

and *Morning Raga* in Hindi but the fact is it’s not my language. English is the language I really think in.\(^1\)

The film reminds us of Indian films like *Kamsutra* and *Fire* dealing with same sex love and thereby aroused a lot of debate and agitation in our society. Most of the characters are gays except Kiran. Initially, she seems little novice and nervous, but emerges as the bold and powerful at the end. It is attributed:

The one heterosexual in the play is a woman Kiran, who initially presents us with the picture of naïve, victimized and weak character, but turns out perhaps to be one of the strongest, basing all her ideas of the self on openness and truth. She seems naïve in her suggestion of gay marriages, but Dattani makes a definite case for the simplicity and strength in her recognition of diversities as diversities, and not aberrations.\(^2\)
Despite the development and fast civilization, there is no much change in our society. Keeping this rigidity in mind, Dattani presents the theme of homosexuality in such a way that it couldn’t paralyze the popularity of the film. Moreover, the task of making a film than a theatrical performance offers a lot of challenges and problems. Dattani in conversation with Angelie Multani puts:

It is ten times more difficult to make a film than a play! As far as the language goes, yes it is now getting to be impossible to find funding for Indian English films. No one in India has made a profit out of Indian film. The only successful one in terms of commerce has been Monsoon Wedding. The rest have all lost money.  

Literature is characterized by its suggestiveness. It denotes and connotates meaning. It doesn’t state directly. Boyum believes that like works of literature, the film is replete with connotation as well as denotation in terms of meanings. Dattani’s works also make powerful suggestions which open new avenues of imagination. In Mango soufflé, he doesn’t directly state his views about the issue of homosexuality, but he points at the reality which is invisible due to darkness. He just throws light on reality to make it visible. He doesn’t take us into world of fantasy and imagination, but he takes us into virgin soil of taboo issues.

I am not sure whether audience acceptance of movie should be a form of censorship on creativity. In any case, being gay or lesbian is not right or wrong, it is reality and we have learnt to accept alternate relationship and live with them. 

It can be deduced that Mango Soufflé is an endearing and appealing attempt to present the theme of homosexuality. Both the play and the film indicate clearly that homosexual relationship is as much possessive and demanding as heterosexual love and affection. Dattani maintains that
there are so many people living with us hiding their gay nature. Under the pressure of family and society, they prefer a person to marry belonging to opposite sex and continue to keep their gay relationship without the knowledge of their betterhalf.

‘In Mango Souffle’, the lovers swim naked in a pool and the many strands of sexual orientations and

Dattani is imbibed with immense guts and clarity of ideas. He presents the suffering of the deprived sections of our society on the page, stage and the screen as well and thereby, registers his protest against subjugation and suppression of the subalternity of some sections of our society. He pleads that what is wrong if two individuals of the same sex love each other. It is as natural as love between two individuals of opposite sexes. He goes ahead to plead for the marriage between the two homosexuals. He is analyzing this relationship from various dimensions. He discusses it physically and socially as well as psychologically and religiously.

*Morning Raga* is his one of the best known screen plays. The most outstanding feature of the film is that music is woven in the texture of the play. While talking to Shabana Azmi, a renowned actress, Dattani puts:

A story that brings together the modern and the traditional, unites the past with the present, Carnatic music with the Western music, fate and coincidence with individual choices.

The film was released in India on 29th October, 2004. The international premiere was part of the Cairo Film Festival in December 2004. Shabana Azmi played the role of Swarnalatha and the film was directed by Mahesh Dattani. Like some other plays, the play has no formal divisions into acts. Of course, the narrative of the play takes place through interior and exterior devices. Like most of his plays, flashback technique is used for reviving events of the past. Dattani uses different techniques in different plays.
corresponding to the themes and the mental spectrums of the characters. It is observed:

The action in the play split between past and present, floats in order of flashback and flash forward in a symmetrical order corresponding with the flow of consciousness of different characters.¹⁸

It is essentical to note here that Mahesh Dattani generally depicts post modern issues in his plays. Most of his plays are deeply rooted in urban issues and milieu. However, some of his plays are located in rural background. Morning Raga is one such a play. The play is ingrained in country background which lends simplicity, spontaneity, and naturality to the play. Of course, some actions do take place in the city. The scene moves from a village to a city having carnatic music as the background. It seems that Dattani pleads for the carnatic music in the play. By selecting countryside as the setting and keeping music as a motif, he succeeds in imparting a touch of sublimity and spirituality to the play. Through the delineation of different characters, the dramatist seeks to present different notions and ideas about the music. There is emotional affinity between some characters and music. Shabana Azmi puts: “...An emotional current grips me as I read it, even though it is overstated in places...”¹⁹

The inner movement is very powerful in this play. Dattani tries to reflect them in the behavior.

...I want the inner movements, adding psychological dimensions that manifest themselves in gesture and behaviour. I need consistency in style... ²⁰

At the very outset of the play, flashback technique shows that some villagers are boarding on the bus with their luggages. This is the incident of twenty years back. Swarnalatha and her friend, Vaishnavi, are leaving their home village for the city with a motive of music. Both are carrying
their sons of about four years or so. Swarnalatha is having tamburi where as Vaishnavi has a violin in a case with her. On the other hand in a city home, Mr. Kapoor is getting into his car with his briefcase. Mrs. Kapoor and her toddler girl are seen at the front door of the house. He drives out his car and puts on the stereo. Now the car is moving fast into the countryside, leaving the music from the stereo in the background.

In the bus, the people are singing and a good deal of noise is coming out from the fast moving bus. Swarnalatha and Vaishnavi are seen sitting in the bus holding their children and musical instruments. The camera captures happy faces of the passengers, happy children, their mothers along with their instruments. The fast moving car and the bus are appearing from the two opposite directions and collide. Dattani puts collision of the two vehicles in the following manner “.Subject camera shots of car and bus driver in high speed. The music continues as the two vehicles collide. The bus driver sees the collision about to happen. He swerves to avoid the impact. The car hits the side of the bus, sending Kapoor flying out of the windscreen. The back window of the bus shatters on the impact, sending the children and and begins to keel over into the river. Inside we see the passengers world turning upside down even as the morning sun glows through the back of the bus.” (CPII: 339)

This mishap claimed the lives of many, leaving many more injured and affrighted. Mr. Kapoor’s car was overturned the bridge throwing him in a pool of blood. The music from the car continues to play on and the violin is flowing gently down the river. Swarnalatha is survived but her son is died in this unfortunate accident. Her friend Vaishnavi is also died, whereas her son Abhinay is survived. This is the flash back into the past. After twenty years, Abhinay is planning to commemorate the 20\textsuperscript{th} death anniversary of his mother, Vaishnavi by setting up a musical group.

Swarnalatha is living with anguished past. Her son is lost in the accident. Nevertheless, she is more concerned with the death of her friend,
Vaishnavi. She feels that she was taking Vaishnavi with her. Vaishnavi’s son Abhinay has strong love and passion for music. He is committed to keep alive the tradition of music and art. Pinkie, originally Priyanka, is a sensitive young girl. She is dedicated to cause of western music. Her father Mr. Kapoor died in the accident while driving the car twenty years back. Her mother, Mrs. Kapoor, is an attractive lady in her mid forties. She runs a boutique shop which has a very fashionable window with high fashion creations on the mannequins. In this way, Swarnalatha, Abhinay and Pinkie share the unhappy common past. All the three have lost their dear ones in the bus-car accident and now all the three are keen to nurture the tradition of music. It is observed:

– Swarnalatha, Pinkie and Abhinay have a common quest to preserve the tradition of art and music. Their passion is rooted in their begotten past but they have a yearning to seek its outlet in the present life conditions. The dramatic structure of Morning Raga moves in the direction of breaking the duality of past and present and the distinction of personal and impersonal.  

Abhinay is looking for his defunct mother’s violin. He approaches his father for this at his village home, but his father shows cold shoulder to his inquiry. He suggests him not to waste his time for music, whereas Abhinay is longing for preserving the tradition of music. In fact, Abhinay leaves his home village for the cause of music three years back as his father is protesting the idea of preserving the tradition of music. He is not interested in art and music and passes his time in dalliance. Abhinay expresses his desire for starting a music group before his father. On hearing this, his father retorst, “You have also gone mad! Like your mother! She is controlling you from the other world!” (CPII: 344)

Actually, the father and the son embody two different attitudes towards the music. They are two different stand points of the music. The son has an ardent desire for learning and preserving art of music. The father has
no heart, no respect for the art of music. He hates the music and doesn’t wish his son joining it. It generates the conflict between father and son. Abhinay strives to hold back the violin of his late mother, Vaishnavi. The son is eager to have that instrument, the sign of his late mother, whereas the father is disturbed by his son’s urge and unyielding passion for music. To father, music is nothing but a waste of time. To son, it is the driving force of life. He is very anxious and impatient in finding out the instrument. Even during night, he attempts to search out his mother’s violin. He is persistent in his search of his mother’s violin and photograph and his father tries to dissuade him from it. He takes out some of his mother’s photographs from a chest. Among these photographs, there is one photograph in which Abhinay’s mother is holding a carnatic violin. This photograph is very suggestive. He gets up and goes into the outer room and opens the old trunk of his mother. The old and rusty trunk’s noise wakes up his father.

Abhinay: Where is amma’s violin?

Father: (not too sure he has heard right) Violin? (Looking at him as if he is crazy). Why do you want it in the middle of the night? (CPII: 345)

Human life is rationed by the Destiny and God. ‘Human self’ is at constant struggle with the collective forces or selves. What causes the emotional upheaval or turbulence is the encounter between individual self with hostile surroundings. Such conflicts are quite befitting for the dramatic presentation. They are the raw material for the drama. Abhinay finds hostile atmosphere within his own home in the form of his father. His uncompromising passion for music and his father’s contempt for music are dramatically juxtaposed in the play. It is aptly observed:

The impatience of Abhinay, the contempt of father and the mystery of violin are three strong situations for the exposition of the plot. It sustains mystery and suspense...
Dattani draws his characters from real life. Appa Rau is a minor character of the play. He is both comic and realistic figure. He has a buffalo whose name is Annapoorna which is very symbolic. Annapoorna means goddess of food. Early in the morning, Abhinay happens to meet Appa Rau when the latter is walking with his ‘Annapoorna’. Abhinay inquires him about the violin.

Abhinay: Such a small village and you don’t know where a violin went? The whole village will know what I ate for dinner but you don’t remember where my mother’s violin is?

Appa Rau: Everybody knows. But we forget. We forget all that we want to forget. Why remember all that which brings you pain? (CPII: 346)

In this way, Appa Rau tries to explain Abhinay how people of the village have come out from the past shocks and suffering. They don’t want to refresh their wounds by recalling them. His words also showcase the strong emotional content. The dramatist has externalized such strong emotion bearing situations which easily grips the souls of the play goers making play an enjoyable and educating experience.

Like Abhinay, Pinkie is also a very sensitive girl of early twenty and wants to perpetuate the memory of her deceased father by preserving the tradition of western music, as her father was passionate lover of western music. His passion for western music and Vaishnavi’s urge for carnatic music are the two dimensions of one tradition of music. Like Abhinay, Pinkie also goes to the village where accident took place. Pinkie lost her father in that dreadful collision and Abhinay his mother. Pinkie goes to the village with a view to paying homage to her deceased father. She feels that her mother shows no sign of feeling and sympathy for her defunct father. She wants to prolong her father’s voice. So her passion for music is her sentimental quest. She doesn’t pay much attention to her mother’s boutique. Pinkie informs her mother that she went to that village last month. She wants her mother take
interest in keeping her father’s voice alive, but her mother shows indifference to it. She blames that her mother didn’t love him.

Pinkie: You didn’t love him, did you? All you care about is yourself.

Mrs. Kapoor: (slamming the stuff in the sink) Pinkie that’s unfair to me. You are being very very unfair. (CPII: 365-66)

Pinkie charges her mother for being unfair with her and her father. But in reality, she did love her father. Pinkie blames that her mother hated her father. When it is beyond endurance, Mrs. Kapoor reveals the truth before Pinkie.

Mrs. Kapoor: memories of him.

Pinkie: Tell me.

Mrs. Kapoor. He used to beat me up.

Mrs.Kapoor: I did. Pinkie, that’s all that mattered to me. That you didn’t see any of it. I don’t want you to hate your father. He was sick, but-he loved you a great deal. He did.

Pinkie is deeply grieved to know the ill treatment meted out to her mother. She feels that she couldn’t realize the pain of her mother. She wants to know the real cause of the accident.

Pinkie: Mrs.Kapoor: He-he was responsible for it. He was drunk. He killed those villagers. (CPII: 366)

Thus, Mrs. Kapoor reluctantly breaks Pinkie’s illusory notions regarding her father by presenting the truth. Pinkie is greatly shocked to know the harsh reality unknown to her for these many years. Her consciousness is
rocked again. It reminds her of the old woman’s curse at the village. She is left aghast and anguished. She is unable to bear all these and intends to decrease the angst by making candid confession before Abhinay. Here, both Swarnalatha and Pinkie feel guilt consciousness for the death of Vaishnavi. Pinkie is quite young and expressive. She is keen to reduce the mental agony by confessing before Abhinay, whereas Swarnalatha suffers all alone within by suppressing it in her heart. She carries the burden of guilt on her heart. She observes the silence which intensifies her pain and suffering. She is having the violin of Vaishnavi. Actually, she feels panicky and cursed. So she doesn’t handover it directly and makes confession to Abhinay. Later on, she sends the violin alongwith a carnatic note that Swarnalatha sang at the riverside through postal service. Abhinay is highly thrilled and felt elated at the rediscovery of violin with which he wants to revive the art of carnatic music. The dramatic narrative presents this incident in the following way. “Abhinay holds the violin in his hand, a sense of excitement building up inside him as he feels the texture of the violin. We see the picture of his mother bathed in moonlight transforming into a memory of Abhinay’s mother, (CPII: 370)

The violin is not merely a musical instrument, but it is also the metaphor connecting son to his mother. It is also very essential for preserving carnatic music. The play depicts the emotional upheavals in the life of Abhinay. It has been assumed:

Morning Raga is the only original screen play from the pen of Dattani and therefore beyond the limitations of stage and theatre, he delicately presents the emotional crisis of an individual in whose life music is a passion, a creative art and a question of his identity. 23

With the rediscovery of violin, Abhinay rediscovers his identity. He tries to define meaning of his life through carnatic music. He goes to Swarnalatha’s house for persuading her to participate in the music group
which he has been longing to start for commemorating the 20th death anniversary of his mother.

Swarnalatha: What do you mean?

Abhinay: I am starting a music group and I want you to be a part of it.

( CPII: 372)

Despite her prompt refusal, Abhinay is determined to convince her for participating in his music group. He insists her that she has to come with him to the city for partaking in it. Actually, Swarnalatha is the true worshipper of music. She wants to carry on the practice of music and to keep voice of Vaishnavi alive as well. However, her will is controlled by the society which doesn't appreciate her interest in music. There is a conflict in her mind resulting from her undying urge for music and discouraging familial environment. Critically, the clash or tension is born out of conflict between individual 'choices' and 'social commitment'. One more thing that prevents Swarnalatha from the joining with Abhinay is self realization of her accountability for Vaishnavi’s death. She derives acute pain at the realization of this. It functions as a tense chord of violin.

Abhinay wants to preserve the tradition of carnatic music initiated by his mother with the help of Swarnalatha. Therefore, he insists Swarnalatha to teach him what has been taught to her by Vaishnavi. When Swarnalatha excuses herself on the ground that she doesn’t go to city, Abhinay directly hits her conscience by saying.

Abhinay:

want to return the favour because she is dead and it doesn't matter anymore? ( CPII: 380)

This generates waves of speculation and thoughts in her mind. Her conscience is divided into two. Firstly, she is suffering from a sense of guilt consciousness for the tragic demise of her friend Vaishnavi. Secondly, her mind undergoes intense conflict for restricting her passion for music. To
make matter worse, she is blamed for showing ingratitude. She is unable to bear charges made by Abhinay. It's not a question asked by Abhinay to her, but it is an accusation made by him for showing a sense of ingratitude. She is neither thankless nor passionless lady. It serves as a challenge to her identity. She decides to sing for him. Her suspended passion for music starts revitalizing. She redisCOVERS her passion for the carnatic music. That is to say, by preserving the violin of Vaishnavi, Swarnalatha preserves music of Vaishnavi.

The horrible accident keeps on haunting Swarnalatha’s mind. She has lost her son in that accident. However, she is concerned much about the death of Vaishnavi. She feels pangs of guilt. It seems that her nerves are weakened. Whenever she sees anything related to Vaishnavi, she gets disturbed and distraught. Abhinay comes to her for learning music with Vaishnavi’s violin. She is perturbed to see that violin.

Swarnalatha: Why do you bring your mother’s violin here?

Abhinay: Don’t you like it? (CPII: 380)

Swarnalatha is also quite aware of allegation put on her by Abhinay’s father. Abhinay’s father has a lot of contempt for music and also for her. He doesn’t want Swarnalatha teach music to Abhinay. One day outside the temple, Swarnalatha bumps into Abhinay’s father.

Abhinay’s Father: I hear my son is learning music from you.

Swarnalatha: May be.

Abhinay’s Father: Please leave him alone. Music will take him nowhere (CPII: 381)

This allegation falls like a brick on her head. She is already in pain inwardly. Abhinay’s father has increased her pain by this negative remark. Moreover, her decision of singing is not welcomed and appreciated by other people of the village.
Appa Rau: (to Annapoorna) Here is some news that will get rid of your the city to sing!

Yes, I heard it only this morning. That boy Abhinay has asked

(CPII: 382-83)

Swarnalatha’s condition is highlighted through interior and exteriors dramatic devices in the play. In this way, she has internal as well as external barriers in joining with Abhinay’s musical group. Both the past and the present are non-corresponding to her suspended passion for music, to her desire of playing for Abhinay. Despite these, she agrees to go to city for singing in a banquet. After a long time, Swarnalatha starts her journey in the crowded bus. She feels a panic to see the child drawing a pattern on the dusty window pane. A small group begins to sing. Moreover, the bus is approaching the bridge. All revives her past. The present sinks in the past. Swarnalatha sees the past accident in her mind’s eyes. She starts screaming and asks to stop the bus. She gets off with her bag from the bus and goes back home.

Everybody is anxiously waiting for her at the banquet hall. Balaji and Munna begin their instrumental sections. Abhinay strikes the first chord. He says, (Looking at Pinkie) “…” (CPII: 389) Abhinay is highly troubled. He feels that Swarnalatha has let him down. He can’t sing without Swarnalatha. Despite being different persons and having different social identities, both are depending on each other for the fulfillment of their ambition. The music is common search between both of them. They visit the past and derive pain. Time and again the past bumps into their present and changes the course of their actions. It is attributed:

The consistent projection of the images of the past is a strong dramatic device to present the life on the stage. Dattani develops the thesis that past and present are not fragmented notions but they
are collectively integrated in human consciousness. ²⁴

Abhinay is still hopeful and comes to see Swarnalatha at the village. He meets her and makes direct accusation.

Abhinay: You let me down.

Swarnalatha: I-I am sorry but I am helpless. There are some things I can’t do

Abhinay: (Sighing) It’s the same with me. (After a while) I can’t play without your voice.

Swarnalatha: (CPII: 391)

Swarnalatha has been avoiding music for twenty years. The violin has been mute for all these years. Swarnalatha’s ‘silence’ symbolizes the silent violin. Vaishnavi’s voice is silenced with her death. Abhinay wants to rediscover her voice by revitalizing Swarnalatha’s passion for music. The musical instrument is nothing if there is no passion for music. Vaishnavi’s violin remains useless because Swarnalatha has suspended her passion for music. It is very necessary to instill passion in the heart of Swarnalatha for stirring the music in Vaishnavi’s violin. Abhinay takes the initiative to make Swarnalatha’s passion for music alive. He is impatient to break the long observed silence of Swarnalatha by rejuvenalizing her spirit for the music.

Abhinay: You don’t have to say anything now. I will wait. Think about it. But remember, I am waiting for you to sing for me. I know you will. You want to sing. And I can help you fulfill your ambition. I am not leaving the village till you agree. (CPII: 391)

Pinkie also tries her best to bring Swarnalatha out of her depressed state of mind and make her sing for them. She succeeds in convincing Swarnalatha to sing for them.

Swarnalatha: (after a while) Thank you. I want to help you and Abhinay.
Pinkie: Looks like we all want to help each other but don't know how. (CPII: 393)

Thus, all the three have common quest i.e. music. They try to interpret their identities through the image of music. They pass through emotional crisis which creates strong theatrical environment. Such condition motivates the dramatist to construct the plot of a play with music as motif. As Swarnalatha becomes ready to teach carnatic singing to Pinkie and Abhinay, she inquires;

Swarnalatha: How long have you been singing?

Pinkie:  

Swarnalatha: Then it won't be too difficult.

Pinkie: What?

Swarnalatha: To teach you Carnatic singing. (CPII: 393-94)

Pinkie is overwhelmed to know that Swarnalatha intends to teach them carnatic music. Pinkie, like Abhinay, is very sensitive young lady and very curious to learn music from Swarnalatha. Moreover, she is feeling guilt consciousness. She wants to help Abhinay, Swarnalatha and the villagers as well. She carries the weight of the responsibility of her father for the accident. She is so impatient to learn music that she bluntly refuses duties at her mother's boutique shop.

Pinkie: And you are doing all this for me, I know. Mom, I have helped you enough. Now I want to do something that will help both of us.

Mrs. Kapoor: Which is?

Pinkie: Helping those people in the village. (CPII: 395)

Swarnalatha gradually develops courage and decides to teach Abhinay music anyhow. She rediscovers her spirit and passion for music.
Earlier, she avoids to see Abhinay’s father’s and Vaishnavi’s violin. Now she has changed to gusty. She goes to Abhinay’s village home to invite him to come over her home. She speaks to his father.

Swarnalatha: And bring your mother’s violin.

Abhinay’s father is stunned into silence.

Abhinay: I'll be there.

Abhinay goes in.

Swarnalatha: (to his father) I can teach him raga. I can teach him tala. Let us see whether he has inherited some bhava from his mother.

(CPII: 395-396)

Pinkie and Abhinay come down to Swarnalatha’s home for learning carnatic singing. She makes them do a prayer to the idols of goddess Saraswati and Lord Ganesh. She sings a traditional Saraswati or Ganesh sthotram. It is followed by Abhinay and Pinkie. Abhinay follows it on violin. Pinkie follows Swarnalatha with a western voice. Later on, Swarnalatha offers a valuable insight into the carnatic style.

Abhinay’s spirit is doubled with Swarnalatha’s revived passion for music. Motivated by this, he decides to hold a concert by borrowing loan from the mortgage of his apartment. His father opposes his idea of investing money in music. Abhinay is not worried about the return of the money so invested. It is something beyond material investment. He wants to come out of the guilt and establish his identity as an individual. He also wants to help Swarnalatha to come out of the guilt. A change is also seen in Mrs. Kapoor’s life. Like her daughter, she comes to the village and tries to help the old woman and others by purchasing their handloom sari at high price.

Old Woman: This one sari will cost you three hundred rupees.

Mrs. Kapoor: Nonsense!
Old Woman: Madam, we are all poor people. Okay give us what you think is best.

Mrs. Kapoor: (Pretending to be businesslike) Well, if you change the border the way I want it, I could give you seven hundred for a sari. Not one rupee more. (CPII: 401-02)

All the women, gathered over there, were excited to know her generosity. As a matter of fact, she tries to lessen their trouble by helping them in a best possible way. It suggests that she also feels the pangs of guilt.

The singers have arrived at the village. It is really very amusing and interesting scene in which Pinkie, Balaji, and Munna sing a song in the field. The villagers laugh and make fun of these city people and their mania for the music. Abhinay’s father accuses Swarnalatha for this embarrassing moment.

Abhinay’s Father: They are laughing at my son, because of you!

Swarnalatha: They are laughing at your son today. Tomorrow they will salute him for his talents. But then he will be Vaishnavi’s son. (CPII: 403)

Swarnalatha’s suspended passion for music is revived fully. She teaches one by one raga to Pinkie and Abhinay. Now she is going to teach Sindu Bhairavi raga to them. That is the morning raga which belongs to Abhinay’s mother Vaishnavi.

Swarnalatha: This is the name of the raga I am going to teach you now. It’s a morning raga. It’s- very special to me. It was Vaishnavi’s

(Collecting herself) please note down the ascending and descending scale. (CPII: 405)

It is very interesting to see the way they learn the raga. Pinkie makes notes in her book as Swarnalatha sings it. Abhinay heard this raga
when he was young. His mother used to play the scale on the violin and he moved about there. So when he listens to it, he quickly speaks out:

Abhinay: That’s it!

Swarnalatha stops playing.

That’s the raga I want! That’s what I was looking for, don’t you see! (To Pinkie) My mother never played that for me! She only played it for her. (Pointing to Swarnalatha) (CPII: 406)

Both Swarnalatha and Pinkie are shocked at this remark. This comes as an accusation to Swarnalatha disturbing her a lot. Perturbed by this, she gives a sad smile saying that she took his mother away from him. She feels that she is a cursed woman. With the flashback into the past, Swarnalatha beholds scene of Vaishnavi holding tanpura in her hand and feeding Abhinay as a child. Abhinay tried to convince her that he didn’t intend anything else. Pinkie also tries to draw her out from the pain of the stroke that hits at the core of her heart. Swarnalatha is not in a condition to come out. She also realizes that the past is not the past but it is the part rather integrated part of the present. She slowly recovers strength from the assumption that present is constituted with the past. One has to face it, whether good or bad. In this way, she derives consolation from this and gathers courage to live in present. In a flashback, Swarnalatha sees the past bus accident and the bus keeling over. The day after accident, bodies were retrieved and shrouded. It was the most horrible day for Swarnalatha as her husband accused her for the death of their son.

Mr. Shashtri: You killed my son!

Abhinay’s Father: (to the other villagers) These lives were lost because of that woman! (CPII: 408)

Even today Swarnalatha feels the pain and agony of her fault. Pinkie tries to convince her that it was not her fault. But Swarnalatha is not convinced. Therefore she says;
I wish you all the best. I won’t give you my blessings. Since they would be more of a curse. But please believe me. I want you to be happy. I do. (CPII: 408)

Again Abhinay expresses his sincere apology for his unknowingly accusation made by him. At that time, Pinkie comes forward and tries to falsify their notions. She is restless and desperate. She wants to share something with them. She exclaims:

Pinkie: You are wrong. You are both very wrong. There is something you ought to know. (CPII: 409)

Pinkie has made up her mind to disclose the reality. All the three get into Pinkie’s car. She puts the car in top gear and drives towards the bridge. Swarnalatha gets panicky and pleads her to stop the car. The car speeds towards the bridge and the truck passes by at high speed. The car crosses the bridge. Pinkie stops the car.

Pinkie: You see. Nothing happened. It is not a curse on you! I knew that nothing would happen, because you are not to blame. Look at

Pinkie holds Swarnalatha so that they are looking into each other’s eyes. Abhinay joins them on the edge.

(CPII: 410)

Both Swarnalatha and Abhinay are dumb founded. They are left speechless. Pinkie further says;

I- was too small then to know that. I thought he was happy. He loved me. He really loved me. I know that. But he

(Pleading now) I know that if he were alive he would

If you cannot forgive him, at least don’t blame yourself for what

(CPII: 410)
Thus, Pinkie exposes the reality of the dreadful past event and awaits the forgiveness from Swarnalatha and Abhinay. Swarnalatha feels relived and relaxed. She views the bridge in a new light. She takes a deep breath and gets in courage to speak. New light and new spirit starts stirring inside her.

It doesn’t matter whose fault it was. The truth is that your mother is gone and so is my son. Can any force bring them back to us? Can any force bring back her father? No. (CPII: 410)

This is new spirited and enlightened Swarnalatha. She is filled with practical wisdom and moral guts. She understands the true nature of the worldly things. She is encouraged and elevated to face the harsh reality of life. She motivates them to face the present constituted with the past. Abhinay is also filled with strength and understanding. He tells (CPII: 411)

This remark frees Pinkie from the pressure of past guilt of her father. It seems that music appears to be a character or a controlling force in the play Morning Raga. Sindu Bhairavi or Morning Raga seems to be the source of inspiration and strength in the lives of Swarnalatha, Pinkie and Abhinay. Morning Raga instills a lot of spirit and zeal in the life of Abhinay. As stated earlier, he has decided to organize a concert in the city. He sends an invitation card to Swarnalatha. Mr. Shastri opens the card which has an image of mother and child. Since, Swarnalatha’s hands are soiled, her husband reads to her.

Mr. Shastri: (reading) ‘You are wrong. There are forces that can bring back your son and my mother to us. I hope one day I can help you understand how proud your son would be if you sang for him. I don’t know how to make you see that, but I will keep trying.’ (CPII: 411-12)
Abhinay is the most energetic and optimistic character of the play. He has got both talent and proper understanding. For him, music is a powerful force that can make impossible possible. Swarnalatha decides to join him at the concert. Mr. and Mrs. Shashtri are driving across the bridge. This is for the first time; she appears to be joyous at the bridge site. They reach at the auditorium. Abhinay is little nervous due to the scarcity of the crowd. However, soon, he is cheered to see the stream of villagers coming into the auditorium. Mrs. Kapoor informs him that she sold some tickets when she was there. Anhinay’s father has also arrived with the villagers. When Anhinay sees Swarnalatha, he rushes to her beaming. He bends down and touches his guru’s feet. Balaji, Munna and Abhinay are on the stage. Abhinay checks on the violin on the stage. Pinkie also appears on the stage as the curtains open. They are greeted with a loud applause. They are going to play Morning Raga. Pinkie; being busy in conversation with Swarnalatha, appears lately on the stage. She informs her that they are going to play Morning Raga taught by her. Pinkie also informs her that her dream of singing in the city is going to come true.

Suddenly Swarnalatha feels inspiration and makes a decision to go to the stage and sing Morning Raga. She comes forward and touches the stage with her hand in salutation. She begins to sing Morning Raga going into intricate patterns. She receives warm applause from the audience. She feels that her dream has come true. She is so enthralled and elated and encouraged, she goes to the mike and declares: “Thank you. It has been a difficult raga for me to learn. Twenty years is a long time.’ Music is a never ending journey. Abhinay and Pinkie look on. It has been my dream to sing for an audience such as you. But Finding it difficult to get the words) tonight, I will sing this song for my son who, like my music, has returned after a very long journey. (Looking at Abhinay) Abhinay, I sing this raga for you- my son.” (CPII: 416)

Abhinay is highly touched by her statement. If Swarnalatha has got back her music and son, Abhinay has got back his mother after twenty years. It is the force of the music that brings him back his mother, Vaishnavi
and Swarnalatha her son. The music triumphs over the forces that control human life. Through flashback, Abhinay imagines his mother Vaishnavi singing and playing with him. In flashback, Swarnalatha imagines singing this song for her son, while singing, in flashback, Pinkie imagines her father rocking her to sleep. In this way, the trio of the singers consisting of Swarnalatha, Abhinay and Pinkie come together in one spot. It is no more music coming from the scales of the violin, but it is the music coming out of the scales of the human souls. It is enhancing and elevating music. It crosses the physical and mental spaces and attains the glorious height. The song ends to a thunderous applause. The music opens up new avenues in human life.

_Ek Alag Mausam_ is a celebrated screen play dealing with the pain and suffering of HIV positives of our society. It is a thematic innovation in the field of Indian drama in English. The film _Ek Alag Mausam_ was released in India on 4th February, 2005. It was produced and directed by K. P. Sasi, supported and presented by Actionaid India.

Mahesh Dattani takes the pen against the forces that suppress the call of humanity. The play is an attempt to respond the call of humanity beyond the socio medico territories. The plot of the play deals with emotional and existential crisis in the lives of Aparna and George, the two HIV positives. It is generally considered as the love-saga of the two HIV positives Aparna and George. Beena Agrawal appreciates it in a newer light.

_Ek Alag Mausam_ is a play with a message, it is not a question of the love of the two people but it is a question of love with life. Dattani takes the place that the misfortune of being marginalized as being 25

Dattani’s theatrical art depicts the real life experiences corresponding to the human conscience. He is very innovative and quite daring in the presentation of human experiences on the stage. He doesn’t
allow his presentation of theatrical art rationed by any norms or conditions of dramaturgy. He believes:

Unless you reflect the ethos of the people, it is going to be an elitist theatre; or it is going to be a museum piece intended to satisfy curiosity. On the other hand, if you widen your audience, the only thing you can do is to write more about them.  

Thus, Dattani reflects the ethos of common people by mirroring their experiences associated with their conscience. His theatre tries to reach to those people who are silenced by the various customs, myths, conventions, misbelieve etc. of the society.

The play Ek Alag Mausam focuses on fundamental thrusts of human beings such as to survive, to belong and to live life in an honourable way. It also brings out the forces that thwart human being from fulfilling these thrusts on various pretext and grounds. The play shows us attitude and apathy of society towards the ill-fated HIV positives who lead life with pity and disgust and dies in the shame.

Like many other plays, Ek Alag Mausam depicts incidents of past and present in the lives of Aparna and George. The story is told in time present and time past. The actions are revealed through the flux of conscience of Aparna, the heroine of the play. When the play begins, Aparna decides to put Paro in Panchgini boarding school. Paro’s mother was died due to the virus infection. She was brought up like a daughter by Aparna. Aparna did her best for well-being of Paro. Now she feels that she can’t continue her support as usual. Before sending her boarding school, she has worked out according to future requirements of Paro. Paro feels filial affection and affinity with Aparna. So disappointed by Aparna’s decision, Paro pleads, “Why? Why are you sending me away?” (CPII: 473)

Dattani has made effective use of flashback technique in this play. The most of the actions are shown through flashback device. Aparna is
very sensitive and sensible lady. Her heart is filled with human sympathy and compassion. They are driving in the car, on their way to the school. Paro accuses, “George.” (CPII: 474) Moved by Paro’s allegation, Aparna sinks into the past and the past course of action issues out from the flux of her conscience. In a surrealist situation, she sees the picture of George driving a truck. The whole past emerges from the flux of her conscience. Suddenly, the truck approaches at high speed. She manages to avoid the accident and pulls over to the side. The horror of past appears one after another before her eyes. The memory of George driving truck is very fresh and powerful. Again, truck passes by honking madly. She again shifts to the past and recalls the past phone call of Rosalynd Cooper who was a volunteer nurse at the central

(CPII: 476)

Aparna is expecting a baby. She informs her husband about the Cooper’s telephonic talk and requests him to accompany with her hospital. She puts “It’s something about our baby. I am scared Suresh. I want you with me.” (CPII: 476) She is greatly hurt as her husband is not keen to accompany her. So, she is compelled to go to the hospital alone. At the hospital, Cooper advises her to give up her baby. Aparna strongly objects to this idea by asking “Why? What’s wrong with my baby?” (CPII: 478) Aparna wants the child anyhow. She doesn’t understand what doctor and nurse mean to say. Dr. Sanyal explains, “Look here. I think it is better for you to come with your

(CPII: 478)

Dr. Sanyal also informs her that her blood samples were sent to them for some routine tests. Aparna is anxious to know about the results of heard of HIV?” (CPII: 478) Aparna is unconvinced and laughs a little at this question. She tries to argue without understanding thing properly. A little later, she realizes what is being indicated. She is deeply traumatized to know that she is HIV positive. This is quite unexpected and inconceivable for her.
Therefore, she importunes, “It’s not possible. How could I be HIV positive?” (CPII: 478) Despite the doctor’s confirmation of her being HIV positive, but my husband, I haven’t had any blood transfusions, I always make sure the of test? That’s more accurate? (CPII: 479) Both the doctor and nurse try their best to reassure the validity of the finding of the test. Cooper convinces her that they have even done the Western Blot. Moreover, she is a trained counsellor. So there is no shadow of the doubt about the truthfulness of the report. Dr. Sanyal even declares that Aparna got the virus infection from her husband.

Her conscience receives a great jerk at the disclosure of her husband being HIV positive. She is left wonder struck and broken within. She (CPII: 479) Aparna seems to be vulnerable completely. She is frightened at the idea of loss of the unborn baby as she pines to have the child. She is divided into two distressing ideas. Besides, the loss of the unborn baby, she is also worried about her husband. She feels that she is losing on either side. She is feeling an acute mental agony and her soul falls to pieces at the prospect of losing the baby. She still keeps on arguing that she wants the baby alive. Dr. Sanyal makes final assessment:
And either your baby or you will die soon.” (CPII: 480) The doctor is presenting curt truth without understanding motherly sentiments of Aparna. Aparna is helpless and left dumbfounded. There are two spaces of her sufferings. She is paining physically because of virus infection. Apart from this, she is greatly worried about the pain that results from social stigma. When she comes out, she realizes that some people were looking at her with a mixed feeling of pity and disgust.

Besides the existential crisis, the play presents Aparna’s maternal crisis. She is a woman and to be the mother of a child is the bliss in every woman’s life. Her privilege being mother is shorn of and destroyed. It is more of internal crisis than of external one. It is observed:
reality that it has to the mother who harbours it. 27

Aparna knows no ray of hope for rescuing her child. She has become miserable creature. She goes back to her home and makes a call to her mother. But the grief grips her so strongly that she can’t speak even a single sentence to her mother. It indicates mental agony and suffering prevailing in her mind. Her husband expresses his repentance for not accompanying her at the hospital. She convinces him that he knew about the infection. She enquires of him how he has got the virus.

Aparna: All those business trips! Those late nights. How many women have you infected so far?

Suresh: I don’t know!

Aparna: You are too drunk to know.

Suresh: What are you going to do now? (CPII: 482)

By asking this question, Suresh puts her in a more miserable and pitiable condition. This question has got impersonal significance. All the affected are questioned in the similar way. Aparna is beseeching him for helping her. She is unable to make the decision. She implores, “I don’t know.” (CPII: 482) The playwright remarks that Suresh is frightened at the prospect of making this decision. Aparna pathetically accuses him that he has ruined her life. She needs help from him. She doesn’t want to lose her baby as advised by the doctor. Her husband is also sailing in the same boat which is going to sink very soon. He is unable to help her. His helplessness is revealed in the way he replies. “How can I help you? I am dying too.” (CPII: 482)

He tries to escape from the shame and danger that involve the disease. He leaves the city with guilt ridden soul. Aparna makes vain efforts to hold him back and talk a little in an hour of crisis.
Aparna: Suresh, stay for a while! Just talk to me for a while!

Suresh: (CPII: 482)

He, in fact, has neither capacity nor courtesy to help her. Aparna feels a sense of uprootedness and insecurity. In her desperate mood and vulnerable condition, Aparna lets go her child. She is weakened in both body and will. She breaks down sobbing. She pathetically asks her mother, “Mother! Please come here! I am dying! I am dying, mother!” (CPII: 484) This is the most moving and pitiable scene of the play. She is deserted by all and supported by none in the hours of crisis. Her husband has deserted her so infected and afflicted. Moreover, the infection is killing her physically as well as socially. The pain is both interior and exterior. What fears the most is the social stigma attached to the disease. Forced by the fate and family, ailing Aparna seeks refuge at Jeevan Jyoti Hospital. Gradually, she feels that Jeevan Jyoti is her new and true home. It is observed:

It was a new dawn in her life with message of the shadows of death, can’t be overpowered, can at least be lingered with the positive thrust of life. If HIV is the preface to death and social shame, Jeevan Jyoti is certainly the light of life.  

When she goes to the hospital, the group therapy session is going on. Aparna hangs around the door and observes the session. Dr. Machado moves around with grace and energy while addressing the inmates. Dr. Machado (moving around) “ Aren’t we all dying? Isn’t everyone in this world dying? (Pausing for effect) I am not HIV positive. But I am also dying. But do I think about my death all the bloody time…” (CPII: 486)

Dr. Machado tries his best to lift their spirit and shake off their fear of death. The people are encouraged and cheered by his attempt. Aparna is moved by Dr. Machado’s slogan “Keep fighting. Seize the moment” (CPII: 487) He infuses positive attitude into the minds of the people infected with virus. It is evident that death is not more dreadful than the process that leads
towards death. The social disgust, exclusion and avoidance are more horrifying than the horror of death. Dr. Machado is very impressive and optimistic in his presentation. He appears to be a subtle souled psychologist. He invites them to share the positive experiences. Encouraged by Dr. Machado’s words, Manoj, one of the boys, shares his experiences with two different dentists. He needed gum surgery to save his teeth and went to a dentist and told the truth of his being HIV positive. So, the doctor didn’t attend him. After this unhappy experience, he went to another dentist whom he didn’t tell the truth of his having virus infection. The dentist did the surgery. His gums are perfect now. Later, he sent him a letter informing that he was HIV positive. This provides sort of amusement to the people. It indicates that social myth is more powerful than the individual's rationalism. This incident is full of humour and satire. Dattani ridicules the society where even a doctor, a man of science, is carried away with the tides of social myths and irrational notions and increases the suffering and pain of the people instead. The social humiliation and spiritual pain is killing Aparna bit by bit. She tries to solace herself by helping other victims of AIDS.

Death is an inevitable phenomenon in human life. Dr. Machado approves that none can avoid the death. However, cheerful atmosphere makes one's journey a little easier. Before approving her services, Dr. Machado tries to test her by giving a very difficult job of entertaining Ramnath who is dying. It was really an acid test for Aparna. She goes to the room to find the man who is all skin and bones. She is quite horrified and bewildered to see him. Some people including Manoj are playing a game of cards around him. Manoj encourages the dying man to play one more game, but Ramnath disapproves his action.

Man A: Yes you can. Come on. Try to beat us.

Manoj: You can’t beat death. But you can beat us. Try! (CPII: 492)

This is unbearable for Aparna. The man looks at Aparna. His breathing gets more and more desperate. He deals the cards and wins the game. And suddenly his breathing stops. He loses the life. Aparna rushes out
petrified to the doctor’s office admitting, “I think I have failed, doctor.” (CPII: 493)

Aparna’s encounter with George is very significant thing in her life. His relationship inculcates the sense of belongingness and lifts her from the depression. Aparna first mistakes George as the doctor. Later on, she comes to know that he is both an owner and driver of the truck transporting the dead bodies at Jeevan Jyoti. Aparna is very candid and kind lady. She admits that she is not doing any philanthropic or charitable task. Aparna’s candid confession impresses much to Dr. Machado. When Dr. Machado inquires what she would like to do. She promptly replies that she would like to work with the children at the earliest. It is quite clear that she wants to work with children because she wants to redress her lost motherhood. It is fitness of the thing to say that she tries to define the meaning of her meaningless life by working with the children. Gradually, she feels good and looks forward for a new way out of her perpetual suffering. George is very emotional and energetic volunteer. He understands Aparna in a proper way. She also develops emotional bondage with the children and George. She starts taking interests in their lives. Aparna inquires him about his truck driving business. She is curious to know about him. George explains, “Your first day here and you are asking so many questions! Who do you think takes the bodies for cremation? The municipality van won’t even enter the compound. Before me they had to bury or burn them all right here. So be careful. If you come here often enough people will think you have AIDS also.” (CPII: 497)

Aparna is very apologetic. She is bewildered at this suggestion. Initially, both Aparna and George are quite ignorant of each other’s being HIV positive. George comes to know about Aparna’s having HIV positive through Dr. Machado. After meeting the children, Aparna feels that her sufferings are less than the children. There are so many people who are sicker than her. As she tell

(CPII: 498) Her statement highlights the world of suffering and pain at the hospital. It creates cathartic impact on her mind. She feels a little relaxed knowing people with more sickness.
Dattani tends to say that social apathy doubles the pain and suffering of the diseased people. Human love and warmth can help in forgetting pain if not cure it. Aparna has been suffering acutely. She starts forgetting her suffering and pain in the emotional company of George and the children. Dattani always focuses on the root cause of the problem for generating awareness among the audience. Like a scientist, he analyses ‘cause and effect’ of the problem. In this play, he throws light on the cause and the effect of the issue of HIV positives. He examines and demonstrates that the virus infected people have two kinds of suffering one physical and second mental resulting from the social apathy. The diseased people are more scared of social stigma than that of death which is imminent. The sign at Jeevan Jyoti hospital ‘Leave Your Prejudice Outside’ is very suggestive and significant. Dattani belives that social myths, convention, prejudice, apathy etc. have made the lives of many people worst than the hell. If society shakes off apathy and deep rooted prejudices, the life will become easier journey.

George tries to make Aparna happy and cheerful enabling her knows the reality of life. She is highly sensitive lady. Initially, she fails to learn the harsh realities of life. After working with children for days at Jeevan Jyoti, Aparna goes back her home and decides not to return. Aparna is resented that the children showed no much interest in her. The scene in which George and all the children visit Aparna’s home is quite dramatic and provides a lot of amusement. It focuses on the theme of craving for the interpersonal relationship. Aparna is adamant in her decision of not coming back to the hospital. The children insist her to come back and teach them that song. As Suraj requests Aparna, “Aunty. Please come. We all want to learn that song you were teaching us.” (CPII: 509) Her mother requests them to eat the ladoos, but they refuse to eat them. Suraj asserts, “First aunty must agree to come to Jeevan Jyoti again.” (CPII: 511) Touched by the love and affection displayed by the children, Aparna’s mother assures them that Aparna will come there again.

The play *Ek Alag Mausam* celebrates the joy of life rather than mourning on the death. It encourages how to fight against suffering. Here
everybody is in love with life. The play depicts love for life. Once, Aparna complained that she should have been informed about Suraj’s deceased parents. George puts it in a very subtle way. “Death is not news over here. Life is.” (CPII: 504). Therefore, Ramnath was encouraged to play cards even before few seconds of his long breath.

Dattani maintains that nothing can rout ‘innate blood consciousness’.30 No condition or clause hinders the expression of human sentiments. Under the evil impact of the social prejudices and myths, people are forced to live lives at the peripheral level of society. They cause social exclusion of the weaker sections of the society. Nothing can stop man’s longing for human love and interpersonal relationship. They can degrade the human prestige, position, and dignity etc. Human soul and sensibility are out of their reach. The lake washing scene is fine example of this. George is in the lake washing himself. Aparna, passes from there. George, slowly, steps out of the lake. Suddenly Aparna sees him. She is transfixed as he slowly emerges from the water. He is wearing only small langot around his waist. Aparna realizes the impact of his wet body shining a golden yellow in the morning sunlight. Suddenly George notices Aparna staring at him. He becomes aware of his wet body creating sensational effect on Aparna. He picks up the towel to wipe himself and shakes off water from his hair. Watching this, Aparna is flustered. She promptly goes back to her car and drives off without saying anything.

Again on another occasion, while hitting nails, Aparna hits his fingers. George is waving his fingers in pain. She is frightened and holds his finger and is about to suck it. As soon as she realizes his masculinity, she is frozen. George stops yowling due to warmth and care displayed by her. This scene encompasses the pain, sensation and laughter. The pain can be reduced by the human warmth and care.

Once, George and Aparna along with Suraj go to George’s home to collect wooden soldier. Aparna is relieved to find wooden soldier as it is more needful than medicine for Suraj. In her excitement, she hugs George.
The same is reciprocated by George with more feeling. As Aparna feels stiffened, George breaks away. Soon after this, George goes to her and kisses her tenderly. Both have become passionate and emotional. George, feeling strongly, confesses. “Aparna. I love you.” (CPII: 519) But Aparna gently breaks away and makes fragmented utterance “I-” (CPII: 519) George knows well that she is refusing on the ground that she is HIV positive. So George completes her sentence by asking counter question: “Because you are HIV positive?” (CPII: 519) She looks away. Not to know what to say.

(CPII: 519)

She is greatly shocked to know his being HIV positive. She runs to the car and speeds away leaving behind George shouting “What is wrong in it? Tell me what’s so wrong?” (CPII: 520) George seems to assert that one shouldn’t run away from the reality of life. Everyone has got right to express his/her feelings despite the social/legal prohibition. No social or state’s law can suppress expression of human sensibility permanently. It seems that George is the mouth piece of his creator who speaks through George’s mouth. The playwright suggests that if you want to live life happily, face it rather than running away.

The question that arises in our mind is that why doesn’t Aparna reciprocate feelings to George? The reason is that George’s revelation of his being HIV positive reminds her husband who infected her. She is ignorant of real cause of George’s infection. Therefore, she feels that George is shameless than her husband who buttoned his lips after knowing his being HIV positive.

The inset story of Rita and her brothel is also a very bold dramatic attempt of Mahesh Dattani. Through the character of Rita, Dattani throws light on the illicit sex going on in our society. He also throws light on the fact that such unlicensed sex business is managed by the men and women are the victim of it. It is understood that corrupt sex is the cause and carrier of the AIDS disease.
At the exterior level in present, Aparna and Paro moving in the car singing a Hindi film song. Suddenly Paro asks Aparna how she first met her mother, Rita. Aparna replies that she is thankful to George for that. With this, scene shifts again in the past and George, Manoj, and Shyamu are seen creating awareness against AIDS. They have converted the truck into a makeshift stage. So many sex workers have assembled around the makeshift stage. George is addressing them in a question answer method. It is concluded that HIV doesn’t spread through human touch, living, eating, and sleeping with an infected person. Nor doesn’t it spread through mosquitoes and flies. It can be spread through unprotected sex, infected blood, contaminated injection needles and from infected mother to newborn.

Suddenly, they saw a woman being beaten and dragged out of her house along with her five-year old daughter. Actually, she was employed at the brothel as a sex worker by some people. It is revealed that she has got virus infection on account of her involvement in illegal sex business. They want to drive out her from her house as they are losing customers due to virus infection. Her name is Rita and her daughter’s name is Paro. Rita is marginalized as an AIDS infected person and her existence is doomed. She has no hope for her life. It doesn’t matter to her if she dies there. Therefore, in a desperate mood, she makes a plea to George for saving her daughter.

Rita: (pushing her child into George’s arms). At least take her away. I will die here. But put my daughter in some orphanage. (CPII: 527)

Like post-colonial writers, Dattani is concerned about the problems and suffering of the marginalized people. He tries to justify them by putting their voices on the page, stage, and also onto cinematic screen. He attempts to articulate the voices of those whose voices have remained inarticulated so far.

George informs Rita that they are taking them to Jeevan Jyoti hospital where she will be looked after without giving anything in return. George assures her that hospital will take care of her along with her daughter.
Rita is so relieved that she feels happy to have virus. She pathetically speaks, “oh! Thank God I have Aids” (CP: II-528). At the hospital, she was separated from her daughter for the safety of her daughter. Though, Rita is a sex-worker, her motherhood is intact. She is all the time thinking about her little daughter. It is quite touching when she asks Aparna to allow her daughter stay with her only for one night. She requests “Let her stay with me just for one night please” (CP: II-529) Despite doctor’s suggestion, Aparna allows her daughter stay with Rita. This is a very suggestive and significant thing. Both Aparna and Rita are women as though different in social background. They are same at one point i.e. undying desire for motherhood. It is observed:

Aparna and Rita are from two distinctive social status, but both of them possess equal quest for motherhood. It signifies that human sentiments, human sympathy and human sensibility is associated with the universal human experiences, irrespective of externally imposed restrictions. ³⁰

The longing for human love and relationship is the main theme of the play. George and Aparna, being HIV positives are destined to end up like many other HIV positive very soon. Nevertheless, they want to make every moment of life meaningful. George wants to enjoy the life on the devouring face of the death. Joy and happiness is the gist of his existence. He can’t defeat death, but he can rout pain by being cheerful and happy. George also wants Aparna to be like him. That is why he asks Aparna don’t deserve happiness?” (CPII: 532)

George has courage of conviction that he has right to be happy and enjoy life like everyone. The virus cannot restrict her zest of life. His assertion imparts dramatic environment to the play. Aparna feels happy and comfortable at Jeevan Jyoti. She indentifies her suffering with the suffering of the people in the hospital. It is the sublimation of her pain. The hospital lights new life in her. She has derived satisfaction through the realization of others'
pain; whereas George is deriving happiness through realization of accountability of interpersonal relationship.

Aparna believes that Jeevan Jyoti lives on forever. She has nothing else to like for. She doesn’t know that the lease of the land is going to be expired and the landlord won’t renew it. George doesn’t bother about his future; but he bothers only about the present. She feels happy by helping to the needy people. It is a new start to work for the cause of the virus infected people. Aparna is little suspicious about being happy. She puts, “To watch each other die? I see my mother observing my every move. My every cough, my every sneeze is painful to her. I can see the terror in her eyes when she is thinking this is the beginning of the end. I can’t do this to anyone else. And what makes you think that just because we are both HIV positive, we will be happy together?” (CPII: 533)

Actually, George wants her forget that they are HIV positives and things related to it. He thinks only of their lives together. She is unable to forget all that. George teaches her to live life heroically. He teaches everyone the same. He encourages other to live like a soldier. He believes that zest of life is very necessary for the sustenance of existence. One can survive and also enjoy against the backdrop of perpetual pain if he is possessed with strong will power. Therefore, he reproaches Aparna;

You have branded yourself AIDS, AIDS, AIDS! You have put a big red stamp on yourself. I thought only an uncaring, unfeeling society would do that to us. But no. We don’t have to worry about society. We are doing it to ourselves! I refuse to brand myself. All I know is that I love you and I want to marry you. (CPII: 533)

The character of George reminds us heroic will of Earnest Hemingway’s Santiago who asserts; “Man can’t be destroyed.No one can destroy my will to complete my journey!” Aparna is feared of at the prospect of horrors that AIDS involve. She loves George but she doesn’t want to undergo the pain that involve in it. She keeps on avoiding confession on one or
another ground. Her mind is full of doubts and fears as well as confusions and queries. George makes relentless efforts for clearing them up. In her accusation of not knowing her, George convinces her in the following words:

George: (hurt) How can you say that, Aparna. That is totally untrue! I know your every mood, your every movement. I know your fears of death. I have seen you with the children. You want to be close to them; but any demands of affection and you are suddenly as distant as the stars. I can see the fears in your eyes and also the desperation to love something without the fear of causing it harm. Yes. I know you, Aparna. I think of you all the time. I want to think of ways to make you feel happy. I have never felt this way about another woman before. (CPII: 533)

The way Aparna retort is very painful and hurting. He is anguished and angered when Aparna insults him saying that he is merely a truck driver. It is easy to understand the cause of his infection. She can’t marry the person who has also infected many other women. She calls him shameless person. He is highly agitated and distressed. He wants to reveal the truth—the cause of his illness. He makes a plea to explain himself as he implores, “Aparna! I can’t lose both Jeevan Jyoti and you!” (CPII: 534)

George is the most innocent character, but he is punished beyond endurance. He is infected, rejected and insulted for no fault of his own. All the same, he survives and sustains against all the odd forces that consume his self-esteem and existence. He endures all these because he has got inward strength and courage.

Jeevan Jyoti is a new life for all the HIV positives. Aparna and George also feel that Jeevan Jyoti is not a place but something more than that for them. It is not only healing clinic for virus infected, but it is real home for them. It is the only place where they feel associated and needed by others.
Condition of George is more pathetic and tragic than Aparna. He is on the verge of losing both Jeevan Jyoti and Aparna. To make matter worse, he is repelled by his own parents. The scene in which he is rejected by his parents is very tragic one. After a long, George goes back to his home. His mother is happy to see him after a long time. Suddenly a group of villagers came there asking George to leave the village as he is HIV positive. His parents try their best to pacify the annoyed crowd, but they couldn’t succeed in it.

Villager 1: (picking up a stone). I said stay away from us. (To the rest of the crowd.) We all heard what Sukhiya had to say! He swore on his mother, it is the truth. (CPII: 536)

This is the worst example of social apathy and myth. AIDS is an organic disease. It is improper to interpret it in terms of morality. By relating it to moral aberration, the society does grave injustice to an individual. It is an unfair mode to hinder the call of humanity. George’s mother breaks down and cries in despair. He is struck dumb to see his mother’s grief-stricken face. His father collects himself and speaks, “You may live for another seven years. But you have killed us before we have entered our graves. What face do we have left in this village? (with great effort) Don’t come back. Leave. Go George! (making a gesture as if to a beggar) Go.” (CPII: 537)

It is apparent that the flood of social apathy sweeps away the filial love and piety. His parents are weighed down under the weight of social stigma. His mental and physical pain is subsided against the horrifying social shame. They are left with the feeling that a curse has fallen upon the entire family. George tries to make everyone understand the AIDS in a proper way. He moves one place to another educating people about the incurable disease i.e. AIDS. Unfortunately he meets with a little success. Even, his parents are carried away with the waves of irrational myths of society.

The play *Ek Alag Mausam* may be deemed as a tool to evolve social protest against the social myths and misbelieve about the dreaded disease. Jeevan Jyoti is the makeshift home for the people with HIV positive,
but it becomes real home for them. It is going to cease due to the shortage of fund. Aparna is organizing a charity show on the 2nd December, world AIDS Day, for generating resources for saving the place from the crisis. She has encouraged the children to make posters for the world AIDS Day concert. She makes relentless efforts to get these children to prepare some painting which they could sell. Rita’s daughter Paro has also drawn a wonderful painting which Aparna intends to send to UNICEF. George wants Aparna deriving satisfaction from the idea that she managed to save Jeevan Jyoti. Infact, George sold all his trucks and godown to pay for the lease agreement of Jeevan Jyoti. When Aparna comes know about this at the auditorium, she insists him to stay with her. She implores,

(CPII: 545)

George advises Aparna to look after little Paro and intimates her. He says,

your fault. It’s your duty to make the world understand that.” (CPII: 545)

George is right that the AIDS is not the result of someone’s conscious act. It seems that the dramatist, through the character of George, strives to create understanding and love for HIV positive. It is irony that Aparna herself is infected with the virus. She is unable to appreciate the condition of George. Like others, she thinks that he is infected due to his involvement in unlicensed sex. One thing should be noted that she, gradually, is deriving courage to assert like George. She doesn’t feel shame in confessing that she is HIV positive even in public. On the stage at the concert, she speaks, “(right at the back) I too am living with the fear of losing someone whom I love. And I too am not ashamed” (CPII: 546)

At the exterior level on the road in present, Aparna and Paro are enjoying the music in the car. They call on Dr. Machado at his house out of coutesy. This visit proves to be a turning point, opening up a new dimension in her life. During their conversation, Dr. Machado brings up the issue
between George and Aparna blaming her for running away and breaking his heart. Aparna contention is that she did so because he was HIV positive like her husband. Dr. Machado inquires if he didn’t tell how he was infected.

Aparna: Was there any doubt? He wasn’t a drug user. And being a truck driver, it was very clear to me.

Dr. Machado: My child, you have been very foolish. So foolish. He didn’t get it through a prostitute. (CPII: 598)

Dr. Machado shocks her saying that George got virus from his son Joseph. He explains, “This man – Joseph was my son. He died of AIDS seven years ago. I started Jeevan Jyoti in his memory. My son and Joseph with some anti social elements from Bombay. He became a drug addict. It was George who dragged him to th
they were coming back in George’s truck. The truck fell into a ditch. George was seriously injured. Joseph escaped unhurt. George needed blood. Joseph gave him his blood, And- unknowingly-” (CPII: 549)

Aparna is traumatized at this revelation. He adds that she never gave him a chance to tell her truth. However, he suggests that it is not too late to reciprocate her feelings. Aparna is self-reproachive for being selfish and foolish. Soon after this, Aparna and Paro arrive at Panchgini School. Quite dramatically, Dr. Machado comes there bringing George with him. The area is surrounded by hills and mountains. Paro and George go to climb the mountain nearby. Dr. Machado and Aparna remain at the school campus waiting for the turn of the admission. During this time, Dr. Machado promotes Aparna to reciprocate her feeling for George without further delay. Encouraged by Dr. Machado, Aparna runs in the direction pointed by the doctor. The play ends at the exterior level on a hill showing Aparna and George in each other’s arm and Paro blowing bubbles on them. With immense mental strength and exceptional power of understanding, the character of George triumph over the man made and nature made maladies.
Dattani circulates some ideas like ‘live and let others live’, ‘understand and love’, ‘giving up myths and prejudice’ etc. Aparna creates a web of illusion and allows herself live in that manner. Eventually, George breaks through illusion presenting the reality. George does his best to inculcate the idea of understand and love in other. The play *Ek Alag Mausam* may be seen as a response to call of humanity. It is a sincere and genuine attempt of creating awareness against the social myth and apathy that are more dreaded than the most dreaded disease AIDS. At the end, the dramatist attaches a disguised message by way of Dr. Machado’s speech. At the interior level in the school hall, Dr. Machado addresses the school children as follows, “On World AIDS Day. Let us remember the lives of those who died of the virus and respect the dignity of those who are living with HIV. Today’s enemy is not other human beings from another country or people of another religion or race. The real enemy today is a tiny invisible creature a virus. The AIDS virus knows no barriers of caste, creed, religion, age, gender, and race. It is not prejudice, fear or ignorance that will win the battle against the AIDS.”

(PII: 556)

This extract may be seen as the epilogue of the play. Dattani seems to be missioned at working for the cause of the deprived and marginalized. He strives for doing the justice to the people who have been denied love and justice. He dramatizes the emotional crisis resulting from the lack of understand about the dreaded disease AIDS very skillfully and artistically. It renders immense prestige and popularity to the play.

Theatre and film are often judged as the method of spreading the ideas among the people of society. Despite its limitations, it has evolved powerful means of communication and cultivation of ideas aiming at a change in the attitude and aptitude of the society. The picturization of the play *Ek Alag Mausam* opens up new avenues for disseminating message of understand and love for the AIDS infected community. Terry Almeidee, the chief executive of Action AIDS Indian Society, aptly observes:
It is a film that will make people sit up and start thinking about the issue seriously so far. We have only seen marginalization of such people. Through *Ek Alag Mausam*, we hope to put the problem in a different perspective and help audience to understand the issue better. We used the film medium to reach out to not only HIV positive people out there who are feeling isolated, but also a large cross-section of people.\(^{31}\)

Dattani is well known for investing images and symbols in his works. He often weaves his ideas with the threads of images and symbols. It speaks volume of poetic exuberances and craftsmanship. He uses different symbols and images to express certain views. Wooden soldier is a very rich and meaningful symbol. The soldier fights against the enemy of the country without fearing the death. Here virus is an enemy to human body. George teaches children to fight like soldier without keeping fear of death. In soldier’s life, fight is important. So, Suraj wants to be a soldier and fight like a soldier to beat it. When George asks how their soldier is doing, Suraj replies;

Suraj: (holding the toy soldier up). Attention! The soldier will kill all enemies of the country.

George: Live like a soldier, die like a soldier (CPII: 506)

Thus, the play champions the idea of inculcation of courage and strength in the virus affected people. To live bravely is one of the tones of the play. The dramatist depicts socio-medico issue with philosophical twist. The play *Ek Alag Mausam*, being a screen play, spared from the theatrical restraints and constrains and thereby helps the issue in a variety ways and angels. In this regard, the observation of Pudorkin, a Russian director, is worth mentioning here:

The theatrical producer works with real reality, which though he may always remould, yet forces
him to remain by the laws of real space and real time. The film director on the other hand has his material the finished, recorded and celluloid. This material from which his final work is composed consists not of living men or real landscape, not of real, actual stage sets, but only of their images, recorded on separate strips that can be shortened, altered and assembled according to his will.\(^3\)

Aparna’s love and care for Paro, George’s affection for the kids, all the HIV positives and feelings for Aparna, and Dr. Machado’s undying paternal care and consideration are the way to redress the gaps carved in their lives by social apathy and fate. The stroke of AIDS cut off their relationship from their loved ones for good. Aparna is separated from her husband and has to let go the unborn. There is a strong desire for the filial love. George has to leave his parents due to the virus infection. The lack of parental love enhances him for the love of Aparna and others. Dr. Machado lost his son Joseph due to the virus infection. This deficiency keeps on flowing the brook of paternal care inside him. All these things have got universal significance and therefore the play got wide popularity. There is a meaning all across the spoken words.
References:


22. Ibid., p.131,32

23. Ibid., p.129

24. Ibid., p.134

25. Ibid., p. 140


29. Ibid., p. 140
30. Ibid., p. 147
