PREFACE

Mahesh Dattani is a rare Indian dramatist with versatile abilities. He is an actor, director, trained dancer, instructor and one of the most sought after Indian dramatists, in the international arena. He is the only Indian dramatist, writing in English, to be felicitated with the prestigious ‘Sahitya Akademi Award’. In a career spanning twenty five years he has experimented extensively with the art and craft of writing and presenting plays. He has directed plays ranging from classical Greek to contemporary works. He has written radio plays for the BBC and film scripts like *Ek Alag Mausam*, *Dance Like a Man*, *Mango Soufflé*, and *Morning Raga*. His films and plays have received international appreciation and acclaim.

This dissertation attempts to explore and analyse thematic perspectives depicted in Mahesh Dattani’s plays. His plays deal with contemporary issues and experiences that haunt, primarily, the urban middle class. Themes like communal disharmony, gender and class discrimination, familial affiliations and discords, child abuse, empathy towards the marginalised; for example, women, gay, lesbian, transgender, victims of HIV and incest, to name only a few, have been depicted convincingly to appreciating audience and readers in India and abroad. These themes and all allied issues have been portrayed
objectively, with artistic credibility, for the first time on the Indian stage, through his plays. Dattani also weaves very convincing tales around themes analysing the questions of individual freedom, social oppression, the element of guilt, prejudice, passion and its effect on individual action and collective psyche. He shows how characters under pressure use camouflage as mode of self defence.

Nearly all his plays depict the convergence and influence of the past over the present and the inevitable future. Violence, murder, hatred, mystery and suspense all find an apt treatment in his plays. As a dramatist, Dattani does not shy away from depicting the harsh realities of contemporary socio-political conflicts and even its forged compromises. He also makes an abundant use of Indian rituals and traditions to highlight the contemporary issues and the resultant transformation effecting the social fabric of the country. He elevates these themes to a higher level, touching the human chords that emanate love, happiness, and fulfilment through a sense of identity and achievement. Dattani’s plays have a universal appeal. He moulds his subjects in such a way that they become both topical as well as appealing. His plays very effectively transcend the barriers of language and culture through a seamless assimilation of human emotions.

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