Mahesh Dattani's plays are remarkable for the technical craftsmanship. Dattani ensures that the enactment on stage will be effective when detailed stage directions are given. He uses space very skillfully, some times as confining and some times as widening. He moves from one part of the stage to another from one level of the stage to another, and he lights up different areas of the stage at different times. As he does this, his characters move in time. Age becomes youth, 1990s become 1947 and, past, present and future come together. The complex structure of these plays matches their complex and disturbing thematic quality. Dattani, very often places one character at a higher level so that the play is seen from his review point.

Dattani says Theatre has always been a mirror for man, a reflection of his world, the eternal conflicts that plague him, through which he has experienced the gamut of human emotions. Man has created a very complex language called theatre, a language that has the ability to redefine the natural concepts of time, space and movement. A language that goes beyond the verbal and beyond the physical. Through his language of theatre he has been able to see himself for who he is, what he has made of himself and what he aspires to be.
There is a constant danger of disillusionment of the theatre, because we do not see ourselves or our aspirations in the theatre. So, it becomes important to do the kind of theatre that means something to you personally and also to go to the kind of theatre which engages us enough for us to relate to in the way he has spoken about. Only then is there the true synergy between the artist and the audience.

That is why there is the need to look at identities both for the performer and the audience. It is not enough to say we are Indians and we shall see Indian theatre. We have to arrive at the true Indian mess of our theatre.

In a plural society such as ours, which is culturally as diverse as the European continent, and a civilization that is as ancient as the world, it is very difficult to define what is quintessentially Indian. Obviously a more pluralistic approach is required. The conventional way of defining by linguistic and regional divides does not work for creating artistic identities any more, or it probably never has. The spaces that Dattani goes beyond region and language are the most useful. These are more of ideological spaces and the whole purpose of making them is to come closer to our identities rather than create further hostile divisions. We have enough of those in our country.
Dattani roughly describes the three spaces as 1. The traditional, 2. The continual and 3. The radical. None of these spaces are mutually exclusive. The traditional: According to Dattani we need not go into the traditional aspects of our theatre. There are enough people who are traditionalists who can vouch for the permanence and completeness of our classical theatres and dance forms. Infact the word 'Natya' is used for both Dance and Drama. We can pride ourselves on our integrated performing art forms which are complete in every sense of the world. A varnam in a Bharath- natyam concept contains everything that theatre and dance all over the world strive for. It has technique, it has grace, it has power, it has emotions and most definitely it has style. A rasika who has the capacity to enjoy this experience is truly a traditional in the best sense of the world.

The continual: A lot of us seek our identities in our roots or traditions whether they are rural or urban, regional or international, or a mixture of all. It may be important to draw from these roots and to create works that are largely inspired from where we come from. To a lot of people their roots are a greater form of identify even if they have moved away from the traditions that they seek inspiration from and yet they need to be true to their times. This state of transition has created many great works.
in our country. Watching a play by Girish Karnad or Kambar gives us the satisfaction of viewing our past and our roots through a view finder that definitely belongs to the present. It is an important bridge that reminds us of where we come from and where we are today. It is interesting that both Karnad and Kambar have used the same Kannada folk tale to give us two gems *Naga-Mandala* and *Siri Sampige*. Both are so different from one another and yet they share common roots. This is something unique to Kannada theatre.

The radical: While it is absolutely vital to have tradition and continuity, all is not well with that. We do need change. We do need people who are willing to explore and develop new forms and languages. The radical theatre of today is in all likelihood to become the traditional theatre of tomorrow. Some of the most powerful works in theatre today are from radicals like Rabindranath Tagore, Badal Sircar, and Vijay Tendulkar. Tagore was among the first of the 20th Century dramatists to put the focus on the caste system and gender inequality through his plays. If traditional and continual theatre is linked to our roots, radical theatre is linked to our spirit. It soars like a bird exploring new horizons and offering us vantage points that we didn’t know
existed. Both form and content have been enriched by radical thinkers in our theatre.

So, as we can see that to form our cultural identities we need all three. Tradition, continuity and change. It is when we accept the need for all three in our theatre that we can truly have a theatre movement that is inextricably linked to the development of cultural, social and individual identities. So, according to Dattani theatre is the representative of life.

Special mention must be made of Dattani's technical craftsmanship. Dattani has ensured that their enactment on stage will be effective with his stage directions. He uses space very skillfully, some time as confining and some times as widening. He divides the stage into different segments. He moves from one part of the stage to another and one level of the stage to another. He focuses the light at different areas of the stage for proper effect. Past, present and future come together. According to Kasturi Khantan:

The complex structure of these plays match their complex and disturbing thematic quality. Dattani very often places one character at a higher level so that the play is seen from his viewpoint. Often characters are
interchanged. Questions asked at one point, between two characters are answered by the conversation, between two characters in another part of the stage.¹

Dattani's plays would seem very grim indeed, were it not for humour—humour that can be wild, wicked, double-edged or slapstick. He wields it with such confidence that he is not afraid to paint sober or even tragic moments with a shade of the comic. Then there is suspense, which he handles like a mystery-writer, giving away little tensions, heightening the tension and jabbing you in the gut many times—found as he is of multiple climaxes.

Dattani blends time and space in his well made plays. He loves traditional art forms, especially Bharatanatyam. Which is integral to Dance Like a Man. His plays fuse the physical and special awareness of the Indian theatre with the textual rigour of western models like Ibsen and Tennessee Williams. It's a potent combination, which shocks and disturbs through its accuracy, and its ability to approach a subject from multiple perspectives. Post colonial India and multi-cultural expression of the contemporary; they require public spaces in which the mingling of eastern and western influences can take place. Through his fusion of forms and influences, Dattani creates such a space. This is in
itself a political and social statement of astonishing force says Michel Walling in his A Note on the Play:

Critics have compared his technique to that of Ibsen's, perhaps struck by the regularity with which all his plays unravel to reveal the present peace: be it the guilt of the educated liberal secularist who ghosts of the past. Some dark secret which comes back to torment the most confront again the truth that his family fortunes were built in the loot and spoils of engineered riots, or the retired dancer couple who come face to face with human cost of the pursuit of their negligence. One would rather attribute this to Indian story telling traditions as manifest in Kunti's dark secret of Karna's parentage, or the inevitable revelations in countless Hindi films where the hero and the wrong doer must confront the terrible truth of their twin hood it is true how ever that these four plays have a pervading ambience of menace and darkness but ultimately they are life alienating and redemptive despite the cruel twist they deliver.

The four plays show the writer's progressive ease with form as he shifts from a decidedly naturalistic
style to experiments with different innovations: playing with the unities of time and space through flashbacks, flash forwards and working on the physical realities of staging using split-level stages, hidden rooms and other devices like having the same actors playing different characters. The plays are crafted meticulously and the dramatic tensions carefully built up and regulated with small giveaway hints dropped from time to time leading up to the climatic revelation which makes it that match more credible. Dattani uses the devices of the ‘well made play’ but gets away without becoming predictable.²

Dattani is a theatre practitioner who loves art and not himself in art. Painstakingly, he works with the actors to recreate his text in a form which suited their approach to performance: a sub textual approach characteristic of actors with a western training. Watching this was an object lesson in openness, responsiveness, and cross-cultural collaboration. To Dattani a play is never really finishes. Plays only really happen in the theatre, as ephemeral events. The apparently permanent printed text is just one approximation to what might occur when the piece is performed.
Dattani has built a substantial œuvre which can today be viewed and weighed. The main characteristics of the author's method tend to be repeated, with variations, from work to work. He takes great pain in his stage directions to explain the stage layout expects the observers to follow him in detail. Dattani presents his themes in a multiple narrative way, moving back and forth across time. He highlights the characters at different levels. Through a technique reminiscent of cinema he builds dramatic tension as it cuts rapidly from one scene to another.

In Dattani's plays, the plot tends to follow a particular pattern. A visitor or a stranger enters into a family with an introduction. Through him a series of events are revealed. Past events are unmasked. Some dark secrets of the family are revealed. Once the action begins to follow, the interest of the audience is substantially strengthened as a number of lesser revelations lead us to the final theatrical coup.

Each play is something of a theatrical *tour de force* from within which the characters don't always emerge fully. They often have crackling lines of dialogue but there is little ballast to them. It is not character that drives the action; rather, a series of hints and revelations lead us into secrets that the protagonists
would prefer to conceal. By the end, they stand exposing, not on what is revealed. The human core is not what it is about; the situational drama is what holds the attention. ³

The constantly shifting nature of Dattani’s stage space became the starting point for a kaleidoscopic approach to the text. In the play Dance Like a Man during the first flashback the actor who plays Jairaj immediately turns in to Amrithlal by simply wrapping the shawl, his most prized possession, around his shoulders. Dattani uses the shawl as a symbol to signify the stature of Amrithlal. Viswas is intrigued by the ornate cupboard, a solid rose wood; every article in the house is antique. He finds a splendid brocade shawl for dowry. That itself indicates its worth. That shawl is a present to Amrithlal from the Mysore maharajah, as an award during Dussehra that is the most prized possession. Whenever he has visitors, he wraps it around. He is the first among the educated elite class to shun western suits and wear khurtas and shawls on formal occasions.

Through Viswas, Dattani expresses the views of Amrithlal and prepares the audience mentally that he is against the wish of his son, Jairaj.
VISWAS. What a granddaddy she had! He must have been a terror. No wonder her father is a weirdo. (Clears his throat and puts on a mock-father voice.) So, you want to be a dancer. Hah! Hah! Hah! Son, you will never amount to anything in life. Look at me. Look at what I have achieved. Yes. Look. Look. Look (points to the furniture.) What's that you say? There's more to life than money? you ungrateful wretch! (396)

Dattani depicts the stature of Amrithlal with his shawl around, through Viswas. Later in the first flashback Jairaj after giving his consent to Lata's marriage with Viswas, Ratna exits to the bed room. He notices the shawl. That is the last memory of his father. He feels happy as he soon will get rid of the shawl by giving it to Viswas as a dowry as he asked for it. When ever he sees the shawl the picture of his father walking about this room disturbs his mind. He wants to be away from those memories.

Jairaj wears the shawl. He is immediately fixed in a spotlight. The music builds up until suddenly jathis or dance syllables being recited can be heard. The living room now changes into a lovely rose garden. Spotlight picks up a young man with his back to the audience, dancing. He wears dancing bells and a band around
his waist. A young woman is sitting in front of him. The characters have all changed. Jairaj becomes the father, Amritlal Parekh. Viswas becomes Jairaj. Lata is now Ratna. Their ages remain the same as those of the previous characters they played. It is now the 1940's.

Dattani has already given a clue to the audience through Viswas by making him Amritlal with the shawl. When Jairaj wears the shawl and when he is fixed in a spotlight and when the living room changes into a rose garden with young Jairaj and Ratna the audience are taken to the past. This technique of changing characters by simply changing the shawl is a novel idea of Dattani.

The young Jairaj unable to bear with the restrictions of his father any longer and decides to leave the house along with his wife. Young Ratna exits behind him. Then the garden becomes the present day living room. Amritalal becomes the older Jairaj as he removes the shawl. The older Ratn's voice from the bed room picks up from where the young one's trailed off. Older Ratna speaks to older Jairaj as usual.

The second Act again takes the audience to 1940s. In the second flashback the younger Jairaj and Ratna comes back
defeated only after two days. Amritlal forgives them and seeks the help of Ratna in helping Jairaj to grow up like a man and he departs. Young Ratna exits. Amritlal picks up the newspaper and becomes the older Jairaj again the lights are brightened and the garden changes into the living room, then he calls for Ratna, the older Ratna enters from the kitchen. Young Jairaj and young Ratna come as Viswas and Lata four of them participate in the joyful conversations of Lata’s rave reviews.

Old Ratna breaks down with jealousy of her daughter, Lata’s development and rave reviews. She then exits into the bedroom along with flute music. Jairaj exits to the kitchen. The living room changes into the garden, bathed in moonlight. After a while, the young Jairaj and Ratna enter from the garden, Ratna is wearing a splendid Bharatanatyam dress. Jairai is evidently drunk. Amritlal is away receiving the acclaim for serving the nation. In this third flash back the death of their infant Shankar is revealed.

*RATNA (screaming).* No!

*Jairaj rushes up the stairs. Ratna looks up and slowly goes up the stairs as music plays. The lights dim. She exits hurriedly.*
The music contaminates in a scream which comes from the older Ratna. The garden changes to the living room. The music however continues, perhaps muted. The lights remain subdued. The older Ratna comes down the stairs almost in a trance. The older Jairaj enters, and stands in shadows, watching her as she sits down. He moves and stands beside her. They are both fixed in a spot light. All senses of time is abandoned now. (446)

Through the dialogues of Jairaj it is revealed that many years have passed and many changes have taken place. The ancient house is demolished and built a posh house. When Jairaj is revealing the changes that have taken place spotlight picks up the younger Jairaj and Ratna in the dance hall. Both of them were in dance costumes and wear dancing bells during Jairaj’s speech. They smile a lot and perhaps even laugh. When the younger Jairaj strikes a pose the younger Ratna laughs and hits him playfully. The younger Jairaj and Ratna smile and embrace without any prejudices. After his death Jairaj expresses that they dance perfectly with unison without missing a step or a beat and they laughed at all the mistakes they made in their previous dances. They have come to an understanding Jairaj says, “We were only
humans. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God."(447)

This is the statement of maturity, understanding and realization. At the other segment the younger couple is ready to dance and salute the audience while the music builds up and the spotlights fade.

In this 'well made play' structure, Dattani bends time and space to suite his will. Through out the play the time moves back and forth within the same scene. His ability to create meaningful and moving drama has established him as the leading figure in English theatre today. He is the only Indian playwright with a consistent body of work in English.

To direct a play is a process of making the word flesh. When the words are Mahesh Dattani's, the flesh is already contained within the word; the written texts are fully realized through the process of performance. Dattani's plays fuse with the physical and spatial awareness of the Indian theatre with the textual rigour of western models like Ibsen and Tennessee Williams. It's a potent combination, which shocks and disturbs
through its accuracy, and its ability to approach a
subject from multiple perspective. 4

In the play *Bravely Fought the Queen* the set is centered on a
slightly abstract inner space, furnished with three white blocks,
which represented the Trivedi household and the office. The only
naturalistic element in this area was the bar: a glowing
blasphemous shrine to alcohol. Around this central area was
another world: red and dusty full of torn newspapers, discarded
whisky bottles and cigarette packets, the beggar woman’s
tarpaulin, a wheel chair. This was an India at once alluring and
terrifying, both for the bourgeois characters of the play and for its
western audience.

This play is the world of Kanhaiya, the sexually alluring
young cook and the dark arms of the auto driver who embodies
Nitin’s sexual guilt; of Alka’s liberating dance in the rain; and of
Baa the living embodiment of the past with its attendant guilt and
shame. Her presence is undercutting the apparent naturalism,
and upsetting the fragile fictions, which the characters had
created. This is a play about performance; and uses the theatre to
demonstrate how, in a world of hypocrisy, acting becomes a way of
life. Paradoxically, it is only by the overt performance of the theatre
says, Michael Walling in his Note on the play.
In this play past and present exist simultaneously, when Baa speaks from the past and her lines alternate with those spoken by Jiten and Nitin. The dialogues of the characters in one segment are intertwined with the dialogues of the other segment characters. The questions asked by a particular character in one segment will be answered by the other character’s conversation. The dialogues are woven with good craftsmanship and with lot of skill. The characters of a particular segment will not give direct answers, but their conversation comes in between the dialogues of another segment and gives apt and reasonable answers to the readers or to the audience.

In Act I entitled, The Women, the segmentation of the stage is described in a picturesque way,

*The upstage centre is dominated by a well-stocked bar. On a higher level is the bedroom of Jiten and Niten’s mother, referred to as Baa. She is bedridden and is visible through the screen wall when it is back-lit. A staircase is visible along with a small landing which leads to both Baa’s bedroom and Dolly’s bedroom off-stage. Upstage left is a largish window overlooks the front of the house. Next to it is a stereo system —music can be herd. It is a thumri sung by*
Naina Devi. Downstage left, exit to the kitchen and
downstage right is the main door of the house. (233)

Dattani loves traditional art forms of dance and music. In this play, Nayana Devi's thumri has given lot of importance. The mud mask on the face of Dolly and Lalitha's shopping bag contains bonsai plants are of great significance. In this Act Baa rings the bell at crucial movements to distract the attention of the audience from a particular conversation. When Lalitha is explaining about the bonsai plants, how the roots and shoots are cut to make the growth stunted, Baa rings the bell.

In Act II, The Men, the stage gives the idea of Trivedi's business significance.

The office of the Jiten and Nitin Trivedi. An advertising agency. Pin-ups of campaign in a board. A huge photograph of a sensuous model with the Re Va Tee logo. Two larger desks with executive chairs. A comfortable couch next to Jiten's desk. A small desk belonging to Sridhar, which is over crowed with papers and assorted items. There is also a rather odd-looking bonsai on his table. One doorway leads to the reception area, another to the toilet. The level representing Baa's
room remains as in Act I. so does the well-stocked bar.

(264)

The character Baa is essential to reveal the past incidents. Even in the second Act when Sridhar is talking about bonsai Baa rings the bell, to intervene the conversation. Sridhar indicates if it is not bounded or shaped correctly the plant becomes grotesque and ugly. It conveys the meaning that if the characters are molded from their child hood then they will grow with perfection unlike the grotesque and ugly bonsai. Indirectly it is indicated that Baa is responsible for the behaviour of her children. The conversation of Lalitha and Baa in the upper stage mixes up with the conversation of Sridhar, Jiten and Nitin in the office.

The telephone rings. Sridhar answers it.

SRIDHAR (on the phone). Hello? Yes, he is here. Just a minute. (To Nitin.) It's your wife.

LALITHA. Can I help you?


BAA. Where is Praful?

LALITHA. Who?

BAA. Dolly, where is your brother?

LALITHA. I'm not Dolly! Dolly will be ...
BAA. You are not Dolly. You are not Lally. Who are you?

NITIN. But where do you think we are going?

LALITHA. Dolly is dressing up. They are going out.

BAA. Those girls go out, go out, go out a-a-all the time to.

LALITHA. I think their husbands wanted them to.

NITIN. (rudely). Hasn't anybody told you?

BAA. Oh! Jitu and Nitin are taking them out?

NITIN. No. Dolly knows.

BAA. My Nitin is afraid of going out in the dark.

NITIN. That's very strange.

Lalitha. Did you need anything?

NITIN. I can't. We are working.

BAA. Ten years old and he is still afraid of the dark. Afraid to sleep in the dark. Afraid of his father- who is as black as night!

NITIN. I think you should keep Baa company. She is lonely.

(Hangs up.)

Simultaneously, the spotlight in Baa's area goes off. (272)

In the plays of Dattanli the incidents are not sequential. They are simultaneous just how the things or events happen in our real life. Again when the business men are discussing on Re
Ve Tee ad, about taking the money from Praful and about selling their old house, their conversation is intervened with Dolly and Baa, and gives too many memories.

BAA. Wait! What are you doing?

JITEN. Baa isn't going to live longer than a year.

BAA. No, no! Don't hit them! They're only boys! They didn't steal! Nitin, tell him you didn't steal it!

NITIN. I don't want to sell the old house. Ever.

JITEN. One and a half crores. At today's market.

BAA. I gave them the money! Yes, I took it from your purse and gave it to them!

NITIN. That's where we grew up.

BAA. Why should I not? It is my money!

NITIN. Too many memories.

JITEN. Sentimental fool.

BAA. Mine! Every paisa is mine! Mine from my father!

NITIN. It—it belongs to Daksha. Maybe we should do it up and all live there.

BAA. This is my house! My house!

NITIN. We could sell these twin houses.

JITIN. No! I built them. We built them. They are ours!
BAA. Don't shout! Who are you to shout at me?

JITEN. I'll never live in the old house.

NITIN. Why not?

JITEN. Too many memories.

BAA. You hit me? I only speak the truth and you hit me? Go on. Hit me again. The children should see what a demon you are. Aah! Jitu! Nitin Are you watching? See your father! (jerks her face as of she's been slapped.) No! No! Not on the face! What will the neighbours say? Not on the face. I beg you! Hit me nut not on . . . aahh! (Covers her face weakly as her scream turns silent and the light on her fades out.)

(277-78)

With this conversation the readers or the audience will understand the past memories of Baa and how it is related to the present situation. Baa dwindles between past and the present. Her mind is not fixed to the present. It is wavering between the past and the present. She mixes up the situations. In Act III Free for All! The stage setting is the same as in Act I; mixing up of characters conversation reveals so many family secrets and their characters. The queries of one area are aptly answered by the characters in the other area. This type of drama technique is very
interesting. It will make the audience to watch and listen to the stage very attentively. In one situation the conversation of Baa and Nitin mixes up with Dolly and Jiten.

DOLLY. Go on. What are you waiting for? Strangle me

NITIN. It all happened because you denied Daksha was your blood!

DOLLY. You should have strangled me then, when Baa told you.

BAA. That was the day I got the letter. Praful was lying!

DOLLY. I know! He lied! But what a price to pay!

NITIN. So he lied. But you did far worse!

BAA. No!

JITEN. Baa provoked me. It was her fault!

BAA. I did not want this I did not know. . . .

DOLLY. You didn’t have to listen to her! She called me a Whore and you believed her?

BAA. I was angry with Praful. (310)

This is a prolonged conversation, where the incidents of fifteen years are recollected and revealed. The cause for Daksha’s physical deformity is revealed. This is a play about performance;
and uses the theatre to demonstrate how, in a world of hypocrisy, acting becomes the way of life. Paradoxically, it is only by the overt performance of the theatre that such acting can be exposed for what it is. For example, when Dolly reveals the fact that her child was seriously disabled at birth by Jiten’s violence she begins to dance as Daksha would dance—disjointedly, wildly, with ever-increasing frenzy, until at last she breaks down in a gut-wrenching grief. By exploiting layer upon layer of performance, of unreality, Dattani allowed his actress a route to emotion in its rawest form: the pain the anguish in the blood-knot of the family is his constant theme.

Mahesh Dattani frequently takes as his subject the complicated dynamics of the modern urban family. His characters struggle for some kind of freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender, and repressed desire. Their dramas are played out on multi-level sets where interior and exterior become one, and geographical locations are collapsed.

Tara centers on the emotional separation that grows between two conjoined twins following the discovery that their physical separation was manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favour the boy (Chandan) over the girl (Tara). Tara, a feisty girl who isn’t given the opportunities given to her brother
(although she may be smarter) eventually wastes away and dies. Chandan escapes to London, changes his name to Dan, and attempts to repress the guilt he feels over his sister's death by living without a personal history. Woven into the play are issues of class and community, and the clash between traditional and modern life styles and values. Just as in any other play the stage is segmented into:

A multi level set. The lowest level occupies a major portion of the stage. It represents the house of the Patels. It is seen only in memory and may be kept as stark as possible.

The next level represents the bed-sitter of the older Chandan (referred to as Dan for clarity) in a suburb of London. There is a small bed, and, in the foreground, a small writing table with a typewriter and a sheaf of papers. A part of a wall covered with faded wallpaper can also be seen. This is the only realistic level.

Behind, on a higher level, is a chair in which Dr Thakkar remains seated through out the play. Although he doesn't watch the action of the play, his connection is asserted by his sheer God-like presence.
On the stage level, running along the cyclorama and in an L-shape, downstage right, is the galli outside the Patels' house. Which can be suggested by cross-lighting.

The play starts without any music. A spot picks up Dan at his writing table. He is typing furiously. He stops and removes the sheet from the typewriter. He looks up and speaks to the audience.

The play begins with Dan's monologue. Dan is the older Chandan. He recollects his memories and wants to write Drama in two acts Twinkle Tara. A spot on the stage level picks up young Chandan and Tara. Both are limping but on different legs. Patel and Bharati are seen in another area. The same character comes to the stage of Tara and becomes young Chandan.

After the conversation the light spots on Dan who suddenly jerks as if woken from a nightmare. He wants to interview Dr Thakkar under the caption Marvel in the world of Medicine.

A television show type signature tune fades in whirl the spot fades out. Although Dan is interviewing Dr Thakkar, he remains where he is, in darkness. The
tune ends and a spot picks up Dr Thakkar, seated as if being interviewed in a studio. (330)

In the interview Dr Thakkar gives detailed information about Conjoined twins – developing from one fertilized ovum are invariably of the same sex, and of the surgery. Throughout the play Dr Thakkar will be there and the interview will be continued till the end of the play. Then the spot fades on Dr Thakkar.

Spot fades out on Dr Thakkar as we hear the explosive opening of Brahms’ First Concerto.

The street area is lit. Tara enters the street. She mimes meeting someone and smiling, starting a conversation. After a while, she slowly lifts the leg of her trousers to reveal her artificial limb. She laughs in an ugly way. Then she says goodbye and enters the living room as the lights cross-fade.

Chandan is lying on his back on the floor, listening to the music and conducting an imaginary orchestra in the heavens. (332)

Music has much influence on Dattani’s sense of perspective. Again lights cross fades to Patel on the phone
talking to Dr Kapoor. When Bharati wants to reveal the injustice done to her, Patel objects. Patel he himself wants to reveal it his children. Dan’s dialogue from his stage intervenes.

BHARATI. I will tell her.

*Patel stops.*

I will tell them everything.

*Patel goes to her and slaps her. The moment she recovers, Bharati looks at him with some triumph.*

PATEL. You wouldn't dare tell them. Not you.

Please, don't!

Not yet!

BHARATI. Then let me do what I want to do.

PATEL. *(defeated).* You cannot tell them. For their sake, don't! *(Looks at her suddenly with determination.)* If at all they must know, it will be from me. Not from you.

*Cross-fades to Dan who is busy typing. He stops and reads out his last line.*

DAN. 'If at all they must know, it will be from me. Not from you.'
Dan continues to type as the lights cross-fade to the living room. Tara and Chandan are watching a movie. Bharati is knitting. As the movie ends.

(345-346)

The act ends with the sobbing of Bharati, where as Dan unwinds the sheet and reads aloud, the story of ‘Twinkle Tara’ up to Bharati sobbs.

In the second Act the second movement of Brahms First Concerto starts and light focus on Dan and Thakkar. At the end of the play Dan realizes that he achieved nothing. In his vision he sees Tara and himself walk without limping and Tara hugs him once again as they were in the comfortable womb. Dan moves between past and present in the past. He is Chandan, escapes to London and changes his name to Dan. There he attempts to repress the guilt he feels over his sister’s death by living without a personal history. Both Vijay Tendulkar in Ghashiram and Mahesh Dattani in Tara have exciting visual impact on stage, then Tara experimented with the form of the ‘well made play’, breaking the unities of space and time to produce a gentle introspective ‘memory play’ on stage. According to Kusum Haider:
The most noted and most grandly presented of these plays is *Final Solutions* which was launched to acclaim by Bombay's Theatre Group. It addresses issues drawn from the 1992 riots in Bombay and is certainly a brave effort to look at matters. We usually prefer to our biased, narrow, sometimes murderous selves. Yet in many ways this is the least satisfactory of this collection of plays. Here alone does Dattani move away from the dramatic conventions he observes elsewhere into a direct commentary on real events. It is a different kind of theatre, less subtle, more obviously 'dramatic'. It may be a challenging and worthy response to challenging and worthy response to unconscionable events, but it could prove more ephemeral than others as a creation for the theatre.5

The play *Final Solutions* is like Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* in drama technique. Mob/chorus are there in both the plays. The stage setting plays a vital role in the plays of Dattani.

*The play is dominated by a horseshoe- or crescent-shaped ramp, with the ends sloping to stage level. Most of the action of the Mob/Chorus takes place on the*
ramp. Ideally the Mob/Chorus should remain on stage in a crouched or stylized position throughout the play.

The Mob/Chorus comprises five men and ten masks on sticks. The masks are strewn all over the ramp. The players ‘wear’ a mask by holding the stick in front of him. At more dynamic moments, he can use it as a weapon in a stylized fashion. There are five Hindu masks and five Muslims masks. The Mob/Chorus becomes the Chorus when they ‘wear’ either the Hindu or the Muslim masks. But when referred to individually, they remain Chorus 1, Chorus 2, etc. The players of the Mob/chorus do not belong to any religion and ideally should wear black.

Within the confines of the ramp is a structure suggesting the house of the Gandhi with just wooden blocks for furniture. However, upstage, perhaps on an elevation, is a detailed kitchen and a pooja room.

On another level is a room with a roll top desk and an oil lamp converted to an electric one, suggesting that the period is the late 1940s; this belongs to the young Daksha, who is in fact the grandmother, also sometimes
seen as a girl of fifteen. There are several instances when Hardika, the grandmother, and Daksha, the young bride, are on this level at the same time, although they are the same person. Hardika should be positioned and lit in such a way that the entire action of the play is seen through her eyes.

When the play opens, Daksha is reading out what she has just written in her diary. Hardika is seated, motionless, on the same level. (165)

The play begins with the young Daksha or Hardika as a young girl. Past and present are fused through the figures of Daksha and Hardika. The lay begins with Daksha reading from her diary. She writes about independence and also about the communal feelings. She gives complete description about Hussainabad incident in which her father was killed by Muslims.

Daksha slowly closes her diary. Silence. Daksha leaves her diary close to Hardika's feet as a slow low drumbeat is heard. She rises and stands behind Hardika, her back to the audience. Hardika picks up the diary and speaks directly to the audience. (167)
Daksha's diary establishes the history of division— the sense of 'us and them' the link between personal experience and political belief/social hatred. A communal riot is invoked in the very first scene of the play, a riot in which Daksha's father was killed, a riot which firmly creates for Daksha. According to Angellie Multani:

The 'them'—history is present throughout the action of the play sometimes repeating itself directly, through statements made by Daksha/Hardika, sometimes indirectly, through situations of violence which have been enacted before, and are too frighte-ningly familiar. History is also evoked and used by almost every character on stage. 6

When ever the cross fades to the Mob/Chorus they slowly wear the Hindu or Muslim masks according to the situation. When they are behind the masks they become more frenetic. The lines could be explored for harmony and discord, but only for dramatic effect and not for musicality.

CHORUS1. The procession has passed through these lanes. Every year,

For forty years!

CHORUS 2, 3. How dare they?
CHORUS 1, 2, 3. For forty years our chariot has moved through their mohallas.

CHORUS 4, 5. Why did they?

Why did they today?

CHORUS 1. How dare they?

CHORUS 2, 3. They broke our rath.

They broke our chariot and felled our Gods!

CHORUS 1, 2, 3. This is our land!

How dare they?

CHORUS 1. It is in their blood!

CHORUS 2, 3. It is in their blood to destroy!

CHORUS 4. Why should they?

CHORUS 5. It could have been an accident.

CHORUS 2. The stone that hit our God was no accident!

CHORUS 3. The knife that slit the poojari’s stomach was no accident!

CHORUS 4, 5. Why should they? It could have been an accident.

Chorus 4 and 5 continue to question. ‘Why should they?’ ‘Why should they?’ ‘It could have been an accident’, while Chorus 1 mutters, ‘No accident, no
accident ....’ and Chorus 2 and 3 continue, ‘The stone that hit our God was no accident, the knife that slit the poojari’s stomach was no accident.’ Soon they overlap and say it together. Chorus 1, 3 and 3 build their parts to a crescendo. They all finish together on the word ‘accident’. (168)

The mob is unruly. They are crying out for blood. At one moment they hold both the Hindu and Muslim masks far away from their bodies as if they have plucked them away. They sway as if in a trance while their humming suggests mob hysteria. So in every incident the chorus explains the situation with their action. They even carry one of the choruses like a dead body being taken for burial. Their heads are covered with prayer caps. They feel very insecure, as they are less in number.

The Hindu chorus feels that they cannot be complacent about their glories past seeing them safely through. Their bellowing pales in comparison to the whispers of a pseudo-secularist who is in league with the people who brought shame to our land.

Throughout the play the emphasis is on Noor Jehan’s music. The lilt of the music is stopped by the mob smashing the records
by throwing the stones, when Daksha was young and also when she is old. It symbolizes that the melody of life is disturbed by the people with communal feelings and with savage ideas. The same tempo repeats. Nothing has been changed in the mentality of the people. This is an eternal problem without any solution.

Joy is the essence of life and theatre should exude delight. *Where There's a will* is such a play. It is not only thought-provoking and introspective but also provides an evening of pure entertainment.

This play has philosophical twists. In this play Hasmukh Mehta has control over his family through his money and forgoes an opportunity to improve her relationships. The play *Where There's A Will* is Dattani's first play. Drama technique in this play is different from that of others. In the first act the stage is divided into three spaces.

*The lavish house of Hasmukh Mehta.*

*There are three spaces: the fancy dining-cum-living room, the bed room belonging to Hasmukh and Sonal Mehta, and the hideously trendy bedroom of their son, Ajit, and his wife. Preeti.*
Ajit is in the living room, talking on the phone. Preeti is drifting in and out of the kitchen, loading the table with food for dinner. She is pregnant. Hasmukh enters through the main door with his walking stick. (455)

Hasmukh narrates the events to the audience in a prolonged speech. In his soliloquies he expresses his anguish about his son Ajit. Ajit is a spendthrift. Mehta wants to save all his money. But unfortunately he dies. After his death Hasmukh rises from his ‘body’ on the bed. He moves behind the bed and speaks in normal but low voice.

HASMUKH. I am dead. I can see my own body lying still on the bed; looking peaceful, but dead. I never imagined it would happen so soon. Well, it has. (To the audience) Didn’t I tell you that if I carried in smoking like that I’d be dead in no time? I didn’t believe it myself. I thought I was joking!

Sonali enters from the kitchen and slowly makes her way up to her bedroom.

There’s my wife. Coming up to our bed-room. I can see through the walls. How will she react when she
finds out? She will tear her hair and beat her head against the wall! Let's see.

Sonali enters their bedroom. She looks at 'him' lying down.

Sighs.

SONAL. Are you asleep?

HASMUKH. No, I'm dead.

SONAL. Of course, he's asleep. He just has to lie down on the bed and he is dead to the world!

HASMUKH. She has a way of saying things.

SONAL. (notices the cigarette and stubs it out). Oh, so you've been smoking; have you? Do you want a second heart attack?

HASMUKH. I just had it, thank you.

SONSL. Who am I talking to? The four walls?

HASMUKH. How right you are.

Sonal lies down on the bed beside 'him'

Don't go to sleep, you silly woman. For I have to wait for Diwali before you find out I'm gone? (476)

When they found out that Hasmukh is dead. He or his ghost grins from ear to ear for the first time. Later throughout the play
the ghost of Hasmukh will be moving with other characters and he will be intervening with other conversations.

Mahesh Dattani is always adventurous in his ways of using the theatrical space at his disposal: multiple levels, breaking the bounds of the proscenium, wondrously inventive use of lighting to give height, breath and depth. In *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, he reaches new heights.

Although the setting is basically interior with different spaces—Kamlesh's flat, mainly the living room and the bedroom—there is also the mental space indicated by the stage directions. Then there is not only the skyline of Mumbai beyond, but there is the real world out there, indicated by the niggling presence of the wedding going in at ground level.

The outside world is always pressing in—the heart, the sounds, the people pestering Bunny, the kids who find the photo. Very few dramatists are able to give this sense of a whole society touching the participants in the on-stage drama—it recalls Ibsen at his social best.

It is a play about pattern, how society creates patterns of behavior and how easy it for individuals to fall victims to the
expectations society creates. The characters in this play are stereotypical. They are carefully balanced with a depth of experience that exceeds traditional expectations. They are brought together in such a way as to bring out the conflicts, repressions and past secrets which are assailing Kamlesh and Ed/Prakash, and the new 'romance' between Ed and Kamlesh's sister Kiran are beautifully counterpoised until the revelation at the climax of the first act that Ed and Prakash are the same person- which always draws a gasp of astonishment from audiences.

This is a refinement and development techniques Dattani has deployed in his earlier play. John McRae in his A Note on the Play says, 'his (Dattani's) special theatrical quality is to build tension in a social context, leading to a classic dramatic confrontation which involves not only the characters themselves, but which also confronts the audiences with its own expectations and attitudes.'

Every act builds a climax of revelations and self-discoveries. The intrusive wedding music becomes the accompaniment to a dance of death indoors- and the audience must go through the classic cathartic emotions if terror and pity as the characters masks fall, their emotions unravel, and their lives disintegrate. The drama technique of Dattani is revealed clearly by the deep study of the stage characters.
The stage is divided into three acting areas. The first is a small flat, beautifully done up in ‘ethnic chic’ fashion. A huge poster of Meena Kumari in Pakeezah offers relief to a stark white wall. The windows overlook the Mumbai skyline and act literally as a window to the city with its glittering lights. The flat is too high up for the noise but the partial view of the ‘Queen’s Necklace’ suggests that the flat is located in the up market area of Marine Drive, though not quite Pali Hill. The entire flat is almost too perfect to be real. Yet it speaks a lot of its occupant. Kamlesh, and his attempt at creating a world where he can belong.

The second area, a completely non-realistic set comprising three levels, is black expansive, Characters in this area are immediately suspended in a ‘shoonya’ where they are forced to confront their inner thoughts.

Below this is Kamlesh’s bedroom. The bedroom is realistic, but hidden behind a gauze wall, giving it some mystery and secrecy.

The backdrop of these three acting areas is the Mumbai skyline, engulfing the created world of
Kamlesh, the secret private space of the bedroom and the deeper space that belongs to the inner thoughts of the characters. (49-50)

When the lights fade out on the two characters, Kamlesh and the Guard it fades in on the highest level of the darkened area. The music stops with the entrance of Ed. Ed’s love care and concerned are revealed in this act. The beginning of the act two is very important. This is the crucial point of the play. The audience will understand the relationship of Kamlesh and Ed in their first meeting. Dattani’s dramatic technique at this juncture is very skillfully woven into the play.

The characters are in more or less the same positions as at the end of Act I, but now they are in silhouette.

The second level is lit. Ed is sitting on a park bench looking around. He spots someone walking by. His eyes follow him. The person walking by, whom we don’t see, turns around and walks past Ed again. Ed smiles at him, again following him with his eyes as he walks by. Now the person walks by again and this
Ed speaks to the person who is sitting beside him. In this prolonged conversation he reveals his mental condition to Kamlesh, how he is craving for a male companion. Dattani depicts the agitated mind of a homosexual and how he searches for a stereotype, when he finds Kamlesh in the park he realizes that he is the right choice. If he had not found any companion he thought of ending his life by jumping over the balcony out of frustration. Ed speaks by looking at the person closely. The audience cannot see the person who is sitting beside Ed. He converses with him in such away as if the person is responding. When he was talking to him Kamlesh enters and stands behind Ed. Ed continues to address Kamlesh as if he were sitting next to him on the bench. Kamlesh asks him to hold his hand. He wants every one to see how beautiful they are together. Kamlesh asks Ed to close his eyes and imagine that he is standing behind them and watch how they are together. “Ed gets up and stands behind the bench on the other side of where Kamlesh is.” They stand and watch themselves supposedly kissing each other with admiration.

Then the light fades into the living room as Kamlesh steps off the platform and joins the people there. Kiran is seen in the
bedroom. In another situation Ed enters when Kamlesh and Kiran move to another level of the empty area. Ed continues to address them as before.

ED. Mind if I dance with your sister? .... Would you care to have this dance with me?

Soft music: 'Begin The Beguine' or similar. Ed mimes dancing with Kiran

KIRAN (to Kamlesh). I quite like your friend.

ED. No problem, just follow my feet. Relax...

KIRAN. He told me how he met you at Sushma's party.

ED. There you go. Once you relax, it's a lot easier.

KARAN. And he told me you thought he was gay!

Whatever gave you that idea?

Kamlesh moves to the third level.

ED. I love ballroom dancing. It is very difficult to find the appropriate partner.

KIRAN (laughs). I mean, he doesn't look gay.

KAMLESH (on the third level, as if to Ed). Prakash, can I tell my sister about you? (90)

Here the dialogues of Kiran with Kamlesh intervene with the dialogues of Ed with imaginary Kamlesh. Then Kamlesh moves to
the third level and converse as if with Prakash or Ed. His imaginary conversation intervenes with real conversation of Ed and Kiran from another level.

KAMLESH. People will know anyway, sooner or later. If you are seen with me.

KIRAN. People talk. It is difficult for me. You are a man, I know you have it hard too, but it is easy for you to be . . . invisible.

KAMLESH. How long shall we continue to hide? We can’t hide forever!

ED (stops dancing). Let them talk. If a man and a woman want to dance together, what’s their problem? We will stop after this number. Let them see. (Begins dancing again.)

KAMLESH. Let them talk if two men want to love one another, what’s the harm?

KIRAN. Being divorced doesn’t help. Every one seems to know all the details. Or think they do. At that party I felt their stares, as if they were saying, ‘That’s Kiran. The one whose husband dumped her.’ Kamlesh take my advice. Don’t let people know about you. You will
spend your whole life defending yourself. If I had the choice, I would stay invisible too.

KAMLESH. Are you embarrassed to be seen with me?

Ed. Relax. Don’t be so afraid of what people think of you. But if you are really embarrassed, we could stop.

(Continues to dance.) (90-91)

When Kiran steps on to Ed’s level and dances Ed moves to Kamlesh’s level and Kamlesh moves to the level where Kiran was earlier.

KIMLESH. Kiran, I want you to be happy. No matter what mummy and daddy may have felt about your divorce, they love you too.

KIRAN. Oh I feel a little dizzy. (Mimes dancing with her head resting on Ed’s shoulder.)

KAMLESH. Of course, I am happy. I may even have some good news to share with you.

KIRAN. Please Ed, let’s stop. I-I don’t feel too well.

(Stops dancing, and sits down on the level Kamlesh is standing on.)

ED. Let’s not get too emotional. Think for yourself. There is normal future.
KIRAN. (mimes *accepting a glass of water*). Oh, thank you! Don't worry about me. God! Everyone's looking.

KAMLESH. Well there is someone special is someone special I am seeing.

KIRAN. Where's Kamlesh? Ed, please find Kamlesh.

KAMLESH. He is rather shy. He still has a long way to go in coming to terms, but I am helping him.

ED. Kamlesh, I can never forget what you did for me. You were there for me when I needed someone.

KIRAN. Kamlesh, will you take me home? I am not happy with the situation.

KAMLESH. And I am going to make it big in Bombay.

Life can be so simple and wonderful. (92)

Here the three characters speak from different level. Kiran speaks to Ed, Ed speaks to Kamlesh and Kamlesh speaks to Kiran. They speak from the three levels. This technique is different from that of the conventional plays which are very interesting. Again Kamlesh moves to Ed's level and asks him not to wrench his soul from his body. Lights in the living room come on when Ed enters the living room when Deepali, Bunny and Ranjit are there and asks for Kiran. From the other levels Kiran and Kamlesh shouts for Ed.
KIRAN. Ed! You go by yourself! Really, I am not making a fuss! No, I can’t! I can’t!

KAMLESH. Prakash! Please!

KIRAN. (overlapping Kamlesh’s plea). Ed, no please......

*Ed looks warily at Deepali, Ranjit and Bunny.*

*Blackout while a wedding band can be heard from the window with hooting and whistling from the crowd.* (94)

Dattani’s dramatic technique is unique of its kind. It is beautifully crafted. One actor, moving from one role to another and the incidents shifting from present to past and past to present, marks it as unique. The play travels back and forth between several generations and back and forth.

All these plays of Dattani show a rich variety of theatre form. Our ancient traditional forms offer the urban playwright a lot of technical freedom with the help of music, mime and exotic imagery. All the modernization and westernization of the urban life is depicted on the stage. Dattani’s stagecraft in the contemporary Indian Drama has highlighted his drama technique. The drama depends on the participation of – author, actors, and audience to accept the operation of theatre and the conventions associated with it. The page is only a raw material for the stage from which
the performance is created. Dattani, the writer, actor and director could weave his plays colourfully with all his talent as a craftsman and tries to communicate his ideas through this dynamic medium. With his technical craftsmanship Dattani has become the successful and celebrated dramatist in the contemporary Indian drama in English.
NOTES


5. Quoted, Kusum Hyder, p. 24-25.