CHAPTER- 5

Conclusion

The Comparative study of select plays of Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani has shown that there are areas of similarities and differences. Vijay Tendulkar, originally a Marathi writer, had modified the shape of Indian drama with the power of his pen to represent issues that are temporal as well as timeless. With the transcreation of the works of Tendulkar in English and other Indian languages, he has been acknowledged as a potent force in contemporary Indian English drama. He has been in the vanguard of not just Marathi but Indian theatre for almost forty years. He was a journalist and his journalistic vision moulded his creative talent to produce plays to expose the naked reality of society. Inspite of having his roots in Marathi regional theatre, Tendulkar has emerged as a new voice in Indian English Theatre to explore the volcanic dimensions of resentment and discontent hidden within the invisible terrains of human consciousness. His dramatic art is an amalgam of various traditions like Naturalism, Expressionism, Folk Theatre along with the reflections of journalistic trends. To present the controversial issues like gender prejudice, corruption in politics, homosexual relationship, the sufferings of marginalization, Tendulkar has experimented with innovative techniques that make him different from the other playwrights of the time. For example, he used the technique of mock-trial in the play, Silence! The Court is in Session. However, the impact of Naturalism is clearly seen in his play Sakharam Binder. Like Osborne, Tendulkar is a master of verbosity in this play. In Kamala Tendulkar uses media as an instrument for the mechanization of power that can impose greater torture on the marginalized communities. In this play he also uses the technique of expressionism and the flashback technique. As a dramatist Tendulkar’s dramatic art reflects the twilight of Western ideology and the traditions of native theatrical dramatic forms. He makes no imitation of theatrical conventions but he makes efforts to create new dramatic forms for each innovative idea.

Mahesh Dattani, on the other hand, is a contemporary writer who writes specifically in English. He is responsible for successfully launching the Indian Theatre in English.
Tendulkar influenced Dattani to a great deal. Like Tendulkar, he wishes to highlight the issues of the contemporary society. Dattani’s characters are rooted in the urban cosmopolitan setting of Modern Middle class India. In the hands of Dattani, Indian English drama transformed itself beyond the limitations of imitations. Writing since the late 1980s, Dattani’s plays, like Tendulkar’s, question some of the norms and conventions of society. In the process interesting questions regarding gender and other issues like homosexuality, lesbianism, child-sexual abuse, etc. are thrown up.

Mahesh Dattani has been making continuous efforts to showcase the issues and problems of contemporary Indian society, making them an integral part of his dramatic credo. His dramatic world, which differentiate him from Tendulkar, has created relevant questions which dealt with issues that have been confronting human beings for ages. In a way, Tendulkar has mirrored the problems and issues of contemporary Indian societal set-up but he has never made them an essential part of his dramatic art.

Dattani’s genius comes from the fact that he is a versatile artist. He is an actor, director, dancer and playwright. But Tendulkar is a naturalist and realist. As a journalist, he saw violence, oppression and exploitation in the society. He realized that the acceptance of torture had been a way of life and he tried to expose it through the various manifestations of violence.

The best common aspect of Tendulkar’s and Dattani’s works is that both can be compared to Bernard Shaw and Ibsen. Their plays can be said to have been inspired by Ibsen, the Father of Realism. In order to create life on the stage, Tendulkar and Dattani have experimented with the techniques of presentation. This dissertation evaluates the various techniques and devices of both the playwrights’ in their select plays. Dattani is a tireless innovator who makes experiments with new theatrical devices to sustain nobility and dynamism. To use stage with the delight of a comic artist with precisely a serious thought, is the real strength of Dattani’s dramatic art. In the play, Where There is a Will, the humour is sustained with a subtle sense of the realization of the intricacy of human nature within the family as a unit. A serious thought presented in a comic mode elates the pleasure of a live theatre, liberates the text from the burden of inter-textual pressure (as a Ghost of Hasmukh) and permits the free display of the inner feelings of different characters.
against the authority of Hasmukh and this is a unique device for self-assessment of the characters. For Dattani, theatre is integrated in his creative self. In all of Dattani’s plays, ‘family’ and ‘home’ is the locale of action. In Dance Like a Man, Dattani seems to seek an intermediate ground between the narrative and the dramatic. The play is well crafted. The way it moves back and forth in time, its use of one actor to play more than one role really test the actor’s talent and the director’s efficiency. The dramatic structure of the play evolves round the idea that individual will has to struggle against social conventions. 

Another play, Bravely Fought the Queen is a remarkable achievement from the angle of theatrical techniques. The play is presented on a multi-level stage to expose the juxtaposition of past and present and Dattani beautifully mingles the imaginary events and the realistic events without breaking the flow of interest. The whole interior of Kamlesh’s house is visible to the audience through the multi-level sets. Dattani reaches new heights in On a Muggy Night in Mumbai by creating mental spaces – where the characters are left to their innermost thoughts. Dattani is always adventurous in his ways of using the theatrical space at his disposal: multi level sets, breaking the bounds of the proscenium and wondrously inventive use of lighting to give height, breath and depth.

Tendulkar and Dattani have written for both – drama and film. This dissertation has also evaluated that both playwrights have used a lot of exteriors as the locale, and varies the time/space with flashbacks that provide the audience with a different style of storytelling. Their screenplays bear the unmistakable imprint of their innovative theatrical art in terms of theme and technique.

Tendulkar’s and Dattani’s plays are marked by a high degree of stage ability and humanistic approach towards the subjugated colonized sections of our society. Though both belong to different periods, they have discovered new territories of themes and issues which are, generally, unnoticed or overlooked by other dramatists. They have depicted newer themes. Apart from radical issues, their dramatic world present issues like communal tension, plight of the women in our society, problem of career and marriage, socio-political exploitation, politics of patriarchy, gender politics, a shift in value system and people grieving under the stroke of destiny etc.
The study focuses on two different playwrights, belonging to different cultures and time, yet bearing universal appeal and idea. If Tendulkar had raised some of the universal issues in the period of 70s, Dattani also raised some of the radical issues in 80s/90s. Both of them have presented the commoner’s voice which did not find due expression on account of conventional theatrical canons and devices. Tendulkar and Dattani have been constantly striving to explore the position of the marginalized sections of our society for relocating their positions and defining their identities in our society.

Both playwrights delve deep in the depiction of the suffering of those who, still today, dare not voice their pains and problems. Women, eunuchs, minority, transsexual and ailing people constantly maintain their attention. To them, theatrical presentation is a manifestation of the ‘human self’. Therefore, they dramatize the stark reality of life without romanticizing the idea.

The comparative study of Vijay Tendulkar’s and Mahesh Dattani’s select plays in the preceding chapters reveals the following points of comparison. In doing so, much similarities are seen in their thematic concerns, characterization and style or technique. However, a few dissimilarities can also be observed in these aspects.

5.1 A Comparison of Thematic Concerns:

Contemporary Indian drama, deviating from classical and European models, is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical qualities. It is not an offspring of any specific tradition and it has laid the foundation of a distinctive tradition in the history of World drama by reinvestigating history, legend, myth, religion and folk-lore in context to contemporary socio-political issues. A cumulative theatrical tradition evolved by post-independent playwrights like Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani. Apart from the conventional themes, marginalized issues like Patriarchal Autocracy, Gender Discrimination, Homosexual Relations, Clash between Tradition and Modernity, Woman’s Subjugation etc. are discussed in their works. Say for example, the theme of Woman’s subjugation is well discussed by Tendulkar and Dattani in their well-known plays Silence! The Court is in Session and Bravely Fought the Queen.
However, there are dissimilarities found in Tendulkar and Dattani’s plays. In order to sustain the gravity of subject matter, Tendulkar avoids the use of complex stage mechanism. But the stage-settings in Mahesh Dattani’s plays are more complex. There are multi-level sets arranged in Dattani’s plays. Say for example, in *Dance Like a Man*, there is a garden that represents the past and all the events of the past life invariably take place in the garden. A living room in the house represents the present. All events pertaining to the present take place here. Thus, a split-scene is a convenient device to move the action between the present and the past. Another dissimilarity found in the subject matter of Tendulkar and Dattani is that Tendulkar in his plays presents distinctive modes and dimensions of violence. Violence in Tendulkar’s plays is an expression of the ‘discontent of civilization’ and to decode the brutality existing within the scheme of things. He presents three types of violence in his plays – physical, mental and verbal violence. *Skharam Binder* is the best example of it. Dattani is different in his approach to present pathos in his plays. His plays are coloured with a slight humour. For example, *Where There is a Will* is the best example of creating a good sense of humour by projecting a ghost of Hasmukh Mehta. Moreover, Dattani’s plays end with an optimistic note which is absent in Tendulkar’s works.

Thus, the both playwrights reveal their vision and philosophy through their own innovative styles.

5.2 A Comparison of Characterization:

The characters in Indian English Drama of post-Independence playwrights are mostly set in an Indian situation. They are portrayed as struggling with the social norms and designing a path of their own. Since marginalized communities are the themes in the plays of Tendulkar and Dattani, most of the characters are either minor, transsexual or women. Here we have women protagonists living in a patriarchal society and who struggle to define themselves, to find a niche for themselves, a space to call their own, a voice to express their feelings and a wish to fulfill their potential as human beings. We have female protagonists at the centre – analyzing, remembering, recapitulating or evaluating a relationship.
Another similarity in the characterization is that characters are shown not only struggling with the society but they also struggle for their existence and identity. For example, Jairaj in *Dance Like a Man* struggles to establish his independent identity as a dancer. Leela Benare, in *Silence! The Court is in Session* struggles not only with the society but to live her independent life in the society. However, there is an outstanding characteristic, which is discernible in the characterization of both the playwrights. Almost all of them delve into the psyche of their characters and present their emotions, sensibility and sensitivity. The characters in Tendulkar’s and Dattani’s plays are also shown struggling with their fate. They are caught in difficult situations and the conflict is not only with their circumstances but also with their own selves.

However, an apparent dissimilarity in the characterization of both the playwrights’ works is that Tendulkar’s characters come from low and middle class. It is not with the case of Dattani. Dattani writes mainly for the urban people. Thus, characters, in Dattani’s plays belong to the metropolitan city.

5.3 **A Comparison of Dramatic Techniques and Style:**

Techniques and stagecraft have great importance in drama. Style is the thread binding the thematic concerns and characters, and at the same time it helps the writer to represent his or her philosophy and vision. Since style and subject are inevitably interlinked, the artistic treatment invariably forms an integral part of any literary work.

A survey of contemporary Indian English drama shows that the works of Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani represent a powerful resurgence in Indian English drama. Both have given a new direction to Indian theatre, with their innovative and experimental works that resonates with contemporary relevance. Tendulkar and Dattani make no imitation of theatrical conventions but they make efforts to create new dramatic forms for each innovative idea. However, both are different in their innovative techniques. For example, in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Tendulkar has used a well-known dramatic device, mock-play or play within a play. Dattani, however, uses flashback technique in his famous plays, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *Dance Like a Man*, and in a *Where There is a Will*, he devices a ghost of Hasmukh Mehta and creates a wonderful humour in the play. Dattani is master-mind of using stage-setting in an innovative way which makes him
different from Tendulkar. Another dramatic device Dattani makes use of in the play is regarding the roles of the actors. The play requires four actors, and the roles that are played by each actor are arranged like this:

1. The Young Man, in his early twenties, plays Viswas and the younger Jairaj.
2. The Young Woman, in her early twenties, plays Lata and the younger Ratna.
3. The Old Man, in his early sixties, plays the older Jairaj and his father, Amritlal Parekh.
4. The Old Woman, in her early sixties, plays the role of older Ratna Parekh.

Thus, it is Dattani’s great achievement of introducing such role switching device which is vital to the structure of the play.

Another dissimilarity between Tendulkar’s and Dattani’s use of dramatic techniques is that Tendulkar is greatly inspired by the Western models – Drama of Absurd, Impressionism and the Theatre of Cruelty. Amid these models of drama, he makes extensive use of regional theatres of India with dramatic forms like Tamasha, Notanki, Folk Theatre and Group Performances. He evolves an exceptional comprehensiveness in which duality of East and West, traditional and modernity, personal and social become one. He skilfully mingles the requirements of journalism with the art of drama. In Kamala, there is an effective dramatic representation of the commercialization of the art of journalism. The play Sakharam Binder and Silence! The Court is in Session follow the technique of realism mingled with naturalism. In Silence! The Court is in Session, the idea of mock-trial is an innovative mechanism to expose an individual’s confrontation with society.

On the other hand, Dattani well exhibits multi-level sets, flashback techniques, split scenes, thought techniques and voice-over in his plays. He uses Indian dramatic devices, techniques etc. in a very ample measure. He uses Indian words very profusely in his English plays. His characters are fond of using Gujarati dialogues. He has used good number of Gujarati, Kannada and Hindi words in his plays. Dattani’s theatrical genius is characterized by diversity, dynamism, and innovative urge. He is an unconventional voice in the theatrical firmament of India. In his dramatic world, the experience has to pass through five stages – the organization of words in script, the contextual suggestions, tone and direction, gestures and postures of actors and most importantly, the effect of the action on
the audiences. Dattani employs multifarious techniques and devices for bringing themes and ideas home to the audience.

Having examined Tendulkar’s and Dattani’s select plays in detail, it becomes clear that a comparative study of texts belonging to different cultures, time and language is a gratifying experience. It underlines the fact that the human beings in the matters of their physical and emotional desires are the same everywhere, irrespective of the differences in caste, class, clime and creed. The study undertaken to compare Tendulkar’s and Dattani’s works in the light of the comparative study has shown how the study can be useful and meaningful to examine different cultural texts. It has been a distinction of their individual arts that with their theatrical perceptions in terms of time and space they have inaugurated a new era of Indian English Theatre beyond the canons of imitation and translation as well as classical and Western traditions.

The following table gives an overall view of this comparative study. Let us study it to get a specific idea about this research:

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<th>THE COMPARATIVE STUDY</th>
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<td><strong>FEATURES</strong></td>
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<td>TENDULKAR/DATTANI</td>
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<td>THEMATIC CONCERN</td>
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<td>● Silence! The Court is in Session/ Bravely Fought The Queen</td>
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<td>● Sakharam Binder/ Where There is a Will</td>
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<td>● Kamala/ Dance Like a Man</td>
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<td>● A Friend's Story/ On a Muggy Night in Mumbai</td>
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Thus, by examining and evaluating the above table, one can conclude that even though their approach of presentation is different, both playwrights carry common humane expressions. By studying different dramatic traditions from a historical perspective, it seems that Tendulkar’s and Dattani’s plays highlight new ways of being “postcolonial”, “feministic”, “humanistic”, “psychological”, “sociological” and “naturalistic” in the twenty-first century. They do not totally discard the past but present it as an artifact by reinventing different aspects in relevant manners at present. After examining the various aspects of both the playwrights, it is possible to say that the credit goes to Tendulkar and Dattani for carrying forward the tradition of Indian theatre through a necessary and dynamic change. This dissertation is a midpoint in a journey, which is an ongoing one.