CHAPTER II
UNVEILING THE WEB OF IDENTITIES
IN MAHESH DATTANI’S PLAYS

Mahesh Dattani, a theatre personality who is actually involved in stage production and performing on the stage, draws inspiration from Marathi playwright Vijay Tendulkar. Unlike Girish Karnad who lays emphasis on history, myth puranas, Dattani concentrates of contemporary society and reality in the fast changing world. I would like to call him a playwright on contemporary urban India and his plays are topical dramas. The questions he addresses in his plays are that of gender, sex, religion, communal tension, feminine identity, same-sex marriage, and above all gay and lesbian relationship. Hence, his plays appear to be both revolting and sometimes, outrageous (Das 158).

Drama or Theatre has a straight association with human life because it epitomizes human conditions and complexities of human life, society, values and culture. Drama is a platform to exemplify a mirror in front of spectators/audience. Indian Dramatist Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar firstly they all have written their plays in regional language, while Mahesh Dattani is first Indian playwright writes in English. Mahesh Dattani with this first innovative practice with his plays makes him renowned not only in India but abroad as well. As the postmodern dramatist, he asks the questions through his play on identities such as cultural, religion, women and LGBT identities.
Bharat Muni, in his prodigious work *Natyashashtra* utters: “Theatre is life. There is no art, no life, no craft, no learning, and no action which cannot be seen in it” (Adya 35). Playwright’s efforts to touch audience through the medium of the stage and performers, presentation, inkling and paraphernalia make continuity to pursue ‘completeness’ of drama. Indian prodigious sage, Bharat Muni, who lived approximately in the seventh century, has very cunningly and fascinatingly advocated the theory of drama in his great work entitled *Natyashastra* which stands the first complete, concise, and a systematic treatise on drama in India. In *Natyashastra*, Bharat Muni claims that the God wanted to have a thing of great entertainment with the associative abilities of audio-visual features, which can be accessed for delight equally to all parts of society, so, they request to God Brahma who has been observed as the originator of the universe.

Lord Brahma prepared drama, choosing nectar of all the four Vedas (1) *the Rigveda*, (2) *the Sam Veda*, (3) *the Yajurveda*, and (4) *the Atharva Veda*. He took the melody, performance, plot and sentiments from these four *Vedas* respectively, and shaped drama, *the fifth Veda*, which is classified by the four diverse qualities of all the four *Vedas*. Thus, the voyage of Indian drama inaugurates with Sanskrit plays, at the time of Vedic Period. *Drishya* and *Sravya* are the two elements in the literature of Sanskrit, *Drishya* means something, which is received by the eyes, and drama emanates under this group while the term *Sravya* means something which can be received by the ears, poetry in all forms come from under this group. Briefly, in Sanskrit play, there are elements like *Vastu, Neta* and *Rasa* consider as plot, hero, and sentiments respectively. Aristotle also considers plot as the soul of tragedy, tragedy is
possible without character, but not without plot. The work of Indian playwright such as Kalidas, Sudrak, Bhavbhuti, among others, influenced their descendant of India, but their influence can be seen on present-day dramatist of the globe also. This is how India provides fertile soil of drama to the world over two thousand years ago.

Indian English drama is coexistent with Indian English poetry dating back to 1831 when K N Banerjee’s play *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present state of Hindu Society in Calcutta*, four years after Henry Derozio published his book in a verse form called *Poems* in 1827. Thus, it is clear that Indian English Drama is older than Indian English fiction. According to M K Naik’s book, *A History of Indian English Literature* “from 1831 to 1980, not less than 500 plays by Indian English writers had appeared, and during the short period of the last twenty years, about 75 have been published” (Naik 201).

Greece, England, Rome, and India, where drama originated and always been an integral part of the culture. According to Lee A Jacobus:

In all ages, drama has been an integral part of culture. For the Greeks, drama developed partly in relation to the period of barbarism from which the society was emerging reinforced and affirmed the moral values of civilization. The Greek experience of drama was entered in their religious festivals, which coincided the agricultural cycle of the year, communities; their drama became an important focus for their communal lives (18).
Resembling Greek, Roman and English Drama, the root of Indian Drama are *The Rigveda* (the oldest scripture of Vedic collection), first authentic source of Indian drama. Girish Karnard, assets with context to *Natyashastra* by Bharatmuni, about the birth of drama:

The first chapter gives us the myth of the origin of drama. On being, implored by Gods to provide such an instrument, Brahma, the father of the universe, took the text from the universe, took the text from the *Rig-Veda*, the art of performance from the *Yajurveda*, the song from the *Samveda* and Rasa (aesthetic experience) from the *Atharvaveda* and created a fifth Veda called *Natyaveda* (70).

Conventionally, the origin of drama is connected with myth and its presence in the Indian English drama. Kalidas, Harsha, Bhavbhuti, and Sudrak have followed *The Natyashashtra*, they come out with their dramatic foundations dealing with holy events and the poetics of drama. These extraordinary playwrights of the ancient India shaped their work with rich poetry, the art of performance and writing of drama. During the last hundred years, the Indian English drama emerges with the subjects like historical events, legends, political issues, social and cultural problems, psychological matters through myths, day to day happenings and religious beliefs.

Thus, the chief sources of Indian playwrights are *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, the prodigious epic of India, Tagore’s dramas like *Gandhari’s prayer*, and *Karna and Kunti* among others, have mythical characters and themes. Sri Aurobindo also uses myth in *Perseus the Deliveres*, in his play, he anticipated the
contemporary political scene in India and how the Indians were struggling for the liberation of their nation before independence. Prema Nandakumar observations on Sri Aurobindo’s mythical plays:

Sri Aurobindo found plastic material which could be molded to suit his message. The political atmosphere was such that Andromeda could be interpreted as Mother India in shackles crying out in distress for five divine interventions (17).

Modern Theatre in Pre and Post - Independence India:

Modern Theatre in India began in the cities of Culcutta, Madras, and Bombay, among these cities, Culcutta is considered as the hub of professional theatre. These were the cities in which British commercial ports set, had an urban middle-class audience with significance and tastes molded by the English education they received. At this time, a large number of theatres were copied from the British drama, that is the cause we in India has taken some extend the aesthetics, dramatic structure, and even the style and architecture of western drama. Most of the performance was depended on the sponsorship, which is the reason ticket sales put an emphasis on theatre as a commodity, making it available to a smaller and rich group of people.

After the Independence of India, many Indian playwrights thought about the development of theatre without going influence from British prototypes. The movement called ‘Theatre of Roots’ began with the study Indian performance forms like Kathakali, to see what could be used in the foundation of modern Indian drama,
the members of these movements were Girish Karnard, Kavalam Narayana Panikkar, Habib Tanvir, and Vijay Tendulkar. Girish Karnard in his book *In Search of a New Theatre* explains: “was not to find and reuse forms that had worked successfully in some other cultural context. The hope, rather, was to discover whether there was a structure of expectations- and conventions- about entertainment underlying these forms from which one could learn” (101).

Folklore performance has also touched by playwrights from Kerala, K N Panikar, he incorporates some stories, music, rhythms, dance from Kathakali, Patayani and Kuttiyattam into his plays. Panikar believes that the classic elementary expression of man, which is related to the soil of the land, which creates an interest in him, he does not want reason in everything. Panikar works with folk forms and his adaptation from Sanskrit plays, he comes out with the theory, personified in his own writing that theatre is not about conflict it’s about transformation. For him, the theatre is all about telling a story. One of the developers of street plays in India is Badal Sircar, who does not satisfy with the middle-class audience. In 1983, he terminates the common notion that theatre is not art.

Most of the Indian dramatist were first wrote their plays in their local language, because English is terminated by some as a foreign and as colonial language. In India, it was believed that the English language is for the office purpose was the only national debate took place and for many its upper-class urban people. Apart from the plays of Asif Currimbhoy near 1960, the most famous creations of plays by Indian writers in English were mounted by the Madras Players, but these were chiefly translations of plays written in other Indian languages.
India has a sustained proud and impressive past of dramatic sculpture, except Greece, no country can endure comparison with India. The tradition of Indian English Drama instigated with the entrance of the British in India, along with text of European models, translation of Sanskrit dramas into English. The drama entails commitment and interest on both the side – artists and spectators, although the playwright also depends on the performers who perform in a play. Drama is a cinematic medium of manifestation and presentation of drama requires care and conscious determinations not only on the part of players but also on the part of spectators. In this connection, M. K. Naik in his book *A History of Indian English Literature* appropriately notes:

Drama is a composite art in which the written word of the playwright attains complete artistic realization only when it becomes the spoken word of the actor on the stage and through that medium reacts on the mind of that audience. A play, in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience, thus needs a real theatre and a live audience (Naik11-12).

Consequently, the text of the Drama is meant for the stage and performance. When an English play performed in the English language, we see Indian performers speaking English, here the problem of their liability before us. They speak English in front of salespersons, servants or their grandparents or elders. The playwright must have convincing power and the ability to convey messages through performance. There is a diversified reaction to the ordinary Indian speaks English with a milkman, newspaper and local vegetable vendors and goods vendors. Therefore, there are certain challenges before Indian playwright for the establishment of convincing Indian
English theatre. It demands unaffected and sustained efforts on the part of the playwright and production authority to keep theatre survive in India. Although, Indian English Drama is developing gradually and progressively for carving its position in the territory of Commonwealth writings, and pre-independence era, there have been relentless struggles to produce the dramas with due dramatic possibilities.

The perceptible modification between Pre-Independence and after independence drama was printed in verse throughout the pre-independence era, whereas the post-colonial playwrights showed much preference to a prosaic method of drama and performance. All the same, the poetic drama remains to exist in the post-colonial period too. It is recognized by M. K. Naik in his book *A History of Indian English Literature* appropriately noted that: “… Tagore –Aurobindo – Kailasam tradition of poetic drama continues, but with a difference in the hands of Manjeri Isvaran, G.V. Desani, Lakhan Deb and Pritish Nandy” (Naik 256).

Hence, English dramas formed on the stage in India and abroad very magnificently influencing the spectators in an extraordinary manner. For example, the play *Hali* (1950) scripted by G.V. Desani earned rave review, it was performed effectively in India as well as at London in the Watergate Theatre. It portrays the subject of love and passion. Prof. Iyengar observes:

A short poetic play, *Hali* is an attempt to project the story of a ‘passion’: in other words, Hali’s confrontation of the powers of creation and destruction, his grapple with life and death, his surrender to the play of this phenomenal world, his communication with love, and his transcendence of the dualities of
time and place (243).

Similarly, Lakhan Deb, tranquil three dramas *Tiger’s Claw* (1967), *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976) and *Vivekanand* (1972). These dramas were written in verse form and they deal with historical happenings. In *Murder at the Prayer Meeting*, the subject was the killing of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi. This play reminds us the famous play *Murder in the Cathedral* by T.S. Eliot. Gurucharan Das furthermore subsidized his modest mite to the progress of Indian English Drama, his drama *Larins Sahib* is the best specimen of decolonization of English language in the independence era. His other drama *Mira* was reached as a ballet in New York and in Bombay identical splendidly. In the same way, Pratap Sharma as a dramatist has subsidized ominously in the arena of Indian English Drama with his stage-worthy theatres. His plays are *A Touch of Brightness* (1968), and *The Professor Hasa War Cry* (1970), Sex is the essential theme of his theatres. It should be eminent here that his dramas were a great triumph on stage in abroad, but they could not be performed in his own country.

Above all, Nissim Ezekiel, a renowned poet penned five dramas. Nevertheless, the fact remains that he is not as much comfort with theatrical art as with poetic art. His *Three Plays* (1969) containing *Nalini*: a comedy in three acts, *Marriage Poem*: a tragic-comedy and *The Sleep Walkers*, an Indo-American farce, are the best explanation on the narcissism and uselessness of urban middle class. His plays engaged with ironical fantasy, satire, etc. to exhibit emptiness of urban middle class.

Subsequently, Asif Currimbhoy concentrated substantial contribution to Indian
English Drama by writing dramas with an eye on stage with the postmodern presentation. Asif Currimbhoy comes up with miscellaneous issues and actions in his dramas such as socio-political, commercial, ethical, ancient, psychosomatic, spiritual, multicultural, etc. His dramaturgical art, efficacy and profound knowledge of numerous human fields has enormously augmented and lengthened the tradition of Indian English Drama. He has been considered as “India’s first authentic voice in the theatre” (Bowers XII).

In last few years, Indian English drama began to strengthen its place and started to freeze its own identity and place in Indian Writing in English. It inventories the significant development and obtains magnificence at national and international level. With the thematic and theatrical invention, postmodern dramatists find themes like myths, folktales, history, legends etc. very useful and attractive for in their theatres. In fact, present-day dramatists investigate this treasure of knowledge with present social, cultural and political scenario. Nevertheless, it should be identified here that the existing plays mainly depends on the translation. The performances, written in local languages, are transformed into the English language, the translation works to improve the Indian theatrical prospect. In this framework, some prodigious playwrights such as Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Mohan Rakesh are highly brilliant in their dramatic sense.

In addition, Girish Karnad, a renowned playwright has significantly enhanced and enlightened the tradition of Indian English Theatre. During his childhood, he comes across with some Natak Mandalies, which made the everlasting imprint on his sensitive mind and consequently, he found expressions in his theatrical works. Karnad
has composed eight plays; these plays are originally performed in Kannada and later on, have been translated into English.

He began his dramatic career with his maiden play *Yayati* followed by *Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala, Tale-Danda, and The Fire and the Rain* are reincarnated into English. “*Tughlaq* which receives him name and fame, as a major playwright also received the most prestigious *Jnanpith Award* for his wonderful contribution in the field of Indian English Drama. Karnad’s plays were staged successfully and got international recognition and capable of comprehending requisites of stage production of the play” (Parmar 16).

However, Drama has correspondingly fascinated female playwright in the arena of the theatrical art. Manjula Padmanabhan, theatrical figure that demands special consideration. Along with her other prominent women playwright are Uma Parameswaran, Dina Mehta, P Sengupta and Mahasweta Devi. Mahasweta Devi has written in Bengali, but her works translated into the major languages of the India and also of the major languages of the world like in English and in French. Her contribution to Indian English Drama is researching sincerely into the problems and issues of the unreached and unjust masses of our society. She protests against the desecration of undeveloped human rights to the marginalized section of the society like women, dalit, and children. Subsequently, the drama is the most powerful medium to get the transformation in the society. Unlike, Mahesh Dattani, her benevolences through her plays the sentiment interpretation of the issues related to marginalized Indian masses which, in fact, constitute a huge segment of our Indian
In her drama *Water*, Mahasweta Devi dramatizes the serious issues like women and caste discrimination, exploitation and violation of basic human rights to lower caste people. Water is the source of human existence; the play *Water* captures the realistic picture of denial of water to the down compressed and tribes in the countryside of West Bengal.

Correspondingly, Uma Parmeswaran is also the prominent name in the arena of Indian English Drama. Initiates her profession as a newspaper journalist and today she is a well-known poet, short story author and playwright. Uma Parmeswaran has made continuous and genuine determinations in presenting the magnificent inheritance and culture of India on the global stage. She has to her acclaim dramas such as *Sons Must Die*, *Meera*, *Sita’s Promise*, *Rootless but green are the Boulevard Trees*, *Dear Did* and *My Sister*.

Similarly, with high dramatic ability playwright, Manjula Padmanabhan, has got most prominent *Onassis award* for her revolutionary play *Harvest*. The issues that she has talked about loneliness and sidelining peoples are the off repeated themes in her plays. Manjula Padmanabhan represents a very dirty picture of the society where one mother bargains for her kids in replacement of the value of rice. A character named Om Prakash in her play forced to donate his organs to the rich person to get bread and butter. This reminds us Marlowe’s play Dr. Faustus, where Mephistopheles bargains his soul against the power and glory. R K Dhavan in his book *50 Years of Indian Writing* affirms, “Very recently Indian English Drama shot into prominence. Younger writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan have infused new life into this branch of writing” (Dhawan 19).
In accumulation, Vijay Tendulkar delivers new force and direction to Marathi theatre as well as Indian English theatre. In the beginning, Vijay Tendulkar just writes for the sake of writing, but gradually he became the professional writer the language he used in the drama was Marathi. He has written one-act plays, children’s dramas, novel and full-length plays. Most of his dramas are translated into the English language.

In the same way, Badal Sircar, one of the dramatists of Indian English Drama, who portrays externalize the existential approach to modern life via his theatre. “Badal Sircar ‘barefoot playwright’. Since theatre is the effective and powerful medium of sharing our views and opinions with people, Sircar employs theatre as a mode of social change and states his visions and concepts pertaining to socio-economic issues” (Parmar 17). Badal Sircar, an experimental playwright, he explores the idea related to socio-political, exploitation, and current issues prevailing in the society. His first comedy play was Solution X, most celebrated play by him is Evan Inderjit. Sircar is always against the traditional concept of the society; his plays differ from other Theatre practice. Sircar is successful in his avant-garde technique to bring spectators and performers in one line with same trend dimension physically as well as mentally. As Reddy K Venkata rightly says about Badal Sircar, “He has not only broken the dictionary between the actors and audience, but reduced the drama to its barest by dispensing with conventional story, plot, characters and dialogue” (Parmar 17).
In adding together, Mohan Rakesh who is best known for his drama *Halfway House* translated work of his Hindi play, *Adhe Adhure*. The play portrays discord and contradiction of domestic life. *One Day in Ashadha* (1958) and *The Great Swans of the Waves* (1902) dramas dealing with the historical past; the theme of man-woman relationship is also well explored in these plays. Mohan Rakesh is exploring man-woman liaison in a very truthful way. As far as Mohan Rakesh’s dramatic output is concerned, it is not a very large one, but his contribution to the field of Indian drama is countless.

Mahesh Dattani gave the name and fame to Indian English Drama as an autonomous identity at the end of the twentieth century. He puts a mixture of both traditions of India and Europe, which can be seen, in his plays. Being a postmodern dramatist Mahesh Dattani adopted different forms of drama as a medium to represent the real dissemination and liveliness of human involvement. In his book called *Final Solutions*, he expresses:

> English plays in India have never enjoyed this comfortable sense of belonging. Girish Karnad can be described as a Kannada playwright, Vijay Tendulkar as a Marathi playwright, and Badal Sircar as a Bengali playwright, Mahesh Dattani, however, is described as an ‘Indian playwright in English’ (Dattani ix).

With the entrance of Mahesh Dattani on the literary prospect, the development begins with transformation in Indian English Drama. He has authored a number of plays dissimilar in subjects, performances and strategies. Furthermore, his dramas
have been produced on the stage. John Mc Rae calls him “the voice of India” he further observes: “They are the plays of today, sometimes as actual as to cause controversy, but at the same time they are the plays which embody many of the classic concern for world drama” (46).

Interestingly, Mahesh Dattani looks in the theatre as the medium to apparent the cause of the unprivileged sections of our society. His plays externalize the problems and feeling of the subalterns in a very authentic and truthful manner. Mahesh Dattani visits the untraversed and unexplored territory of homosexuals, HIV positive, eunuchs, physically challenged people, etc. By touching up radical subjects such as gay and lesbian themes, child sexual abuse, eunuch, and marginalized peoples of the civic and expanded new vistas in Indian English drama.

Mahesh Dattani, born on August 7, 1958, in the city of Bangalore in Karnataka, though his parents originally belonged to Porbandar of Gujarat. They have transferred to Bombay for business purpose and eventually settled in Bangalore where Mahesh Dattani found an opportunity of watching Gujarati and Kannad plays in the company of his parents and sisters. Mahesh Dattani took his teaching from Baldwin High School and St. Joseph College of Arts and Science, Bangalore. At the age of nine when he went to see the Gujarati drama, at the town hall of Bangalore, Mahesh Dattani shares his experience in his book *Me and My Plays*:

It was only once the house lights came on as the curtain fell that I became aware once again that I was in a hall with a thousand people! There was a palpable silence in the hall before the murmurs pocked up again. Only, this
time they were talking about play, especially the twist before the interval. They were keen to know what would happen next. I was fascinated not only by the plot but also the effect the play had on its audience. If something like this could shut the mouths of a thousand Gujarati’s, I had to be a part of this magic! This was indeed the beginning of a beautiful relationship (7).

However, Mahesh Dattani yearns to present variegated Indian life and sensibility; he sets his eyes on the art of playwriting and stage presentation. He even assisted his dad in the family business for the certain period. He has an impulse to evolve a theatrical tradition competent enough to capture the spirit and sensibility of Indian soil. During his school time, he was fascinated by many writer of English literature. As being a postmodernist, he utters in *Me and My Plays*:

I was fascinated by the English poets, by Dickens and Lambs’ version of Shakespeare because my teachers were so passionate about them…I hadn’t even heard of writers like Shivaram Karanth, P. Lankesh, Girish Karnad and I suspect, neither had my teachers. As for the literatures and language of Gujarat, they were something that my parents indulged in and so were not to be taken seriously. They belonged to the past, and for me, my school and the English language were present. I didn’t realize it at the time, but this attitude would spell my doom in the decade to come (Dattani 9).

In addition, Mahesh Dattani at the time of his college study participates in the various activity related to drama such as the direction of drama, the performer in the drama and also attended several workshops related to performance. Further, Bipin
Parmar says in his work *A Critical Study of Dramatic works of Mahesh Dattani*:

“He took training of Western ballet under Molly Andre at Alliance Francaise de Bangalore (1984-87), where he took the teaching of _Bharatanatyam_ under Chandrabhaga Devi and Krishna Rao, Bangalore. He did his graduations in history, economics and political science at the St. Joseph College, Bangalore. He did his post-graduate study in Marketing and Advertisement Management. Therefore, his academic career has no direct connection with his dramatic voyage” (Parmar 23).

Even Mahesh Dattani declare about his passion for theatre: “By the mid-1980s, I had joined my father in his agency to sell machinery for packing and printing. At the same time, I started my drama group called playpen.” (Dattani 15). In 1984, Playpen playhouse possess by Mahesh Dattani, the manifestation of Mahesh Dattani’s abstract ideas and knowledge of art and dance. His plays are performed in his studio. It also encourages the novice artists to participate in dramatic activities. About acting, he says:

Acting is not about who you are so much possibilities to what you can become. Or maybe I was just too happy being myself and didn’t really want to become someone else. I did, however, join some workshops, conducted by a senior member of the group, which changed my perception of acting completely (Dattani 14).

He attributes his great success of drama and stagecraft to Playpen group.
Mahesh Dattani, in his interview with Erin B. Mee, asserts:

I wouldn’t say the only one, but I would say that I have been the most successful for various reasons: I have my own Theatre company (Playpen), and I have a Theatre background. I’m not writing because I’m a writer (of literature), I’m writing because I have Theatre back-ground (Dattani 156).

Being the multidimensional literary and dramatic figure, Mahesh Dattani has given a new height and dimension to Indian English Drama. He has rendered extraordinary help in bringing out the Indian English drama from apologetic existence.

Dattani’s dramatic art is inspired by the mission to communicate profound meaning through his plays and, therefore, he exhibits keen awareness for the direction and stage performance of his own plays. His sensitive dramatic self is a fine synthesis of a dancer, director, actor, playwright, audience and commentator moving collectively towards a single direction (Agrawal 24).

Above all, Mahesh Dattani is also reputed and accomplished director, scriptwriter, actor and dance teacher. His passion for dance is displayed by Dattani himself “I had another passion that I did not talk about much- not then, not now. I loved dance” (Dattani 22). Apart from playwriting business, he has been actively involved in so many activities related to theatre. He has started successfully in some noted plays winning tribute for his brilliant and sterling performance. Though answering the questions of conflict between the actor Dattani and director Dattani, He
The actor, the playwright and the director are all complimentary to each other in a production. It is like gardening; where a whole is made of many parts. So many conditions determine a garden’s lushness, its beauty. I write for an actor in the true sense of the word and not to ponder to vanity actors. There is no Theatre without an actor or an audience. Everything is geared towards ‘rasa’ which is why I always direct the first production of any play I write. That enables me to put in more stage instructions which go on to become a kind of blue print for other directors. That way, there is no conflict (Nair).

Furthermore, the atmosphere of the stage and audio-visual devices of a play engrossed and fascinated a lot to the mind and heart of Dattani. To the question what makes him write plays, Mahesh Dattani responds in the following words.

I participated in the usual school plays and skits but I always yearned to direct performances. I realized that there must be a script for a performance. That's why I started writing - not very serious stuff though, initially. I watched a play whenever I could. Every time there was a group from Bombay or Ahmadabad staging a play in Bangalore, it became a community event that we would all attend. I remember a play I saw as a child at Ravindra Kalakshetra that fascinated me. It used the “play within the play” concept that I'd never seen before and a dramatic finale that took place in the auditorium. The teasing tone, the costume and make-up, the lights -- were all bright and loud yet I was utterly captivated. I later learnt that it was Madhu Rye's Koi Pun Ek Phool Nu Naam
Bolo (Tell me the name of a flower). He is a sensational playwright. I got the chance to see his other plays, especially Kumarni Agashe (Kumar's Terrace), also in Hindi as Neela Kamra, in Bombay. Then the Bangalore Little Theatre was formed and I became seriously involved in acting, directing and writing plays. I learnt much from Vijay Padaki in the early years. I started my own Theatre studio after a few years (Parmar 26).

The American playwrights Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller have influenced him on the difficulty of stagecraft. Mahesh Dattani has got a very strong impulse and affinity for Indianness. In introduction of Final Solutions “Dattani’s remarkable success with an Indian idiom is responsible, to a large extent, for the wide audience appeal of his plays. The variety of linguistic techniques that Dattani uses to achieve this ‘Indianness’” (Dattani vi).

Uniquely, Mahesh Dattani is one of few dramatists who write their play originally in English. He doesn’t follow the path Western dramatic canons. There is a big challenge for Mahesh Dattani to put the flavour of Indianness and the challenges of putting the English language in front of Indian spectators, who are much more comfortable in the vernacular language. “On the one hand, there are expectations of ‘Indianness’ – in their themes, languages and so on. On the other, Indian English came in for heavy criticism” (Dattani x).

Despite the fact that, Globalization and the arrival of digital technology, the world has become the global township and the English language becomes the lingua franca of this new global township. Mahesh Dattani desires to globalize the Indian
theatre through his English plays in the contemporary era. He has thrivened in making its presence felt at the global level. Furthermore, English is a linkage language or contact language, at the national and international level; it unites larger sections of society or civilization. About the use of English, he explains in *Me and My Plays*:

I had indeed discovered the language called ‘Indian English’ and I was ready now to make my indictments on my society…It was very surprising to me that critics did not loud my attempt at original writing, hitherto unheard of in English-language Theatre in India. (Later, of course, I came to know of well-known Indian English playwrights like T.P.Kailasam, Asif Currimbhoy, Gieve Patel and Pratap Sharma.) But then I have discovered that most critics are slaves to their limited concept of theatre and are very unwilling to acknowledge their limitations (Dattani 20-21).

Hence, Mahesh Dattani aims to improve theatre, which can be understood and appreciated by the multilingual community of India and abroad. Therefore, he resorts English as a medium of communication of his theatre. Nevertheless, Mahesh Dattani puts the first transmission of the message through performance and secondly transmission of messages or ideas through language the second. Therefore, the performance holds more significance than the language in the theatrical world of Mahesh Dattani.

Consequently, Alyque Padmasee frolicked very significant person in paving and sharpening Mahesh Dattani’s theatrical track and career respectively. Mahesh Dattani considered Alyque Padmasee as God, “But among them was an important person- God. Alyque Padmasee was called God in advertising circle- and with good
reason. He had made the careers of many luminaries in advertising and film.” (Dattani 27) Alyque presenting Mahesh Dattani’s plays in the leading theatres of India and abroad, Mahesh Dattani’s plays have been performed to public and critical acclaim in the cities like Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and London. Praising Alyque, Mahesh Dattani utters:

I called the play *Twinkle Tara* and did a production of my own in Bangalore for the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival. It was huge success. But more was in store. Alyque removed ‘Twinkle’ and called it *Tara*. When Alyque chose to direct it, he had hoardings put up all over Bombay with my name just as big as his. God was promoting me! (Dattani 28).

Therefore, critics have cherished Mahesh Dattani’s theatrical talent and provide the motivation by way of empowering stage production of his plays. Alyque attributes: “At least we have playwright who gives sixty million English speaking Indians an identity. Thank you, Mahesh Dattani!” (Padmasee, Alyque, appeared on the cover page of CP).

As a result, Mahesh Dattani’s plays have been performed magnificently to public and critical acclaim. His radio plays have been aired on BBC radio. Mahesh Dattani is very prompt and passionate for the stage production of his plays. He performs the play as soon as the writing of the script of the play is over. As he sets: “I always direct the first production of any play I write. That enables me to put in more stage instructions, which go on to become a kind of blueprint for other directors. That way, there is no conflict, and the other directors can interpret it, as they will” (Nair).
As a playwright, Mahesh Dattani has an astonishing capability to transmute his plays into live performance. Brilliantly with the power of perceiving the chemistry on stage, he knows well how to relate his plays to the spectators. The function of an audience has got much significance in drama. The success of playwright doesn’t depend only on the script of dramatic text but completely depends on its stagecraft. Mahesh Dattani admits:

Audience need to make the effort. Unlike TV or cinema where the viewer doesn’t have to contribute, Theatre is collective experience. In fact, at a moment of truth, you will find how people who don’t know each other join in from all corners of the darkened hall to applaud and declare their appreciation of that important moment. And that’s when you know a play works (Nair).

Thus, the postmodern theatre offers collective experience; it requires the active participation of spectators also. The job of the playwright is difficult and needs time, patience and passion for theatre. It is analyzed: “Dealing with compelling issues rooted in his milieu, he has dispelled the perception about English theatre being just gratuitous fizz. His audiences have been large and responsive, both to the spectacle and the language” (Kuthari13).

However, most of Mahesh Dattani’s plays are rooted in an urban milieu of India, he has dramatized the problems and issues of the modernized rather urban India in his plays. In Mahesh Dattani’s Plays Critical Perspectives, he justifies his devotion of depicting an urban setting in his dramatic universe in the following way.
“I think the old clich… about writing what you know best holds good for any work or for any art (drama or literature). I think one has to be true to one’ own environment. Even if I attempted writing a play about the angst of rural Indian society, it wouldn’t ring true, it would be an outsider’s view-I could only hope to evoke sympathy, but never to really be a part of that unless I spend a lot of time there. I think there are enough issues and challenges in urban Indian society (the milieu I am a part of) and these automatically from the content of my work” (Dattani 156-157).

Hence, Mahesh Dattani’s plays are dramatic reflections on the concerns and constraints of the masses, he dramatizes the common man’s efforts or marginalized people’s effort to have space respect and identity in the society. The Matrix of space is main concerns in Mahesh Dattani’s play, he pens about the society and surroundings in which he exists. His dramatic art is the faithful and authentic expression of his personal experience and knowledge of the socio-cultural environment in which he breathes and lives. He answers, to the question whether he is distressed to see the difficulties that he is dealing with his plays, in the following words:

They invariably do. Social issues move me and I like to examine an idea from different angles. The plays where the content came first are On a Muggy Night and Final Solutions. As for the latter, I was asked to write a play about communal tension, and I said ‘what can one write about that other than platitudes? But out of that churning emerged’ ‘Final Solutions’ Sometimes the
characters spoke to me first, as in Tara and On a Muggy Night. In Dance Like a Man, the plot emerged out of a flashback structure where the same actors play different generations. Sometimes images make the first impact; then, the set (Chakraborty 274).

**Mahesh Dattani’s Web of Identities in His Plays:**

Mahesh Dattani can be categorized into three categories, namely Stage plays, Radio plays, and Screenplays. The subjects of his plays are, by and large, quite contemporary, radical and avant-garde. He has dramatized problems and issues of the contemporary metropolitan Indian civilization, ranging from communal rigidity, homosexuality, the difficulties confronted by HIV positives, gender discrimination, conflict concerning ritual practice and avant-gardism, child sexual abuse, patriarchal social system, constraints of *hijara* (eunuch), women, child laborer, interpersonal relationship, workings of personal and moral choices, identity crisis, revelation of past, marriage and career.

Yet, Indian family is the most important theatrical space in his plays as most of the plays have the household as their locale. *Where There’s a Will, Bravely Fought the Queen, Dance Like a Man, Tara,* are some of his theatre plays in which the painful accounts of numerous families have gone into the fabric and texture of the plays. The dramatist depicts the battles being fought between the members of the same family at home. Family is the often repeated arena of battle in his theatrical creation. The unrest eats up the happy and blissful atmosphere of the family restriction the personal development in them.
The setting for all of Dattani’s plays then, is necessarily embedded within the mechanisms of the middle class Indian family, and this is the context from which he operates. Working within his own time and place, and not an alien and distant westernized world, removed from everyday ground realities with which the urban Indian audience could easily identify, Dattani was already set on a path very different from earlier attempts at staging Indian drama in English (Kuthari 24).

In addition, Mahesh Dattani exemplifies through his drama an unprivileged section of our society. In his plays, he has examined and scrutinized the problems of women, children, eunuchs and minorities. His works offer a fine study of socio-psychological dimensions and socio-political realities of our time. He has redefined the tradition of Indian English theatre with his innovative art and craft. He declares: “…I do see myself as the change element of that thread. I’m not so sure even that I want to go back to my roots…I don’t need to revisit it. I’m more interested in pushing it forward… I am pushing, and I’m pushing the audience” (Kuthari 20).

Therefore, it is inappropriate to call him a sequel to anybody or consider him component of a continuum – the continuing voyage of Indian Theatre. It doesn’t mean that he is something dissimilar, but he is doing thing differently for creating effective and everlasting appeal. He is a true artist who holds the mirror to make reality more visible to spectators. It has been assumed: “He prepared the stage for a specific realism on the lines of Ibsen and Shaw. For him, man is an integral part of society and consciously or unconsciously the creeping influences of societal setup, determine the
fabric of relationship around him” (Agrawal 25).

For Mahesh Dattani performance is more prominence, he derives more pleasure and also a sense of completeness not from playwriting but from directing it on the stage. To the question, “What makes you happy?” Mahesh Dattani responses: “When I’m directing a play, I feel like I’m a complete human being. That makes me happy. And also when I meet people with a passion. It reaffirms all that I do. I’m enjoying what I’m doing and don’t want to do anything else” (Nair).

Nevertheless, Mahesh Dattani has an ability to synchronize the traditional issues with that of postmodernist issues. His plays are very remarkable not only from socio–political but also an emotional and psychological point of views. His contribution to the tradition of Indian English Drama is extraordinary and incomparable. He has been conferred the most prestigious ‘Sahitya Akademi Award’ for his Final Solutions and Other Plays. It acknowledges Mahesh Dattani’s impact to the genre of drama in the following terms: “[Dattani’s work], probes, tangled attitudes in contemporary India towards communal contribution to Indian drama in English.”(Sahitya Akademi Award citation quoted on the cover page of CP).

Mahesh Dattani’s play Where There’s a Will (1988) marks the beginning of his literary career as a committed playwright. The play focuses on the mechanism of the middle-class Gujarati household. In this play head of the family controls the family peoples even after he dies, which shows the patriarchal attitude of a male in India. The play Final Solutions is an attention-grabbing and sensitive play, dealing with communal tension during Rathyatra between Hindu and Muslim community. In
Bravely Fought the Queen, Do the Needful and On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, Dattani visits virgin soil of same-sex relationship, also adapted as a film entitled Mango Soufflé. Both the play and the film describe the issue of the same-sex love. However, there are different locales of both the play and the film, the theme; the characters, the events etc. are same in both the works. The film Mango Souffle is a daring attempt to unmask the gay-relationship veiled under the domination of heterosexuals’ relationship of society that considers it as a disgusting, irregular, and unwelcome. Tara revolves around the theme of favouring the boy and frowning upon the girl with an exceptional originality of commencement. Mahesh Dattani presents arguments against the parents’ partiality for the male child at the price of the girl child. The play holds much significance in the present time especially when the government came with slogan “Save Girl Chid” and other NGO’s are holding programmes and rallies for creating awareness about female feticide in Indian society.

Correspondingly, the conflict between tradition and modernity can be seen in his play Dance Like a Man. Thirty Days in September is based on child’s sexual exploitation and its consequence. The Seven Steps Around the Fire deals with the lives of hijra, it portrays the life, culture and system of eunuch community. At the end, Uma, a researcher of sociology and the wife of a police officer, unveils the mystery of the murder exposing our ruthless attitudes towards eunuch community. Similarly, The play Thirty Days in September dramatize subject of child sexual abuse within the range of familial relationship, although The Swami and Winston pacts with the mystery of the murder of an English lady, the playwright exposes pseudo and scheming scholars in this play. Like previously mentioned two plays, Uma and Fairy Queen is also an investigating drama in nature. The first broadcasting of the play was
done on October 29, 2000, on BBC Radio, called *A Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child*, Dattani was commissioned to write plays for BBC Radio on the occasion of the six-hundredth anniversary of Geoffrey Chaucer. The play dramatizes the journey of English lady, Anna Gosweb to an Indian village after twenty years to meet and help her drought-stricken boyfriend Jaman. Unfortunately, her friend Jaman dies before she reaches his village. The play *Clearing the Rubble* is a very brief but touching radio play, depicts the misery and malady of earthquake affected people of Kutch region in Gujarat. In the same way, one of the screenplay *Morning Raga*, based on the life of Swarnlatha, a Carnatic singer and greatly appreciated for its music as a motif. The play presents dexterously emotional turmoil in the lives of the various characters of the play. Mahesh Dattani detects: “It is about a meeting of two worlds. A story that brings together the modern and the traditional unites the past with the present, Carnatic music with Western music, fate and coincidence with individual choices” (Azmi 331).

In addition, *Ek Alag Mausam* is another screenplay deals with the serious issue of human life. Mahesh Dattani tries to articulate the voice of the marginalized human being, HIV positives finished this play. Unlike post-colonial playwrights, Mahesh Dattani attempts to seek the space for the HIV positives in the society and reflects the ethos of the subaltern section of our society. The play depicts a post modernistic theme-love story of two HIV positives. The play lays bare their love for life. The play has two layers of ideas; need for the creation of social alertness against HIV and love and sympathy for the HIV suffering people.

Powerfully, Mahesh Dattani makes bold efforts to portray quite
unconventional and radical themes in his dramatic career. The complexities of human relationship and the predicament of the modern men find due expression in his dramatic works. His dramatic techniques, stagecraft, rapid shifts in terms of time and space. He has used different images, symbols, devices, techniques, etc. Communicate his ideas in a very effective and concrete manner in his plays.

Being a theatre personality, he has vast experience in the art of production and staging of the plays in various spaces. Mahesh Dattani himself gives evidence to form his words of being a postmodernist playwright:

I am certain that my plays are true reflections of my time, place and socio-economic background. I am hugely excited and curious to know what the future holds for me and my art in the new millennium in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally (Dattani XV).

Therefore, Mahesh Dattani’s plays are about present reality that one happenstance in the metropolis of Indian society. He pens down about hijras, same-sex relationship and marginalized people from the society along with politics and contemporary issues prevailing in Indian culture, he proves through his plays how drama is a true reflection of the society. The avant-garde themes in his plays make him insupportable to the conformist spectators, but he overcomes by his vigorous dialogues and understanding of human nature.
Ever since, Drama is an important form among all literary forms in Literature, because of its audio-visual medium of expression. Tracking with postmodern contemporary sensational urban issues, Mahesh Dattani makes daring efforts to depict quite avant-garde and radical themes in his plays. He dramatizes intricacies of human relationship and the predicament of the individual of urban Indian society. During college time, Mahesh Dattani integrated with the Banglore Little Theatre, has the workshop with them, directed two plays, and found he was interested in performing. However, it was not until he directed Woody Allen’s God after that Dattani decided to choose his career in theatre. In 1987, Mahesh Dattani comes out with his own company, Playpen, and began to look around for Indian plays in English, which attested tougher than he had anticipated:

Like many urban people in India, you’re in this situation where the language you speak at home is not the language of your environment, especially if you move from your hometown. And you use English to communicate, so you find you’re more and more comfortable expressing yourself in English. I found I could only do Theatre in English and other language. And at the same time, I wanted to do Theatre in English and no other language. And at the same time, I wanted to do more Indian plays, so this became a kind of challenge, because there weren’t many good translations- or, there may have been good translations, but they didn’t do anything for me (Kuthari 17).

Afterwards, Mahesh Dattani resolved this problem by deciding to pen his own plays, starting with Where There’s will. Same sex relationship as a theme dealt with
two of Mahesh Dattani’s plays, namely *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *A Muggy Night in Mumbai*, M K Naik talks about homosexuality in his words:

The motif of homosexuality, which is touched upon in *Bravely Fought the Queen* is at the centre of *A Muggy Night in Mumbai*. The play presents a group of well-to-do homosexuals in Bombay, their changing mutual relationship, their revelations, their self-delusions and self-discoveries. Though they are all sailing in the same boat, each has his/her own or to put in, his/her own flag to hoist. Kamalesh is weak and sensitive: Sharad is his exact opposite, with his jaunty nonchalance. Ed assumes a double identity, with Prakash as his second avatar. Bunny is true to the ‘kindred point’ of home and Homo Den; he is good husband at home and very competent one in his bedroom, while he enjoys himself as a gay soul in the company of the initiated. Ranjit solves his problem by going abroad where he feels he will be more readily accepted; and Deepali is a militant lesbian, who declares, ‘Every time I menstruate, I thank God I am a woman.’ Totally free of guilt, she is strong and bold enough to strike Ed when he becomes violent. The wedding music heard constantly on the lives of these homosexuals for whom ‘marriage can only be a doubly dirty twice-four letter word’ (Naik 51).

From above statement, Mahesh Dattani feels that homosexuality is a subject that individuals want to discuss but do not talk about it because of social restrictions. Hence, he uses it as a theme of his Drama to give a platform to the people to look into the problem intently. Recently, Madhu Trehan interviewed Mahesh Dattani during the
discourse with the Dalai Lama, she observed that both Mahesh Dattani and Dalai Lama’s work are same only the differences in their method. She argued;

Mahesh’s plays do not make you feel good. They take you to a place where you question your own attitudes and perceptions, which may be embedded in your subconscious, but none the less, influence how you function in your daily life. Would you believe that is also the alerted consciousness of three days of teachings from the Dalai Lama? Every word you utter, every act that may seem so casual and unthinking to you, must be thought through, weighed and then expressed or acted on (or not). Mahesh’s plays give the same message using a different tool. The difference is – the Dalai Lama uses altruism and compassion to change the world. Mahesh’s plays expose the raw, hideous side. But both make you think and work on yourself to change (Trehan 2012).

Captivatingly, Mahesh Dattani’s plays are like an energizing treat for readers as his performances are to his audiences with the innovative theatrical practices. Nevertheless, what anguishes most is that Indian English Theatre is yet to expansion of the sizeable number of audience, the causes are yet to be identified. KR Srinivas Iyengar comments in a depressed manner; “Modern Indian dramatic writing in English in neither rich in quantity, now on the whole of quality enterprising Indians have for nearly a century occasionally attempted drama in English but seldom for actual production”(Iyengar 226).
Consequently, Indian English drama requires genuine theatre for performance on stage and a live audience. M. K. Naik observes in following words: “A play, in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience, needs are theatre and a live audience. It is precisely the lack of these essentials that has hamstrung Indian drama in English all along” (Naik 81). The Indian English playwright has not used Indian Dramatic traditions and myths much in creative manners. The second cause is the English language of expression between two people in their conversation so that Indian dramatists could not make their Indian actors to speak in English, Because of the language barrier, a common man is not coming to the theatre. Apart, for cultural identity, a prerequisite condition is tradition, continuity and change, if these three things are accepted by Indian dramatist and spectator in the theatre than only there is a complete linked development of cultural and individual identity.

**Postmodern Theatre and Mahesh Dattani:**

Mahesh Dattani’s theatrical intellect describing by multiplicity, vitality, and groundbreaking urge, seeks to present volcanic measurements of anger and resentment as well as distrust and discontent covered inside the psychological sphere of human perception. Mahesh Dattani’s broke the traditional theatrical concept and he has theatrical faith emphasizes that human nature has its individual sovereign space. Mahesh Dattani in his plays is a proper blending of western intellectual perception and the technique of Indian theatrical. He argues; “There is going to be a good positive development because as we get into the internet age which isolates human beings, the act of communication will be a premium. Theatre is our cultural activity
directly related to human beings communication with each other” (Tondon 23).

Unlike, Caryl Churchill, Mahesh Dattani also influenced by Brecht a postmodern playwright. Brecht believes that the foremost twentieth-century theoretician of the theatre, progressed a foremost aesthetic theory, the theory of Epic Theatre, fit for a scientific age. He significantly pronounced, “If art reflects life, it does so with special mirrors” (Chasen 70). Brecht’s stress on the essential to disaffect the spectators from any misconception of authenticity by meta-theatrical foundations of stage properties, such as orientation, prologue, play-within-the play uninterrupted dialogue, aside speak to the spectators. Also, addressed primarily to the mind from side to side properties such as, pantomime, mimicry, gesticulation, lighting, music, dance, and plastic art, background with the help of subtitles, prognostications and stills having the documentary consequence. Brecht employed ‘complex seeing’ which, “permit the simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view, of alternative attitudes to the central problem” (Rama 183).

Thus, this will lead the spectators in the very complex interpretation of drama that is the only method to break from the past in postmodern performance, they are against of unity of time, place and action, non- Aristotelian in their approach. Brecht engrossed much responsiveness and general applause all over the world. In India, Brecht influence surfaced the successful harmony of the traditional forms and western sensibility for a group of contemporary Indian playwrights like; Girish Karnad, Asif Currimbhay and Mahesh Dattani who encountered the situational conflict between the cultural past of the country and attractions of Western methods of beliefs. With inoculating the strategies of Brechtian Epic Theatre, Indian
playwrights have interconnected together with a direct link among the spectator and the spectacle and a kind of space between the spectators and the things going on the stage. Mahesh Dattani identified that; “The function of drama, in my opinion, is not merely to reflect the malfunction of society, but to act like freak mirrors in a carnival and to project grotesque images of all that passes for normal in our world. It is ugly. It is funny” (Kuthari 26).

Hence, Mahesh Dattani bestows with the concept that the spectator can treat a drama as a roller coaster ride’ if any petrifying moment comes, the spectator knows will rapidly and happily the next will be a happy moment and will be stopped on safe surroundings. In postmodern performance the spectator must reach their own conclusion, context to their community response, it’s open to interpret.

As a result, theatre of Mahesh Dattani is like a live show where the Individual is talking to individual as; (1) artists and artists, (2) artists and audience, (3) audience and artist (4) audience and audience. A significant outcome of involvement is by the influence the audience to distillate passionately on the actions occurring of the play, mainly in especially in mimes, eye interaction with the spectators. He adapted the three-dimensional, environmental setting of the audience. Techniques like magical sculpting in space, simultaneous action, lack of time-space barriers, slow motion, freeze, and choreography appealed to the aesthetic canons of his audience and evoked powerful responses to the various socio-political certainties.

Mahesh Dattani is committed socially in his drama, unlike Brecht, whose notion is to change the world, Mahesh Dattani with his deep feeling and rational
thought raises new vistas in the thoughts of the spectators through the portrayal of fragmentation of social and family affairs in his works. Mahesh Dattani portrays the socially ignored/marginalized people. Thus, Mahesh Dattani’s plays are sustained development and rejuvenation of his art both in relations of content and form. He discovers an array of human association in his plays. From Where There’s a Will, to the surrounding substance of gender characters in Dance like a Man and Tara to Bravely Fought the Queen that reconnoiters the pretenses of the upper middle class joint family, to Final Solutions a thoughtful play about the Hindu-Muslim fight, to Do the Needful a rib-tickling radio play that talks about substitute sexual selections as same in the plays On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, while Seven Steps Around the Fire and Thirty Days in September which look the life of Hijras and child abuse. Dattani’s movie Mango Souffle (2002) interrogations the principal values that paradigm social as well as gender identities.

Reasonably, Mahesh Dattani never presents an unfamiliar and aloof westernized world with which the spectators from India got difficult to recognize characters identity. He is reasonably anxious with the apparatus of the family that is deep-rooted inside the middle-class environment, the background that the dramatist is a part, and would like to attach with spectators drawn from parallel circumstances.

In Mahesh Dattani’s plays, characters place themselves inside the domestic atmosphere and in the society. The playwright chooses the location within changing aspects of a present-day metropolitan Indian family. Mahesh Dattani represents the new-fangled realities support older realism blending the given stereotypes and he creates use of the available stage space to disclose these structures in strong concrete
terms. Characters of Mahesh Dattani interchange and express in these spaces with voices, which echo and reverberate. Issues in his plays are deep-rooted in a certain space and time and within a thought-provoking societal background with no manipulation on social issues. At the same time Mahesh Dattani maintains the posture of a non-judgmental witness and on the other hand he wants the spectators to judge the issues in his plays.

As discussed earlier Mahesh Dattani influenced by Brecht about the least use of characters maximizes the theatrical effect of the stereotypes. The disaffection effect, the actor must help abolish stage illusion by putting himself at aloofness, by performing multi-roles the performer keeps away himself from the character, he portrayed and the situation in which he intricate or involve. Mahesh Dattani has absorbed Brechtian epic tradition performance, successfully succeeds a heightened effect by implementing the performance of art within art. Especially in play Dance Like a Man, in the article ‘Leading the Charge’ Sumanaspati comments: “It is beautifully crafted. The way it moves back and forth in time, its use of one actor to play more than one role which really tests the actor’s talent, marks it as unique, as does the strong characterization and the seamless movements in time” (“The Hindu”).

Practically Mahesh Dattani asks through his character for their existence, for him, time is more important than content. In Dance Like a Man, main character Jairaj feels alienate because of situations and stagecraft make the audience believe that Jairaj is isolated. This theory of alienation or estrangement by Brecht encourages an inquiry and critical attitude on the part of the audience towards the actions shown to them. The best part of this theory is a critical attitude developed on the part of the
spectator, as the performer does not identify with the character, which he represents; what spectator could choose from any specific point of view regarding the character from the play. This confusion or multi-faceted seeing leads to levels of diversity transcending mere broad-mindedness to recognition and understanding. Mahesh Dattani argues; “I am not interested in characters asking existential questions in limbo. My characters exist in a definite space and time, in a social context that’s what stimulates me. I don’t focus on a message but the context is important” (Kuthari 77).

Although, postmodern Indian drama has made the practice of courageous innovations and brave experimentations in terms of techniques and themes. Postmodern playwright cast-off history, myths, folklore and philosophies like existentialism; and have employed fluctuating chronological settings, classifications of dreams, masks and narrations. These playwrights integrated the features of Indian Theatre practices and also adopted techniques from the western playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, Harold Pinter, and Jean Paul Sartre. Hence, contemporary Indian English drama emerges as an innovative occurrence. However, a lot to be desired still from Indian English Drama, many breaches yet to be filled by the contemporary playwrights. Scholars and critics have commonly observed Indian English drama from orthodox points of view, but in reality, Indian English drama in its present form and productivity needs fresh critical analysis from the point of view of literary theory. For illustration, in contemporary years it has progressed away from superseded terminology and increasingly used the term subject instead of self. Unitarian identity pre-supposes the idea by the term self, also the impression of identity as something irreplaceable, lucid and self-directed. On the other hand, the
term called *subject* is comparatively wide-open and distinct by modification as it takes into account numerous socio-political, linguistic and also cultural features that constitute prejudice.

Thus, the term *subject* is no extended observed as a not fixed, articulate and motionless construction however, as a flexible structure, which can be mould and remould by a diversity of structures. Thus, subjectivity can be judge on the basis of the ideology, power, culture and language in fashioned. For instance, ideology is not considered, as someone’s own thought of structure but it must be judge on the factors, which it belongs. In same way, language was also considered as medium of expression but in the postmodern era, it is considering as limiting factor of what we think.

As discussed earlier, the age of postmodern is the age of questioning, here the question raised on the subjectivity dwell in the epicenter of the Indian literary theory because of information and communication technologies (ICTs), globalization and rapid change on culture. This change invites multiple questions must be discussed on the one platform. Subsequently, today in India Indian encountered with the question of identity, identity question can effectively be stood only in relationships of subjectivity as expressed in contemporary theory and expressed in Indian English literature, predominantly in the present-day Indian English drama. The question of identity to be addressed in the sphere socio-political and cultural concern.

Mahesh Dattani addresses the problematic of present-day Indian subjectivity in his plays in his own individual ways. The problematic is draw near in his plays
from dissimilar but harmonizing viewpoint, enlightening the numerous facets of current Indian English subjectivity. As far as language, gender, cultural, regional identity is concerned Mahesh Dattani proves himself as the seamless postmodern playwright. He plays vital role in the era to establish Indian English Drama on the world forum. Mahesh Dattani’s plays prove how the character who belong to marginalized sections of the society skirmish to find their individual identity.
Work Cited


---. “Invisible Issues: An Interview with Mahesh Dattani” by Erin B. Mee, appeared in

*Mahesh Dattani’s Plays Critical Perspectives*, edited by. Angelie Multani,


Karnard, Girish. “In Search of a New Theatre.” *Contemporary Indian Tradition*,


Kuthari Chaudhuri, Asha, *Contemporary Indian Writers in English Mahesh Dattani*.


www.books.google.co.in.


Tondon, Neeru, edited, *Perspectives and Challenges in Indian English Drama*.