-: Chapter IV:-

CONCLUSION
4.0. Conclusion:

Contemporary Indian drama, deviating from classical and European models, is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical qualities. It is not an off-spring 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 with context to contemporary socio-political issues. A cumulative theatrical tradition evolved by Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad prepared the background of contemporary Indian English theatre. New drama has emerged as a process of decolonizing Indian theatre. Erin Mee calls, "the decolonizing of theatre, a politically motivated need to devise tools for an indigenous aesthetic and dramaturgy that was not a mere derivative of the western models" (Mee, 7-8). The tradition of Indian English drama has been modified and redefined to cope up with the changing socio-political conditions of contemporary India.

Mahesh Dattani with originality of vision, fearless conviction, awareness of the predicament of human destiny and a remarkable innovative conception of the ‘chemistry’ of stage and audience, has given a new direction to the current of Indian theatre. He is India’s first playwright to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for his contribution to the world of drama. His plays deal with religious tension, sexuality and gender issues. Alexandra Viets calls him “One of India’s most serious and well-known playwrights writing on contemporary Indian themes” (Viets, 1). He is a director, actor, dancer, teacher and writer, all rolled into one. He is a director par excellence and many of his plays have been staged to universal acclaim. He has starred in several well-
known plays and has won accolades for his sterling performances in them. Dattani is also an accomplished dancer. His landmark production *Dance Like a Man* featuring a traditional Carnatic musical score and Bharatnatyam won rave reviews in the New York Times. Dattani teaches theatre courses at the summer session programme of Portland State University, Oregon, U.S.A. and conducts workshops regularly at his studio and elsewhere. But his international acclaim rests on his writing credentials which include plays like *Where There's a Will*, *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Final Solutions* and *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*.

Ever since his first play, *Where There's a Will*, in 1988, he has chronicled the social victim and the follies and prejudices of Indian society. He has criticized and exposed the Indian middle class in many of his plays including *Where There's a Will* and *Tara*. Some of his plays are eloquent defences of society’s outcasts and would-be rebels, people forced to live double lives in order to satisfy the prying eyes of society. These plays include *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, a compassionate look at the life and tensions of a homosexual community tucked away in Mumbai. *Do the Needful*, Dattani’s earlier radio play for BBC, also deals with the coming out of homosexuality. Both *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *Do the Needful* are probably the first Indian plays to boldly deal with the subject of homosexuality. The play *Final Solutions* is about partition and how the engendered suspicion only deepens from generation to generation.

Dattani tackles issues that afflict societies the world over. Just like Ibsen and Shaw, Dattani also exposes the evils prevalent in the society. Dealing with issues like male-female ascendance divide (*Tara*), the patriarchal tradition (*Where There's a Will* and *Dance Like a Man*), consumerism, communalism, Dattani holds back nothing. He uses the world of comic theatre to encase the bitterness of the truths he is dealing with and like Bernard Shaw, Dattani also wants to use the theatre as a powerful tool for bringing about the necessary social change. Dattani excels in mirroring his society. Mahesh Dattani in an
interview says: “Theatre to me is a reflection of what you observe....I write plays for the sheer pleasure of communicating through this dynamic medium” (Nair, Web).

Dattani, like his predecessors Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar believes in the fact that a playwright should write about the evils present in the society of his time and present it before the audience. For this purpose Dattani uses the medium of stage to present the problems to the audience as theatre is very close to real life. In his plays, Dattani takes on what he calls the ‘invisible issues’ of Indian society. By pulling out taboo subjects from under the rug and placing them on stage for public discussion, Dattani challenges the constructions of ‘India’ and ‘Indian’ as they have traditionally been defined in modern theatre. He encourages other playwrights to do the same:

Our culture is so rich with tradition, and that’s a great advantage and disadvantage as well, because...we’re living in the present and there are so many challenges facing us—you just have to cross the road and you have an issue,...I think it is very important for our country to spawn new playwrights...who reflect honestly and purely our lives, because...that is our contribution to the world. (Mee, 319)

His plays have varied content and varied appeal. His characters struggle for some kind of freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender, and repressed desire. Marjorie Boulton says: “All drama has to be contemporary in its immediate appeal” (Boulton, 167). Dattani seems to follow this statement strictly as he writes about issues which are very contemporary in nature like gender issues, homosexuality, lesbianism, communalism and religious issues. His plays depict marginalized groups of society, people who are considered misfits in a society where stereotyped attitudes and notions reign supreme.

Dattani does not indulge in dealing with colonial and post-colonial issues like other writers of fiction. But what makes him one of India’s finest playwrights is the manner in which he speaks to the audience, i.e., straight from the heart. He does not provide ready-made solutions or fully resolved ending.
Like Shaw, he presents the flaw before the people and in this way make people aware that such problems are a part of the society and cannot remain veiled for a long time.

Dattani’s contemporaneity is demonstrated not only through his choice of language, a vibrant, colourful and remarkably recognizable Indian English, but also through the subjects he chooses to write about. From *Where There’s a Will* (1988) to *Thirty Days in September* (2001), Dattani’s themes reflect and comment on the ordinary and everyday conflicts of so many urban people who may be living in transitional periods of history, caught between the firm undertow of tradition and social values and the pull of modernity and globalization. For a playwright who steers remarkably clear of messy and problematic definitions, Dattani manages to crystallize and represent the essence of what contemporary urban life in India is about for so many middle and upper-middle class Indians.

*Final Solutions* is a play on communal hatred based on age-old suspicion and mistrust. It deals with the most talked about contemporary problem, that is, communal disharmony in India. The mutual distrust between two dominant communities—the Hindus and the Muslims—which led to the partition of the country in 1947, continues to be a thorn in the flesh of the nation even after independence. Alyque Padamsee’s introduction to the play raises a few vital questions and unresolved issues. He writes, “the demons of communal hatred are not out on the street...they are lurking inside ourselves”. He goes on to say, “Can we shake off our prejudices or are they in our psyche like our genes? Will we ever be free or ever locked in combat...Arabs against Jews, whites against blacks, Hindus against Muslims? Are they any final solutions?” (Padamsee, 161). If people become liberal-minded like Ramnik, Bobby and Smita and see reason, the evil of communal hatred will be wiped out from the minds of the people. All religion in the end is one and the same religion—that is faith in God, in whatever form He may be worshipped. The locale of the play is Ramnik’s house and the central characters are his daughter...
Smita, wife, Aruna and mother, Hardika, besides himself and the two Muslim boys Bobby and Javed who entered into his house during communal tension occasioned by the attack on the Rath Yatra procession. In the beginning Daksha recollects from her diary about the past when she was married at the age of fourteen. And now after forty years Daksha has become Hardika but her prejudice against the other community continues to be with her.

Gender relationship in contemporary society, a hot subject for feminist critics, attracts Dattani’s attention and he has given an excellent treatment of it in his play, Tara. The play clearly shows the discrimination against girl child in the contemporary society. The conjoined twins Tara and Chandan had three legs between them but the major blood supply was from Tara’s side. After operation Chandan got two legs and Tara one. But the second leg didn’t suit Chandan and it had to be amputated. It was done at the behest of their mother. The girl child suffered and died. Though Chandan lived, he was haunted by guilt consciousness all through his life. Tara is considered to be an ideal character of Dattani. She has been widely applauded and variedly interpreted. In a male dominated world, preference is always given to male when the question of survival comes forward. All the propagandas of equality between male and female, equal opportunities to women in all the fields are belied. Patel and Bharati are educated parents, so the steps taken by them are lamentable. Bharati’s father, a rich person interferes in the decision on the ‘fateful’ leg. Now the question arises why Patel didn’t stand against their decision. The decision affects heavily the relationship between Patel and Bharati. Having a guilt consciousness, Bharati tries to show maternal love and concern for her daughter. She also tries to expiate by the act of donating kidney to her daughter which was ultimately futile. Tara is sacrificed because she was a girl and had no right to have a better life than her brother. The idea of a complete girl child and an incomplete male-child is so shocking that sacrifice of the girl child is acceptable than a handicapped male child. There is no regret that the decision was entirely futile. No compunction is shown towards the injustice done to
female child. Though this play shows injustice done to women, this play also shows injustice done to men like Chandan. He is forced to live a life of guilt for no fault of his. Chandan has changed into Dan in order to absolve himself from the guilt of killing his sister. Though he himself is not responsible for his sister’s untimely death, he suffers because of his grandfather’s and mother’s cruelty. He feels someway responsible for his sister’s death and decides to atone for it. Though the society is still male-oriented but Chandan’s atonement shows that there is a ray of hope for future generation of women. The future generation will consider women somewhat equal to men. In fact in the portrayal of Chandan the agony of Mahesh Dattani for women comes forward.

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Dattani explores the marginalization of women and also their attempt to articulate their voices against the patriarchal politics that subjugates the women and makes them worth for nothing. The play can be considered as the dramatist’s protest against exploitation of women in terms of emotional and finance within the periphery of the familial relationship. The play also highlights other evils like money-lending, prostitution, domestic violence, consumerism, etc. Though, the women of the play differ in their mood and musing, they are unhappy and disappointed at their ‘claustrophobic’ spaces. It is because of this depression and disappointment they are drifted towards different things for eliminating dark-shadow of their frustration. Alka is addicted to wine and Dolly develops romantic notion for Kanhaiya. Lalitha’s over involvement in growing bonsai plant results from her frustrated mental state. At the end, the women of the play become assertive and attempt to create their own spaces against the confined domestic space offered to them. Of course, they articulate their own spaces in different ways to discard their deplorable condition. Eventually, all men are unmasked and their real faces are brought before the audience. They have no other means of defending themselves except escapism. There is revolutionary change in the character of Dolly. Dolly of the first part of the play is quite submissive, meek and shy, but she emerges as an assertive and potent character who breaks through silence.
and burst out her anger against the ill-treatment and injustice done to her at the end. Alka also makes shocking rather disgusting revelation of hidden motives of her brother Praful who got her married with Nitin for continuing his gay relationship with Nitin.

*Where There's a Will* is based on Dattani’s motif of patriarchal dominance. A woman is generally looked upon as a commodity. Her only function is to attend the wishes of her husband and other family members without complain as she is dependent on man for financial and physical security. Man has always taken up woman as a liability and a source of requirement. Women have been looked down upon by men as an object to meet their needs. They should be there to cook their food, smile cordially at his friends, run around attending to their needs and sexually satisfy them, whenever they have the urge. This undemocratic nature of man repulses a woman be it daughter, wife, daughter-in-law or mistress. Hasmukh Mehta is an autocrat and cynical man who always criticizes his son and wife and also looks askance at his daughter-in-law. To him they are all his enemies trying to squander away his hard earned money. He also had a mistress Kiran Jhaveri about whom he had a high opinion and had made her the trustee of his property. His family was ignorant about his second relationship and its revelation was shocking to them which came their way after his death. But here the difference between a man and a woman has been discreetly outlined by Dattani. Hasmukh being a man was arrogant and tactless and therefore was unable to make place in the hearts of his family members, whereas Kiran Jhaveri being his mistress, had impressed Sonal so much that she became her confidante. Ajit and Preeti also accepted her as one of them and were quite at ease with her. Hasmukh Mehta, whose spirit was a mute-watcher of all the developments in his house after his death was greatly disappointed and thwarted to see his mistress take the place amongst his family members which he had desired throughout his life.
In *Dance Like a Man*, Dattani shows intricate family relationship in which the dancing couple Ratna and Jairaj learn and practice dance in their house disregarding Amritlal Parekh’s advice not to do so. Not only that, Ratna also encourages their daughter, Lata to continue dancing and be a good dancer. The play focuses on the conflict in the character like Amritlal Parekh who represents the attitudes of the older generation of the society during the Thirties and Forties and the younger generation represented by Jairaj and Ratna who oppose such an attitude. Jairaj and Ratna challenge the old man who has no good opinion about the art form. For him Bharatnatyam is the craft of prostitute to show off her wares. The play also highlights gender identity. Jairaj is ostracized for he chooses to dance like a woman though his dancing is a way of expressing his identity. The social bias against the art of dance among men is highlighted in the play. Jairaj is shown the door because he goes against the expressed wishes of his father in choosing to dance his way through life. He finds himself in a great difficulty and returns back home and lives as per the wishes of his father. In the end, Amritlal Parekh plays a trick on his son by encouraging his daughter-in-law to dance. The result is that the dancing couple, Ratna and Jairaj fall apart. After his father’s death, Jairaj destroys all the things that were dear to his father. He does not spare even the rose garden.

*Thirty Days in September* shows sexual exploitation of young girls and women by men who are their blood relations. The norms of morality are thrown to the wind. Mala, a young woman was abused sexually by her maternal uncle in her childhood. It is not only Mala’s story. It is also the story of Shanta as well. Both the daughter and the mother were abused by the same man, Vinay, Mala’s maternal uncle and Shanta’s own brother. Mala’s mind was preoccupied with the sexual abuses done to her by the uncle and therefore, she lost her inclination for marriage. Mala is frustrated and grieved after the realization of the awfulness of the thing. She feels acute pain and trauma that her life is ruined and she stands nowhere. Dattani depicts multiple layers of Mala’s slain psyche. Mala feels pangs of guilt of her own fault and also of her
mother. She holds her mother as well as herself responsible for her physical and mental disorder. Her conscience is constantly biting her. She has fragmented and disordered consciousness. She finds herself unable to adjust with the other human beings of her surroundings. She feels a sense of uprootedness and alienation. Her behaviour is conflicting to the socio-cultural connotation and context. This prevents her accepting proposal of marriage from Deepak. Deepak, her love who wants to marry her fails to understand this. She is convinced that it could have been averted if her mother cared for her. This is the real cause behind acute anguish and agony of Mala’s mind. Dattani seems to assert that betrayal within the framework of the familial relationship generates unbearable anguish and frustration. Shanta’s betrayal causes the worst horror in Mala’s life. The agony in Mala’s life grew because of Shanta’s silence but she was helpless. She too was a victim of incest. Both mother and daughter are portrayed as pathetic characters and victims of patriarchal society. Though incest threatens to break the family, love helps to keep it intact. The union between mother and daughter in the end shows the triumph of love over depression and disintegration of family. Mala begs her mother’s forgiveness.

Dattani portrays sexuality as an important category of analysis of literary texts next to race, gender and class. Judith Butler, the author of *Bodies that Matter* (1993), questions fixed identities like heterosexuals, homosexuals and lesbians. All our identities come from differentiations from other identities. Paradoxically, identities are repetitions based on performances. It is in this sense that heterosexuality which takes itself as the only authentic form of sexuality is ‘a string of performances’. Heterosexuality sees itself as the authentic form of sexuality by relegating lesbianism and homosexuality to the background and discarding them as inauthentic. If heterosexuality is the center, other sexualities are the margins. What Dattani says is that it is homosexuality which causes to social exclusion.

Social exclusion is a worldwide phenomenon. In a multilingual and multicultural country like India, it is a major problem that threatens the very
fabric of our society. Factors like caste, religion, community and gender give rise to social exclusion. But social exclusion as a concept emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century, though Indian society witnessed this right from time immemorial when it was divided on the basis of caste. The upper caste hegemony was instrumental in causing the exclusion of the lower caste people from the rank of the society. Mahesh Dattani, the most significant Indian English playwright of our country deals with the theme of social exclusion in his plays not on the basis of caste but gender. How gender relationship based on sexuality causes social exclusion becomes a prime concern for him in some of his plays. Neuter sexuality and homosexual relationship cause social exclusion in our country. This is a cause for concern in the contemporary society. Dattani depicts these themes deftly in Seven Steps Around the Fire, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai and Do the Needful.

Seven Steps Around the Fire is a protest play against the injustice meted out to the downtrodden in a society. A *hijra* named Kamala was secretly married to Subbu, the son of a Minister. She was burnt to death at the behest of the Minister who hastily arranged a girl for marriage to his son. But at the wedding ceremony, which was attended by guests as well as *hijras*, Subbu brought out a gun and shot at himself. The suicide was hushed up. Uma, the researcher investigates and finds out the man behind Kamala's murder. In the process she meets other *hijras* like Anarkali and Champa and interrogates them and understands the reality. Through this play, Dattani is questioning the age old belief of marriage being based on heterosexual relationship. He seems to say that homosexual and lesbian relationships being as natural as heterosexual relationship, same-sex marriage should be permitted in India. Laws should be made to this effect. Secondly, the plight of *hijras* in our society is deplorable. It is an irony of life that the *hijras* who are welcome on two occasions—one, at the time of marriage, and two at the time of childbirth—to sing and dance, are themselves deprived of marriage and childbirth. Nothing can be more ironical and pathetic than this. Dattani has done a good job by introducing a new theme...
to Indian English drama. To write a play on the lives of *hijras* seems not only to be unusual and unconventional but daring and revolutionary. Dattani has the courage of conviction to depict the lives of such people who are looked down upon by the society. The *hijras* are the subaltern. They can’t speak for themselves. They must be spoken for. This is what Dattani does through the character of Uma, the researcher. The society looks down upon them after utilizing their services on the occasion of marriage and childbirth.

*On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is about same-sex love and homosexual relationship. Kamlesh, Ed (Prakash), Sharad, Bunny and Deepali all indulge in same-sex love. The whole play deals with unisexual and bisexual love relationship. Dattani examines this unusual love relationship among individuals both at psychological and physical level. The play is about ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ persons who pretend to be different in public. Dattani dives deep into the psyche of these types of persons who think they have a right to pursue their pleasure and live in their own way. Behind their desire to seek same-sex love, there lies the agony of finding an identity of their own which becomes the burden for these characters. Living in darkness away from the purview of an open society, these characters are torn between desire and recognition. They fail to fulfil their desire as it is crushed under the norms of the society and lose their identity as individuals. Their love remains unnatural and their identity is threatened in a society which only upholds heterosexual relationship leading to marriage. The characters presented in the play are pleasure seekers. Their sexuality is threatened by the norms of society. They want to throw away the traditional and conventional pattern of seeking love through heterosexual relationship. Their nature is different from that of normal social human beings. There is a binary opposition between their nature and the culture of their society. This dichotomy between nature and culture obstructs their love and poisons their minds. The note of revolt against the society is unmistakable. In the age of globalization, nature triumphs over culture.
Do the Needful deals with complex relationship. In this play, the dual problem of love and homosexuality is deftly handled. What makes it different is that there is grafted onto it a love interest which cannot culminate in marriage because of communal consciousness in the Indian society. Lata, the female character, loves Salim, a Muslim belonging to a separate community. Their marriage being an impossible event, Lata resorts to an incompatible marriage with Alpesh, a homosexual, whose homosexuality proves to be a feasible cover up for meeting their respectable lovers—Lata and Salim; Alpesh and Trilok. Through the play, we are taken aback by Lata’s indifference and stubborn attitude towards her expectant parents and at the same time thwarted by Alplesh’s placidity and indecision towards marriage. The play shows complex relationship. It shows that the institution of marriage today has lost its sanctity and is nothing but a compromise to promote personal ends. For Lata and Alpesh marriage is only an expedient mode of coexistence, otherwise they pursue their extra-marital love liaisons even after they have tied the knot. The hypocrisy of such arranged hotchpotch marriages for ‘convenience’ stands exposed. Treatment of this great institution as a trifle contract to facilitate their selfish ends fills us with great distaste. Both Lata and Alpesh could see no way out of the marriage arranged by their parents and were not ready to give up their respective lovers, so they strike upon a half way through, which were suitable to both of them. The path chosen by both of them is a default and desecrates the sanctity of marriage and can never be acceptable to our society.

Dattani, like Shaw, uses the stage to condemn many of the drawbacks prevailing in the society. He manages the stage performances of his plays meticulously and like Shaw he gives full description of rooms, persons and vital actions. His plays are meant to be performed, not just read as literature. Mahesh Dattani uses multi-level sets for his plays, so that the whole interior and exterior become one and geographical locations collapse. In short, his settings are in pieces like the families who inhabit them.
Mahesh Dattani is a theatre personality. Not only he writes plays but also directs them. And what is more, he conducts and organizes workshops on play-writing and stage production. That is how he has gathered vast experience on the dramatic art and stage craft. The innovations he has made in the area of themes made him popular both at home and abroad. In order to make his characters life-like on the stage, he too made certain innovations in the techniques of his plays. To make the inner thought in the minds of his characters, he introduced the technique of ‘thought’ instead of ‘asides’ in his plays. ‘Thought’ is followed by ‘Speech’ in commensurate with the themes of the play. There is a lot of code-mixing in his plays. In his ‘preface’ to Collected Plays (2000) Dattani states:

I know that I am an artist. I don’t need to underline it in my works. I write for my plays to be performed and appreciated by as wide a section of the society that my plays seek to and are about...I am certain that my plays are a true reflection of my times, place and socio-economic background. (CP XIII-XV)

What matters most in a play or drama is performance. Julian Hilton, a theorist, almost discards the audience and the text and concentrates on the performance of the characters. Hilton writes:

...in the theatre any plot or action exists only in the moment or performance and has no stable meaning or identity outside of the performance process...There is no single or necessary definition of what plot or action is, even in the case of a play with an authoritative source ‘text’. (Hilton, 7)

Mahesh Dattani found theatre more vibrant and convincing. In one of the interviews, he confessed, “I think of all arts and of all writing genres, theatre perhaps is the most dynamic because no other art form is as vibrant” (Uniyal, 180). His theatrical art is inspired by the assumptions: (a) to bring theatre close to the real life experiences, (b) to avoid conventionality and imitation to set the direction of true Indian drama in form and content, (c) to represent the perpetual clash of the desires of individual and designs of social influences, (d) to explore the deep recesses of human psyche within the
periphery of stage, (e) to liberate the art of drama from the burden of canons both from ancient Indian and European tradition, (f) to synthesize the performance dynamics with profundity of thought. He made a candid confession:

My milieu is theatre, you can’t operate in isolation...I do want a theatre movement to happen. The major block for that is lack of sound training and professionalism. We have the talent but theatre is more than that, it’s a craft of communication through the language of action. (Dasgupta, Web)

The stage in the play _Thirty Days in September_ is divided in four areas without the formal division of sets and scenes. The first area is reserved for the counselor who remains an invisible presence in the play, still it helps to stir and control the consciousness of the protagonist. The second area is of the living room of Shanta and Mala, the mother and daughter. The large picture of Lord Krishna in the background imparts mystic touch to two distinctive worlds represented by Mala and Shanta. In contrast of living room, the third space is _Pooja_ room and the fourth acting area is the most flexible representing the several locations—a party house, two restaurants and Deepak’s room. Mala encounters the audience unveiling her past only through the conversation with the counselor. These four distinctive areas within one setting is a conducive device to project the twilight of internal spaces of the characters. Besides setting, the language too is used as a tool with broken sentences to expose the emotional turmoil going on within the consciousness of Mala and Shanta. Each dialogue with its incompleteness gives a complete picture of the private spaces. In modern drama, unconventional expressions have greater potential to represent the guilt of the characters. The revelation of the heinous past in presence of invisible counsellor is an effective mechanism to reveal in theatre those issues that are neglected as taboos.

_On a Muggy Night in Mumbai_ has multi-level stage which represents the different spaces of household corresponding with the mental spaces of the characters. The dark expensive area provides a background to mental anguish.
of characters while as open spaces represent the actions in context of external thoughts. The central action of the play takes place inside Kamlesh's flat divided in three spaces—the living room, the bedroom and nonrealistic expensive state. The flat is situated at Marine Drive Area, the emblem of the luxurious life of Mumbai. There is a sharp contrast between glorious view of the 'Queen's Necklace' and the isolated flat of Kamlesh who prefers to remain confined to private spaces. The second area, the bedroom of Kamlesh is realistic but hidden behind a wall and it gives the impressions of mystery and obsessive privacy. The third is a private space where characters immediately suspend in 'shoonya' and characters share their innermost thoughts. Dattani dexterously manipulates the single room spaces to encompass the society of elitist in miniature. The 'light' and the 'heat' are two major components in the play to correlate the atmosphere of physical spaces with psychological condition of gays. Dattani manipulates the stage with the awareness of the fact that homosexuality in Indian society is no longer a socially acceptable relationship. The short, pithy, broken or even non-verbal dialogues are adopted as a device to represent self revelation and self justification. The events are organized not only for the revelation of guilt but also afford possibilities to provide spaces for the acceptance of guilt. The quick shift in light, the movement of characters in Interiors and Exteriors, short and coded expressions of Kamlesh—all make a cumulative effect to sustain the panting of emotions. It equally grips the nerves of audience where audience can have a better realization of the truth that most of the gays are at the edge of nervous breakdown.

In Dance Like a Man stage is divided in the forms of Interiors and Exteriors to decode the fragments of psyche of the protagonist divided between childhood passion for dance and the present anguish for his failure to realize his dream. The background is decorated with several framed photographs along with the focus on musical instruments representing the couples in the various dance postures. The idea of 'couples' in 'dance postures' is suggestive of two
distinctive visions—one of the personal relationship in marital life and other is the commitment for the art of Kathakali. Dattani manipulates the dramatic structure to give an insight into their personal conflict. The role of Amritlal, the father of Jairaj and Jairaj the artist is played by the same character. Jairaj just bearing the shawl becomes Amritlal, the manifestation of the parental authority. The idea of playing multiple roles by the same character has the advantage of a compact structure that is often essential to sustain the vehemence of passion. There is no split level stage and the demarcation of distinctive spaces is suggested through suspended picture frames and in this respect, the consciousness of characters move in accordance with movements of shifting photo frames. The use of light and music help to suggest the shift of time and space.

The play Tara is one of the most sensitive creations of Dattani’s set at multi-level stage. Dattani makes experiment with flashback technique to discover the guilt ridden psyche of the protagonist, Chandan. The only realistic setting is the bedsitter, with the older Chandan introspecting his own past sharing the memories of her sister Tara. The microscopic description of details of stage setting is appropriate to decode the inner spaces of the characters. The development of plot through the consciousness of a single character contributes to self reflective style in theatre and it has a greater potential than the monologues of O’Neill or the soliloquies used by Shakespeare. Chandan’s introspection is not a mere revelation but a re-evaluation of the past to seek a consolation for the present. It is a metatheatrical device to achieve far deeper impact of the presentation. The fusion of past and present, social and personal is an exceptional thrust to ascertain the excellence of presentation.

The play Final Solutions that was selected for Sahitya Akademi Award is an effort to reconcile the mass and canvas within the periphery of the stage. The dramatic structure is organized with the help of flashbacks, corporate mass in the form of chorus and the quick shift of scenes in the form of Interiors and Exteriors. There is a crescent shaped ramp where place and simultaneously the
central action echoes through the consciousness of Hardika. She too plays a double role, the role of Hardika, the grandmother and Daksha, the young bride. In the recollections of the past, she recalls the history of communal violence within dramatic structure. The role of the mob representing communal frenzy is suggestive of Dattani’s intention to bring theatre close to real life conditions. It also suggests his affinity with the tradition of regional theatre popularly known as *Yatra Plays* in Bengal. The only exceptional experiment in *Final Solutions* is the role of chorus and mob and it has the advantage to mingle public and private affairs. It cannot be ignored that the change of mask to suggest Hindu mob and Muslim mob justify that communal differences are the sign of divided consciousness.

The discourse on the dramatic technique of Dattani invites attention to the family comedy *Where There’s a Will*. The protagonist, Hasmukh Mehta plays a double role. In the first place Hasmukh Mehta, the father and in the second place, his image appears as invisible identity to observe the reactions of the other members about his cynicism and unbound authority. The second presence of Hasmukh Mehta has an additional relevance in the play. It is a method to control the fate of family members after his death and it is also a method to shatter the self imposed cover of authority. Sita Raina, the director of the play, in her criticism of the play praised it for its philosophical content. There are three spaces in the play—the family dining-cum living room, the bedroom belonging to Hasmukh and Sonal Mehta and third is the trendy bedroom of their son Ajit and his wife Preeti. The contemptuous challenge of the authority of different characters is an effective tool to control the action both in terms of time and space. The ‘partaker’ and ‘observer’ matrix leads the play to an effective climax.

In *Do the Needful*, Dattni uses an experimental device. It is double dialogue. In it, first the reaction of a character is given as ‘thought’; and then what the character actually says at the point is mentioned as ‘speech’. In the ‘Bride Viewing’ incident, Mrs. Patel, praising Lata’s culinary skills, asks, “who...
taught you all this?” Lata’s reaction is (thought): Madhur Jaffrey and Tarla Dalal”; (speech): “My grandmother”. This type of technique has been used in a more extensive scale by Eugene O’Neill.

_Bravely Fought the Queen_ is a play in which much of the action takes place in the living room of Dolly and Jiten Trivedi, in a posh suburb of Bangalore. This is a play about acting, about hypocrisy. Hence the living room where the so-called moderns of today live an unreal life perhaps just to impress the unknowing guest. It recalls once again what Karnad had said that the living room is the face—the made-up face put forward to strangers. Reality is to be found in the inner chambers—in the kitchen which is a witness to imagined as well as real scandals and upstage in Baa’s bedroom: Baa herself is a living embodiment of past carrying her own burden of guilt.

The technique of ‘thought’ followed by ‘voice-over’ is employed in _Seven Steps Around the Fire_, a play devoted to the theme of the plight of _hijras_ in our society. This play has twenty movements from beginning to the end, the scene moving from Interior to Exterior and vice-versa.

In the choice of dramatic technique Dattani creates his own convention to preserve the liveliness of theatrical art corresponding with the real life experiences. His tireless experiments and the persistent efforts for compactness and condensation richly contribute to eliminate the barrier of ‘art’ and ‘real’. The idea of presenting diverse spaces within one single setting is not only a part of the convention of naturalism but it is an inevitable need of modern theatre to represent the fluid state of human consciousness that is fractured and unorganized. It can get meaningfulness only in consonance of the experiences of audience. Dattani has a perfect control over stage, setting, and dialogue, verbal and non-verbal signs to construct the synthesis of mental spaces of audience, dramatist and actors. The theatrical control becomes more intense and lively with the panting of emotions.

Dattani is basically a theatrical person and the integrated message of text becomes self reflective with innovative devices of stage mechanism. His use of
stage craft is extremely intricate and it makes the text echoing multiple connotations. For dramatic representation is neither a matter of the description nor of presentation but it is a matter of evocation. It is only with appropriate performance that the experience becomes vital and adequate.

Dattani has been striving to articulate the ‘voice of the woman’ in our society. He has no specific agenda of feminism. However, women have always drawn his attention to reflect upon their predicament. He portrays women characters with due care and consideration.

His plays externalize emotional crisis and psychological pain of women of our society. He depicts inner world and thoughts of the women who have been denied of respectable existence and intellectual entity. She is not loved and honoured in true sense of term. Her urges and impulses have never been understood in a respectable manner. It is to be noted here that the presentation of women in Dattani’s plays are real and natural in the world of shifting values.

Dattani’s contention is that the position of women in our society is still not heartening. Only thing that discourages the image of ideal ancient woman is that she has started to reflect and react upon the issues that are threatening her existence as a respectable and ingenious human being. She has learnt how to retaliate to the injury done to her basic self and identity. Ratna in Dance Like a Man, Bharati Patel and Tara in Tara, Dolly and Alka in Bravely Fought the Queen, Smita in Final Solutions, Mala and Shanta in Thirty Days in September. Sonal, Kiran and Preeti in Where There’s a Will, Uma Rao in three consecutive plays Seven Steps Around the Fire, Uma and the Fairy Queen and The Swami and Winston are some of his women characters who contend against socio-political oppression of the women in our society. Dattani launches a campaign for creating awareness against injustice, patriarchal authority and false myths and conventions of the society. He has created his women characters with the courage of contending back.

Dattani seems to assert that women are endowed with high sense of self esteem and pride as well as courage and commitment. They have got strength
and audacity to grapple with social forces that fosters the evil tradition of gender discrimination. He attempts to revamp and redefine the image of womanhood in our society. Through his theatrical art, he provides impetus to women for articulating their voices against the oppressive forces of society aiming to improve their position in the society. He has presented a wide range of women characters in his dramas.

It is strongly, critically assumed that Dattanian plays present the meek and submissive women characters turning into volatile women. His women characters are emotional and also competent. The way he depicts women characters in his plays shows his exceptional sensitivity to feminine psyche and his power of perceiving internal struggle and thoughts of women. The synthesis of artistic perception and extra-ordinary understanding to feminine psyche enables him projecting interesting, original, and appealing women characters in his plays. There is no exaggeration in saying that Dattani is one of the few male creative writers who have given a fresher and authentic insight into the women’s consciousness. His women are imbibed with high degree of susceptibility to their suffering and courage to protest against the ill treatment meted out to them and ability to encounter jibes of animosity. He also approves, confirms and encourages women’s rebellion which is, in fact, uprising against the conventions bound society. By fostering women’s protestation against the society that nurtures the false convention and notions of oppressive patriarchal authority, he engineers the process of a change in the established and accepted notions and conventions regarding the family and society. He seems to assert that only women’s protestation can improve their position in our society. Therefore, he attempts to justify unconventional path chosen by women in the form of protestation. He is developing theory of ‘protest and prevent’. He is convinced that women’s rebellion or protest can prevent themselves from being subjugated.

Thus, the projection of women in Dattani’s plays is quite different. He is not trying to define the concept of ideal woman of Indian culture. Nor does he
try to present the model of new woman who is quite assertive and bold. His perception regarding women is socio-cultural and psychological as well. The women in Dattani’s plays are neither conventional nor archetypal. They can be divided into two categories. The one is passive sufferer and the second being emphatic and assertive. She possesses a will of her own to resist the forces endangering to her survival. She can also fight back to keep her identity intact and her basic self safe and sound.

Dattani doesn’t stick to one particular tradition of drama. He infuses various traditions into one making his theatre true and authentic representation of real life experience. Through this process, he incepts a new tradition of drama which is quite innovative, authentic, and capable of representing the spirit of Indian soil. Therefore, his plays are the real life stories. His original and genuine approach impresses one and all at once. His plays have ability to lift the audience into modern world which is full of angst and woes. Unlike Girish Karnad, he dramatizes the urban angst rather than revisiting myth and history. In fact, he presents the history of human suffering and problems. It is not the history of human deeds but of human soul. His plays record the injustice meted out to the women, children, transsexuals, minorities, homosexual and other people belonging to marginalized sections of our society.

Dattani is fascinated by the ‘voice of his personae’ articulated by the performers on the stage. Therefore, after writing script of the play, he immediately performs it on the stage with a view to arrive at the desired effect. What matters much to him is the performance not the verbal script. Performance finalizes the text of the drama. Thus, his final script is prepared after the stage performance with necessary additions and omissions. He sets his play in such a way that it becomes an organic whole rather than disintegrated bit. It is because of this, his plays are being performed to the critical and public acclaim placing him in the realm of dramatists of first rank in Indian English Drama.
Dattani has unyielding drive for the experiments and innovations. He has been constantly experimenting with his ‘form and content’. Every time, he unearths newer issue and presents it with the befitting stage mechanism. His stage mechanism is ever-changing like the fast moving society. Firstly, he appreciates the dynamics of society and finds suitable devices and techniques for the stage production of his plays accordingly. He understands the true nature of the issue under discussion and then produces on the stage for the public discussion in ground-breaking way.

The proper usage of language renders a great help in presenting realistic views of life on the stage. It is true that language in drama doesn’t hold as much importance as it holds in a novel and poetry. Dattani invests plain prosaic utterances. At times, his plain prosaic expression flows like poetic expression. The beauty of the drama arises out of the ‘natural flows of the dialogues’. It should not be prompted by its creators. The drama is always action oriented and the language should be natural response to it. The plain and direct prose also helps in avoiding any hindrance in communication process. The drama is consisted of various parts like plot, character, setting, thought, etc. The language does play an important role in them. However, they are not outcome of worded expression but of collective response.

Since the drama is the reconstruction of life on the stage, it requires several other things along with language. Swayed by the naturalism, Dattani resists the usage of embellished and ornamental language. The simple and lucid expression helps in creating the illusion of reality.

Dattani spares himself from the rhetoric expression or embellished language. He uses the language spoken by his characters in their routine lives. He makes a big success in the matter of effective usage of conversational language on stage. One can judge the character’s position and status by their register of English. They use spoken words. The poetic or ornamental language is likely to create ambiguity in the minds of the audience. He seriously
endeavors to reach to people by a variety of ways and the simple linguistic investment is one such way to reach out the audience.

His ‘dialogues’ are brief and subtle. His dialogues are very effective and display meaningful depth and naturalness. They are quite suitable to his characters. His characters are remarkably realistic. They display wit and vivacity of the characters. They divulge characters’ psychological and emotional spectrum. His unyielding drive for the innovation and experiment prompts him to invent newer dialogue technique. He invents ‘double dialogue’ technique to decode inward and outward behaviour of the characters. Under this technique, he has made bifurcation of the dialogue into two groups: ‘thought’ and ‘speech’. Reality is expressed through the ‘thought’ device and what character speaks under the circumstances is called ‘speech’. In this way, he makes use of innovative technique of double dialogue for revealing character’s first reaction and forced reaction sacrificing the conventional dialogue pattern.

Besides, double dialogue, Dattani uses ‘injected dialogues’. In Where There’s a Will, there are two different remarks about the same character. Actually, this dialogue mechanism is very comical and ironical. Instead of using ‘aside’ device, Dattani’s use of injected dialogue device is really commendable experiment. He has revolutionized many theatrical devices to bring themes home to audience. The novel dialogue device helps the dramatist comingle the irony and humour in an effective and interesting way. Apart from, brief and crisp dialogues, the dramatist has also used long monologues in some of his plays.

Dattani’s prose is quite plain and easy to comprehend. He uses brief dialogues, incomplete sentences, speeches, natural cadences, and conversational language in almost all his plays. He tries to liberate himself from the burden imposed as a part of language politics. He directly writes his plays in English. So, his theatrical creed may be questioned on the basis of ‘Indianness’ and a part of language politics. Actually, he captures the
sensibility and spirit of Indian soil in a language that originally doesn’t belong to this country. Dattani has both ability and understanding to present the emotional upheaval of the characters without using metrical composition or poetic language. He captures internal conflict and emotional crisis of the character in prosaic form very successfully. He has got power and prowess to write plays in English and get them performed successfully on the stage. Despite linguistic barrier, his plays are making great success at home and abroad.

The language is used in a variety of ways. Dattani excels in taking multifarious tasks through language. His language is quite easy and appropriate to occasions and moods, urges and emotional outburst of his characters. He deals with radical themes like suffering of eunuchs, child sexual abuse, homosexuality, communal hatred, etc. The use of language, while dealing with such themes, is a challenging task. He has successfully used subtle but simple English for communicating crucial dramatic situations. It is, indeed, a praiseworthy thing that he manages to communicate sexual preferences, to present flux of conscience, agitated state of mind, emotional crisis, etc. through simple and plain English phrase. Versification doesn’t count if it fails to capture the rhythm of life.

Dattani has also made ample ‘use of technical modern tools’ like telephonic talk, TV news, etc. Moreover, speeches like public, occasional, and conversational are used as and when need arise. The audience never feels that expressions or dialogues are prompted by the creator. The presentation of flux of conscience of the personage is also done in a genuine manner by way of using brief dialogues and faltered expression. He never intervenes or prompts the expression that emerges naturally from the flux of conscience of the character.

Dattani profusely uses words from Indian languages like Gujarati, Kannada and Hindi in English sentences. It makes his dialogues sound authentic and original. It also makes his characters quite expressive and
communicative. The characters hailing from the poor or unaccessed background have their own ways to use language. Dattani lets them use their own words and accent. There are so many servants, workers, attendants, vendors, drivers, constable characters in his plays. His plays admit their variegated speech style and mode of expressions of regional languages.

An appropriate 'dramatic situation' is very necessary for the richness of the drama. Dattani employs multifarious techniques and devices for bringing themes and ideas home to the audience. He carries out the befitting procedure of presentation of them retaining originality and authenticity. He stresses much on dramatic structure to literary skills. He believes that understanding of human relationship helps achieve a compact dramatic structure. He is very powerful in conception of plot and delineation of characters. All these dramatic qualities put Indian drama in English to the level of world drama.
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