Chapter - I

Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The present research work entitled “Sexuality, Communal Differences and Gender Issues in Mahesh Dattani’s Plays” aims at exploring the plays of Mahesh Dattani from the sexual, communal and gender perspectives. The research has been conducted keeping in mind the following aims and objectives:

1. To analyse and interpret the plays of Mahesh Dattani to highlight the theme of sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular.
2. To explore and interpret the plays of Mahesh Dattani to underline the theme of communal differences.
3. To study and appraise the plays of Mahesh Dattani to emphasise the gender issues.
4. To study the plays of Dattani keeping in mind the man-woman relationship.
5. To lay stress on the struggle taken up by women, homosexuals and hijras to ascertain their identity and equal rights.
6. To study the changing life of Indian society.
7. To critique the plays of Mahesh Dattani taking into account the sex, gender and religious bias of the patriarchal Indian society.

With these objectives in mind, the present thesis has been divided into five chapters. The First chapter of this thesis is about the theoretical aspects of sexuality, communal differences and gender. It also takes a brief review of Indian English Drama, highlighting Mahesh Dattani’s contribution to the Indian English Drama.
1.2 Sexuality and Homosexuality

Sexuality is the most powerful factor in individual and social existence (Krafft-Ebing 1). Besides race, religion, caste, creed, and gender, human beings are classified on the basis of their sexuality. Though sexuality is one of the aspects of human personality, it plays a vital role in the life of an individual and in his/her relation to society at large. The very term ‘sexuality’ is a modern construct which originated in the nineteenth century. In the contemporary era, it has been used to refer to the erotic, that is, to a state of physical attraction to either sex. In the past, however, there was no language of ‘sexuality’ per se.

Goettsche defines sexuality as “the individual capacity to respond to physical experiences which are capable of producing body-centred genital excitation, that only subsequently becomes associated with cognitive constructs (either anticipatory for new experiences or reflective of past experiences), independent of ongoing physical experiences” (249).

According to A Glossary of Feminist Theory, sexuality is a biological inner drive or impulse embedded in the individual, based on Freud's notion of the libido. The term is sometimes used to refer to sexual orientation or identity. However, sexuality also covers aspects of personal and social life which have erotic significance, not only individual erotic desires, practices and identities but also the discourse and social arrangements which construct erotic possibilities at any one time (Jackson and Scott 2).

The Dictionary of Feminist Theory defines sexuality as “the social process, which creates, organises, expresses and directs desire” (Humm 262). In its earliest scientific usage, sexuality defined the meanings of human eroticism, and when
marked by a prefix—such as ‘bi’, ‘hetero’, or ‘homo’—the word came to describe types of person who embodied particular desires (Bristow 2).

Arnold Davidson has shown in great detail how the nineteenth century word ‘sexuality’ eventually moved away from its association with the purely biological aspects of ‘sex’ and came instead to refer to someone’s sexual feelings or sexual preferences, reflecting the fact that by the 1980s: “Sexual gender is no longer exclusively linked to the anatomical structure of the internal and external genital organs. It is now a matter of impulses, tastes, aptitudes, satisfactions, and psychic traits.” (Davidson 21-22)

In the present research work the term ‘sexuality’ is used to refer to sexual orientation of people. Based on their sexual orientation, people can be classified as heterosexuals, homosexuals and bisexuals. As the second chapter of this thesis deals with the theme of homosexuality in the plays of Mahesh Dattani, it is imperative to define homosexuality.

The term 'homosexual' was first used by K. M. Benkert, a Hungarian physician, in around 1870 to describe the condition of sex and love between members of the same sex. It was included into the English language by Havelock Ellis in the 1897 calling it ‘barbarously hybrid word’ (Quoted in Boswell 43). Prior to that, the English language only had words 'Buggery', 'pederasty' and 'sodomy' to describe certain kinds of sex acts between members of the same sex. There is no consensus among scholars on the definition of the term 'homosexual'. Until the 1970s, research on homosexuality was dominated by medical doctors and clinical psychologists whose primary concern was to examine the aetiology and the perceived psychopathology of homosexuality. But, as Masters and Johnson have said, “until
more is known about the origins of heterosexuality it is difficult to believe that meaningful insights will be reached regarding the origins of homosexuality”(411).

The term 'homosexual' was, therefore, very much clinical in nature. Due to the growth of multi-disciplinary research on homosexuality in the 1970s, two opposing perspectives—the ‘essentialist’ perspective and the ‘social constructionist' perspective emerged. According to the 'essentialist' perspective homosexuality is a biological disposition which is constant in human behaviour. Homosexuality is therefore "the general phenomenon of same-sex eroticism.... it comprises all sexual phenomena between persons of the same gender, whether the result of conscious preference, subliminal desire or circumstantial exigency"(Boswell 44). To some, it is “the condition in which the process of maturation does not result in an adult who is sexually oriented toward the opposite sex but toward the same sex as that of the person concerned” (Jennings 529). The 'essentialist' perspective emphasises the underlying biological causation of homosexuality across cultural boundaries. So, it argues that certain people who are biologically pre-disposed to be erotically and emotionally attracted to members of the same sex can be objectively categorised as 'homosexuals' on the basis of their sexual essence.

Conversely, the 'social constructionist' perspective asserts that homosexuality can only be explained satisfactorily within a socio-historical context. According to this perspective 'homosexual', therefore, is a label given to this socially constructed category on the ground of the sexual behaviour of its members. In this connection, McIntosh argues that 'homosexual' is a “social role” rather than a condition (184). Donovan also supports this view and remarks: "Membership within the [homosexual] category becomes contingent upon the context in which these [homosexual] acts
occur. Societies which lack homosexual roles are thereby said to also lack homosexuals, although not necessarily persons engaging in homosexuality." (39)

To Berger and Luckmann, sexuality is channelled in specific directions “socially rather than biologically” (181). Gagnon and Simon, in their book *Sexual Conduct*, reject an essentialist view, arguing that "sexuality is not ... [a] universal phenomenon which is the same in all historical times and cultural spaces"(3).

Foucault in his seminal book *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* systematically applies a social constructionist paradigm to human sexuality, calling it a cultural construct. Pointing out how homosexuality varies greatly from one society to another Blackwood says: “Patterns of homosexual behaviour reflect the value systems and social structure of the different societies in which they are found. The ideology regarding male and female roles, kinship and marriage regulations, and the sexual division of labour are all important in the construction of homosexual behaviour (331).

Homosexuality is ubiquitous throughout the world. It is a social reality in all cultures whether tolerated or not. Even it is found among the animals. Therefore it would be wrong to regard it as ‘unnatural’. Ford and Beach have argued about the widespread homosexual behaviour among various nonhuman species and human societies. In almost all cultures studied “a number of individuals predominantly men choose to exhibit some measure of homosexual behaviour” (Ford and Beach 143). In this regard Alfred C. Kinsey, a biologist, tells us that other animals routinely have homosexual relationships:

The impression that infra-human mammals more or less confine themselves to heterosexual activities is a distortion of the fact which appears to have originated in a man-made philosophy, rather than in
specific observations of mammalian behaviour. Biologists and psychologists who have accepted the doctrine that the only natural function of sex is reproduction have simply ignored the existence of sexual activity which is not reproductive. . . . It may be true that heterosexual contacts outnumber homosexual contacts in most species of mammals, but it would be hard to demonstrate that this depends upon the “normality” of heterosexual responses, and the “abnormality” of homosexual responses. (448-50)

Borrowing the term ‘Urnings’ from Plato’s *Symposium* to refer to homosexuals, Ulrichs declares: “Urnings have existed in all areas, in antiquity, among uncivilized nomads, indeed, actually among animals” (Quoted in Bristow 21).

There were many misunderstandings about homosexuality and homosexuals. The Elizabethans considered homosexuality as a sin too horrible to be mentioned. The Renaissance English society that condemned all forms of non-reproductive sex associated homosexuality with heresy and treason. Homosexuality was considered “that sin which should be neither named nor committed” (Quoted in Boswell 349), the ‘detestable and abominable sin, among Christians not to be named’ (Quoted in Bray 61). The Victorian England criminalized homosexuality and regarded Homosexuals as ‘perverts’ and ‘deviants’.

By the end of the 19th century, medicine and psychiatry, competing with religion and the law for jurisdiction over sexuality, expanded the realms of homosexuality from sin and crime to that of pathology. However, homosexuality was not universally viewed as pathology by all the sexologists.
Krafft-Ebing, the founder of modern sexual pathology, said, “masochism, as congenital sexual perversion, constitutes a functional sign of degeneration in (almost exclusively) hereditary taint” (147). But Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis both adopted more accepting stances. Early in the twentieth century, Ellis argued that homosexuality was inborn and therefore not immoral. Though Sigmund Freud's basic theory of human sexuality was different from that of Ellis, he agreed with Ellis that a homosexual orientation should not be viewed as a form of pathology. Freud’s letter to an American mother who was concerned about her son’s homosexuality requesting treatment for her son shows his attitude towards homosexuality:

Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness; Consider it to be a variation of the sexual function produced by a certain arrest of sexual development. Many highly respectable individuals of ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, several of the greatest men among them (Plato, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.) It is a great injustice to persecute homosexuality as a crime and cruelty too. If you do not believe me, read the books of Havelock Ellis. (Freud 786)

Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895) has justified the ‘man-manly love’ as healthy and normal. To Bloch homosexuality was a sign of “complete mental and physical health” (Quoted in J. Bristow 37). The American Psychological Association in its January 1975 meeting adopted the following resolution: “Homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities; further the American Psychological Association urges all mental health professionals to take the lead in removing the stigma of mental illness
that has long been associated with homosexual orientation.” (Conger 633) Even Plato in *The Symposium* said, “Young men in homosexual relationships are the best of their generation, because they are the most manly” (62).

According to Gonsiorek, "Homosexuality in and of itself is unrelated to psychological disturbance or maladjustment. Homosexuals as a group are not more psychologically disturbed on account of their homosexuality." (74)

With the gradual decline of Religion, attitudes to sexuality became softer. As a result, sexuality began to fall under the scientific microscope. This radical change has been summed up with clarity and subtlety by the French historian, Michel Foucault:

Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (Michel Foucault 43)

Since the Stonewall Riots that ignited the gay movement, homosexuals were increasingly treated not as objects of wrath and repugnance in need of treatment and cure, but people who had adopted an alternative and variant lifestyle. The 1980s and the 1990s saw the flourishing of more sociological and psychological studies that contributed to the understanding of the organisation of gay lifestyles which are a variant and not a deviation from the norm.

**Homosexuality in India:**

The same sex desire was found in almost all cultures across the world. The Indian culture was not an exception to it. The erotic temple sculptures at Khajuraho and Konark, ancient religious scriptures and medieval texts constitute indisputable
evidence that the whole range of sexual behaviour was prevalent in ancient and pre-colonial India.

Besides temple imagery, there are references to same sex love and desire in the sacred and religious scriptures like *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, and in many *Puranas*. Even Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, a treatise on Indian stagecraft, mentions a wide variety of non-vaginal sexual practices which were sought to be punished with the lowest grade of fine. Commenting on homosexuality in ancient India, Serena Nanda remarks, “Homosexuality was condemned in the ancient law books. The Laws of Manu, the first formulation of the Hindu moral code, held that men who engaged in anal sex lost their caste. Other medieval writers held that men who engaged in oral sex with other men were reborn impotent. But homosexuals were apparently tolerated in reality” (22).

Though homosexuality was not accepted as a part of human sexuality in ancient India, both Kautilya and Manu suggested less severe punishment for homosexual acts between men or women than for extra-marital and forceful heterosexual acts between men and women. In this respect Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai say: “Our study suggests that at most times and places in pre-nineteenth-century India, love between women and between men, even when disapproved of, was not actively persecuted. As far as we know, no one has ever been executed for homosexuality in India” (Ruth Vaniya and Kidwai xviii). The classic Indian text *Kama Sutra* deals with all aspects of sexual life including male and female homosexuality. Thus, homoerotic love was prevalent in ancient India.

However, with the Muslim conquest and with the spread of Islamic rule in India, many aspects of Indian life including sexuality changed. The Quran prohibits
anal intercourse between men, though the punishments prescribed are less severe than that of Old Testament. Despite prohibitions, men indulged in same-sex sex. Sufi poetry supports this view. In Sufi mystical poetry, both in Persian and later in Urdu, the relationship between the divine and humans was expressed in homoerotic metaphors. At least among the upper classes of Muslims, among "men of refinement," pederasty became an accepted outlet for a man's erotic promptings, as long as he continued to fulfil his duties as a married man. Emperor Babur's autobiography is quite clear on his indifferent love for his wife and his preference for a lad.

With the advent of the British Raj came the Puritanical values, which regarded display of sexuality as evil or satanic. To the Puritans, sex existed for the sole reason of procreation, and thus homosexuality was considered to be contrary to God’s will. The laws against homosexual activity, such as the act of 1861, are all examples of a repressive Victorian moral code.

The literature of ancient and medieval India is consistently ‘silent on the subject of homosexuality’ and this silence in turn ‘perhaps reflects the generally conservative mores of the people’ (Claude Summers 664). The Right wing Hinduism tries its best to perpetuate “the myth that same-sex love is a disease imported into India from the West” (Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai xxiv). In fact, it is not the homosexuality that is imported from the West but the homophobic attitudes towards homosexuality. The introduction of the British anti-sodomy law into India in 1861 as Section 377 of Indian Penal Code which criminalizes the unnatural sex is a fine proof of it. The homoerotic love had been the part of ancient and Medieval India and even it has been the part of modern India.
In the late 20th Century, slowly but steadily, the concept of homosexuality became somewhat acceptable all over the world. The American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorder in 1973. The World Health Organization also removed it from its list of mental illnesses in 1981. Even the Church has now accepted the fact that for some people homosexuality is their natural preference and that is how God has created them. Further, homosexuality has been decriminalised in a select few countries. The first country to safeguard gay rights was South Africa in 1994. In 1996, the United States Supreme Court observed that no law could be passed by any state, which would be discriminatory towards gay people. Countries like Canada, France, Netherlands, Spain, New Zealand and the Scandinavian countries followed the example of South Africa and enacted similar laws. In 1967 England too had already passed the Sexual Offences Act, which states that homosexual acts in private shall not be an offence provided the parties consent thereto and have attained the of 21 years. Despite all the conscious efforts worldwide to protect alternate sexuality, India has neglected to address this issue and still regards homosexuality unnatural and homosexuals as criminals. Therefore, homosexuals in Indian society continue to be victimised by the State and the society. It is against this backdrop the second chapter of the present research work intends to explore the theme of homosexuality in the plays of Dattani.

1.3 Communal Differences and India

Conflicts between ethnic groups are a serious and growing challenge to domestic and international security (Gurr vii). It is often said that communalism is a modern phenomenon. It was “a petty bourgeois question par excellence” (Bipan Chandra 41). But currently it has gone much beyond the middle classes. Now-a-days,
it has spread to all the corners of the world. It has been an integral part of Indian politics ever since the introduction of the separate electorates for Muslims by the British rulers. The history of the Indian national movement, unfortunately, is also a history of the communalisation of the Indian society (Panikar 79-80). In India, the monster of communalism has succeeded in spreading its tentacles in every nook and cranny of the country. It is ironic that in the land of Gautam Buddha, Kabir, Guru Nanak and Mahatma Gandhi the virus of communalism has spread rapidly.

The term ‘communalism’ was first used in the Indian context in the debate on Morley-Minto and Montague-Chelmsford reforms in which references were made to “communal feeling”, “communal representation” and “communal principle” of representation of the different religious communities (Pandey 8). P. Agrawal defines communalism in the following words:

Communalism, in a nutshell, is a kind of politics which aspires to construct a specific type of civil society which goes against the very grain of our popular culture. Therefore it is naturally bound to... gloss over conflicts of power... to provide moral and institutional avenues for expression both of conservative values and certain brutal aspects of human character, so that violence and hatred towards social targets such as "minorities" may be justified in the name of manliness, patriotism, honour, duty. (23)

The communal riots, the visible manifestation of communal antagonism, are the most distressing challenge before India. Bipan Chandra, while commenting on communalism, says: “…communal riots are not the main form or content of communalism. They were, in the main, its reflection, its active episodic expression, its
bitter and virulent manifestation and consequence, and one of the instruments and agencies for its spread.” (6)

Jitendra Narayan defines communal riot as “When an unlawful assembly of a religious community, or any member thereof, uses force or violence against another religious community in prosecution of the common object, it is called communal riot” (8). According to Ashtosh Varshney, whenever conflicting groups from two different religions, which are self-conscious communities, clash, it results in a communal riot. An event is identified as a communal riot if (a) there is violence and (b) two or more communally identified groups confront each other or members of the other group at some point during the violence. (309)

The communal differences between Hindu and Muslim people have been a recurring feature of modern Indian society. Besides the consequences of national socio-economic 'development' strategies, communal differences were facilitated by the local proportions of Hindus to Muslims, the nature of economic competition in the locality, the history of 'riots' in the area, the election politics of local bodies, the activities of local criminals, the vernacular media, and the socio-economic impact of urbanization (Kumar 32). It has been observed that the Hindu-Muslim violence which occurred during election periods was often “politically and externally motivated rather than a result of any cultural differences between the two communities in the slum” (D'Souza and Choudhury 62).

**A Brief History of Communal Differences in India:**

The problem of communal violence that India is facing currently did not crop up all of a sudden. It is rooted in the historic past of our country. Jitendra Narayan divides the history of the growth of communalism into three phases: the Pre-British Phase, the British Phase and the Post-Independence Phase.
Pre-British Phase:

The Hindu-Muslims problem is as old as Islam. It began with the onset of Islam in India. It is said that Muslims first arrived on Indian soil in the 8th century on the west coast of India and settled down as traders and proselytizers. In 712, the Arabs reached Sind and occupied it. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni began his bloody and ruthless raids into India carrying away with him a vast quantity of treasure in around 1000 A. C. Al-Baruni of Khiva, a contemporary scholar, describes these raids: “The Hindus became like the atoms of dust scattered in all directions and like a tale of old in the mouths of people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Moslems” (quoted in Jitendra Narayan 24).

Invading India in hordes from 1206 onwards, the Arabs, the Turks, the Afghans and the Mughals reduced Hindu temples to rubble, put the thousands of Hindus to the swords and forcibly converted the survivors to Islam. In 1592, Babar, defeating the Afghan forces of Sultan Ibrahim in the battle of Panipat, established the Mughal Empire in India. Relations between Hindus and Muslims were not friendly during the regimes of Babar, Jahangir, Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb reversed the enlightened tolerant policy of Akbar and created bitter communal disharmony. Unabated proselytization to Islam in the regimes of Muslim emperors caused great resentment among Hindus. Tracing the roots of discord one of the great land-holders of Bengal remarks:

The fact is that the religious and cultural feuds between the Hindus and Mohammedans go as far as A. D. 1017 or 1018, when Mahmud of Ghazni conquered the then Hindu centre of India, known as Kanauj, desecrated the holy city of Mathura and destroyed and pillaged many
Hindu temples. Mahmud thus sowed the seeds of hatred and religious animosity which have survived through the ages, bringing bitterness between Hindus and Mohammedans which breaks out at any moment.

(Comming 110-11)

While explaining the relations between the Hindu and the Muslim communities and communal violence in India during pre-British rule, Hugh McPherson wrote:

The differences which separate Hindu and Muslim are essentially religious. They may be reinforced by historical tradition, by political rivalries or by economic contrasts, but for the great masses of the population it is the religious issue that counts… such purely religious causes explain most of the communal disturbances of which we have record in the earlier years of British rule. Before that time Benares had been a storm centre, since Aurangzeb built his famous mosque there on the site of a Hindu Temple. In October 1809, there was here a sudden outbreak of great intensity, when Hindu mob stormed the mosque and put to death every Muslim of the neighborhood who fell into their hands. The entire city was given up to pillage and slaughter; and order was not restored by the troops until some fifty mosques had been destroyed and several hundred people had lost their lives. (Comming 109-10)

Thus, in the pre-British period, the communal differences between the Hindus and Muslims were mainly based on religion.
**British Phase:**

Communal differences were already an inseparable part of Indian life when the British arrived in India. In this respect Stoessinger says: “By the time the West arrived there, India was a politically divided society in which two radically different ways of life competed for the allegiance of the population: Hinduism, which was tolerant of dissension and absorptive; and Islam, which was militant, exclusive and dogmatic” (117).

D. E. Smith seems to agree with this view when he says, “That British obviously did not create the Hindu-Muslim communal problem; they did exploit it for their own purposes from time to time” (16). The British followed a policy of ‘divide and rule’ to foment Hindu-Muslim tensions as a means of weakening any unified resistance to their imperialism. Lord Elphistone, soon after the suppression of the mutiny of 1857, remarked: “Divide et impra” was the old Roman motto and it should be ours” (quoted in Desai 393). After 1857 Mutiny, the British rulers, in order to break up the solidarity of the Indian Army, restructured it on the basis of caste, sect, religion, tribe etc.

It can not be denied that the communal phenomenon and Indian nationalism grew side by side. The history of the Indian national movement, unfortunately, is also a history of the communalization of the Indian society (Panikar 79-80). In 1885, the Indian National Congress was established as a nationalist organization on the secular principal to provide cover to a variety of interest groups including Hindu revivalists and Muslims. In 1905, the Viceroy Lord Curzon decided to partition the province of Bengal on communal basis with an intention to create a gulf between the Hindus and Muslims. The congress violently opposed the partition boycotting the foreign goods
and launching a Swadeshi movement. However, the Muslims adopted the pro-
government attitude. The resentment of the people from West Bengal, the violent
opposition of the Congress and many other factors made the British government to
annul the partition of Bengal in December 1911. This annulment came as a great
shock to the Muslim League.

Thinking that the Indian National Congress was meant only for the Hindus,
the Muslim elites formed the All India Muslim League on 30th December 1906 at
Dhaka to protect the interests of the Muslim community. It was the first communal
political party whose programme was charted for “the political and general well being
of the Muslims” (Craig Baxter 7). As a direct response to the creation of Muslim
League, the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha was formed with an aim to counter the
growing influence of the Muslim League and “to be ardent and watchful in
safeguarding the interests of entire Hindu community in all respects” (Craig Baxter
8). As the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha grew, they became self-centred
and started working for their respective communities. Thus, the growth of the Muslim
League and the Hindu Mahasabha is also the growth of communalism in India.

By introducing the Morley-Minto reforms in 1909, the Britishers further
fomented the communal differences between the Hindus and Muslims pushing them
into “arenas of communal conflicts” (Bipan Chandra 419).

In 1916, both the League and the Congress signed the Lucknow Pact accepting
separate electorates for Muslims. Thus, by accepting the separate electorates for
Muslims, the Congress also got involved in promoting communalism in Indian
politics (Bipan Chandra 421).

The Khilafat movement launched by Mr. Abdul Bari was a crucial incident in
Indian politics from communal angle. Besides the Muslim League, Hindus also
supported the movement whole-heartedly under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. However the clashes between the Mopalahs and Hindus in Kerala marred the unity between the Hindus and Muslims. Swami Shradhanand, one of the leaders of the non-cooperation movement and Hindu revivalist, being hurt by the Moplah incident, started the *Shudhi* movement. The Hindu Mahasabha supported the *Shudhi* movement to which the League objected strongly and violently. As a result, the communal riots broke out at many places. As per the Simon Commission Report, nearly 112 riots occurred between 1922 and 1927 (Bipan Chandra 423). The communal atmosphere reached to its peak when Swami Shradhanand was assassinated by a Muslim fanatic in 1926.

After the Moplah incident the Hindu revivalists felt the need “of uniting Hindus to preserve their self esteem” (Anderson and Dam Lay 11). With this intention the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh was established in 1925. Greatly disturbed by the riots in Kohat and having been disappointed with the appeasement of Muslims by the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha proliferated its branches through out the country by taking out the rallies around the slogan ‘Hinduism is in danger’.

But the Congress tried its best to resolve the communal problem. In 1927, the Muslim leaders put before the Congress a proposal of four demands known as Delhi Proposal upon the acceptance of which the League would agree to joint electorates. The Congress appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to look into these demands. The Committee as well as all party convention held in December 1928 rejected Mr. Jinnah’s suggestions regarding the Muslim representation in the central legislation.

Mr. Jinnah devised 14-point agenda to safeguard the interests of the Muslims which became the basis of the Muslim communalist politics (Bipan Chandra 424).
Jinnah’s perspective thwarted all the efforts of the Congress to restore communal harmony. In spite of the participation of all the communities in the agitation against the Simon Commission and Civil Disobedience Movement, the communal riots continued in the country. In 1931, serious communal riots took place in Banaras, Kanpur, and other places in the then United Provinces. On 16th August 1932, MacDonald added the fuel to the communal fire by announcing the Communal Award by which he accepted Jinnah’s 14-point agenda. Nevertheless, the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Christians attended a Unity Conference held at Allahabad on 3rd November 1932 and appointed ten person committee to solve the communal conflicts. The committee succeeded in bringing all the communities together on the issue of Punjab and Bengal. In the meantime the British government announced its intention to allot 33% of British India seats to Muslims in the central legislation and to make Sindh as a separate province with adequate finances from the central government (Dr. R. Prasad 133). This 1935 Act succeeded in thwarting the efforts of the secular leaders of the country. In 1937 the Provincial elections took place in which the Muslim League received a serious blow winning only 109 seats out of 482 seats it contested. Conversely, the Congress won in seven provinces. Greatly embarrassed and frustrated by the election results, the Muslim leaders in general and Jinnah in particular started vomiting communal poison in the minds of the Muslim masses. Jinnah even started taking objections to the singing of the national song ‘Vande Mataram’, tri-colour of the national flag and the inclusion of the Muslims in the Peace Committees. In the 1938 session of the League, Jinnah said, “The high command of the Congress is determined to crush all other communities and cultures in the country and establish a Hindu Raj in the country” (Bipan Chandra 435). On 23 March 1940, at its Lahore session, the Muslim League ultimately adopted the resolution for a separate
sovereign country for the Muslims. On 18th August 1946 Jinnah said, “The Congress was a party of upper castes and fascist elements which wanted to rule over the Muslims with the help of British” (Bipan Chandra 435). While appealing the Muslims to vote for the League, Jinnah said in 1946: “if we fail to realise our duty today we will be reduced to the status of Shudras and Islam will be vanished from India” (Bipan Chandra 436). Thus, Jinnah used the communal card to appeal the Muslim masses to vote for the League.

A clear relationship between communal riots and politics was established for the first time in 1946, when the Muslim League gave its direct action call on August 16, 1946 (Bipan Chandra 6). On August 16, the day appointed for Direct Action, riots broke out at Calcutta. The Muslim mobs savagely killed Hindus in their path and stuffed their remains in the city’s open gutters. “By the time the slaughter was over, Calcutta belonged to vultures. In filthy grey packs they scudded across the sky, tumbling down to gorge themselves on the bodies of the city’s 6000 dead.”(Collins and Lapierre 28-29) Like Mountbatten, Nehru, Patel and others all felt that a catastrophe menaced India and partition, however, painful it might be, was the only way to save the country (Collins and Lapierre 119).

Thus, the communal frenzy that reached its highest peak during the 1946-47 resulted in the partition of the country into two nations—India and Pakistan. The riots that followed the partition were, however, different. They were massacre of opponents over a wide area due to the clash of political interests of the elite of two different communities.
Post Independence Era:

The partition of India did not solve the communal problem; rather it worsened it. The communal massacre that followed the partition on both the side of the border confirmed it. In this connection S. K Ghosh remarks:

In 1947, amid riots and massacres ghastly beyond all telling, ushered into existence the new states of India and Pakistan. There was an organized bloodbath on both sides of the permanent divide. Whether it was Sindh, Punjab, East Bengal, or Calcutta, Bihar and U.P., the idea was to drive “them” out of the country. Most People who fled to Pakistan or India did not do so out of love for the other country, but out of their terror. Decades later they still find themselves aliens in their countries of domicile. Those who stayed back looked upon another country as their saviour. This was true of Hindus in Pakistan as well as the Muslims in India. (14)

The events that unfolded themselves in the post-independence era justified the predictions of Ambedkar. As early as 1940, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had predicted: “The only way to make Hindustan homogeneous is to arrange for exchange of population. Until that is done, it must be admitted that even with the creation of Pakistan the problem of majority versus minority will remain in Hindustan as before and will continue to produce disharmony in the body politic of Hindustan.”(Ambedkar 104)

Though the period between 1950 and 1960 became a decade of communal peace and harmony, year 1961 witnessed the first communal riot in Jabalpur between two bidi manufacturers, one Hindu and the other Muslim. On 27 December 1963 the
theft of the holy relic of the prophet from the Hazratbal Mosque in Kashmir caused serious riots in Khulna in Bangala Desh causing panic among the Hindus. As a response to these riots, serious riots took place in Calcutta, Jamshedpur, Rourkela and Ranchi in 1964 in which hundreds of people were killed (Engineer, Communal Riots 53). Shocked and perturbed by these riots, Muslims, to register their anger to these riots, voted against the Congress. As a result the United Front won the legislature elections in 1967 in many states including U.P. The Jana Sangh which was the part of the United Front won 98 seats in U.P. assembly. Reacting to the Jana Sangh’s demand for uniform civil code, the Muslims formed the Personal Law Board in the late 1960s to protect their Shariat Law. Realizing the Bhartiya Jana Sangh as anti-Muslim party and having been assured not to interfere in the Personal Law by the Congress government, Muslims once again turned to the Congress.

Another wave of communal riots swept the country between 1967 and 1970. The communal riots took place in Ranchi (1967), Karimganj (1968), Meerut (1968), and Ahmadabad (1969).

In the 1970s the country witnessed once again a spate of serious riots—Bhiwandi and Jalgaon (1970), Meerut (1974), Delhi (1976), Muzaffarnagar (1976), Sultanpur (1977), Aligarh (1989), and Jamshedpur (1979) (Khan R. 222). These riots were caused by a number of local factors including economic competition and inter-religious marriages. Due to forced vasectomy operations as a part of family planning program during the emergency period (1975-77), Muslims voted in favour of the Janata Party which came in power in 1977 elections. It was during the Janata party regime the Imam of Jama Masjid emerged as the powerful leader of Muslims. Being dissatisfied with the growing influence of the Imam, the erstwhile Jana Sangh leaders opted out of the alliance and formed the new party—the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
in 1980. With the rise of BJP, the communal problem floated up once again and the communal riots took place in Varanasi, Aligargh, and Jamshedpur in which Muslims suffered a lot. After the fall of Janata Party government, Muslims once again turned to the congress party in 1980 elections and Indira Gandhi came to power. But due to the shifting loyalties of Muslims she openly played the Hindu card in the elections of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and won the elections. Thereafter both the congress and the BJP used communalism as a convenient tool to gain political power which caused a disastrous national disintegration of the country.

The 1980s unfortunately witnessed considerable change in the dimension of communalism. The riots in the earlier decades had been sporadic, spontaneous, short-lived and controllable whereas riots during the 1980s that took place in Assam, Maharashtra, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were politically motivated and therefore uncontrollable. During the 1980s the communal riots occurred in Hyderabad (September,1984), Bokaro, Chas and Kanpur (October,1984), Punjab (October,1984), Delhi (October,1984 ), Gujarat (July, 1985), Umapur, Beed in Maharashtra (May, 1986), Kashimbazar, Murshidabad West Bengal (May, 1986), and Bhagalpur (October,1989).

The decade of the 1990s will perhaps be regarded as the turning point in the history of communal politics. It began with massive communal mobilization and polarization of an order hither to unknown. The events leading to and arising from the demolition of Ram Janam Bhoomi – Babri Masjid Complex even now continues to cast their shadow. In later years there was even evidence of the machinery of State either turning a blind eye to the travails of individuals at the hands of marauding mobs or at its worst it was found to have played a willing handmaid to communal oppressors.
During the 1990s, the communal fracas took place in Jaipur (October, 1990), Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy District (October, 1990), Bhopal and Ujjain (December, 1992), Bombay (January, 1993), Manipur (May, 1993), Coimbatore (February, 1998), Hubli (March, 1999), and Aurangabad in Maharashtra (December, 1999).

Thus, the communal frenzy that began with the Muslim rule in India reached its pinnacle in the 1990s with the demolition of Babari Masjid. It is against this background, the theme of communal disharmony is explored in the third chapter.

1.4 Gender: Its Theories and Gender Relations in India

Gender is, undoubtedly, one of the most important factors in our lives. As it is about the power relations between men and women, it affects the whole human life. Until the 1960s, ‘gender’ was used solely to refer to masculine and feminine words, like le and la in French (Nicholson 80). However, the psychologist Robert Stoller used the term ‘gender’ to recognize the amount of femininity and masculinity a person exhibited (1968). Gayle Rubin defines gender as the “socially imposed division of the sexes” (Traffic 179). Since gender is social, it is thought to be mutable and alterable. Feminism should aim to create a “genderless (though not sexless) society, in which one's sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does, and with whom one makes love” (Rubin, Traffic 204).

In the past, sex and gender were thought to be complementary to each other. Nicholson calls this ‘the coat-rack view’ of gender: our sexed bodies are like coat racks and “provide the site upon which gender [is] constructed” (81). That is, according to this interpretation, all humans are either male or female; their sex is
fixed. But cultures interpret sexed bodies differently and project different norms on those bodies thereby creating feminine and masculine persons.

Now-a-days, it is more common to denote that genders and gendered traits are the “intended or unintended product[s] of a social practice” (Haslanger, Ontology 97). West and Zimmerman, in their 1987 article "Doing Gender", focuses on the process of how individuals” do gender” as a "routine methodical, and recurring accomplishment" (126). According to Butler, gendered subjectivities are constructed through performance. She says, "Gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who may be said to preexist the deed." (25) It is not “a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is … instituted … through a stylized repetition of [habitual] acts” (Butler 179). Gender is not something one is, it is something one does; it is a sequence of acts, a doing rather than a being. For Butler, ‘woman’ is “a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or end … it is open to intervention and resignification” (43).

According to Joan Wallach Scott, “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based upon perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power” (1067).

Elaine Showalter upholds the same view when she refers to gender category as part of a social process of constructing power relations:

Thus gender should not be treated as an isolated category within a purely psychoanalytic framework, but should rather be seen as part of a process of social construction. Furthermore, gender is not only a question of difference, which assumes that the sexes are separate and
equal; but of power, since in looking at the history of gender relations, we find sexual asymmetry, inequality, and male dominance in every known society (4).

Gender refers to the effects produced in the social relations of men and women by complex socio-cultural practices. Teresa de Lauretis shares this view of gender as “a process of social construction” which represents not an individual but a social relation. By adopting Michel Foucault's theory of sexuality as a “technology of sex”, Teresa de Lauretis proposes that gender is the product and the process of various “social technologies” (2).

Differentiating sex from gender, Oakley says, “Sex a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female... ‘Gender’, however, is a matter of culture; it refers to the social classification into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ (16). Agreeing with Oakley, Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick have shown the difference between ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ in their book titled “Key Concepts in Cultural Theory” in the following words:

The concept of ‘gender’ is typically placed in opposition to the concept of ‘sex’. While our sex (female/male) is a matter of biology, our gender (feminine/ masculine) is a matter of culture. Gender may, therefore, be taken to refer to learned patterns of behaviour and action, as opposed to that which is biologically determined. Crucially, biology need not be assumed to determine gender. This is to suggest that while what makes a person male or female is universal and grounded on laws of nature, the precise ways in which women express their femininity and men express their masculinity will vary from culture to culture. Thus, qualities that are stereo-typically attributed to women and men in
contemporary western culture (such as greater emotional expression in women; greater tendencies to violence and aggression in men) are seen as gender, which entails that they could be changed (158).

Gender has, therefore, less to do with one’s sexuality and more to do with the way those sexual bodies are interpreted and valued (Colebrook 118).

Beauvoir's claim that “one is not born but rather becomes a woman” denotes that masculinity and femininity are thought to be products of nurture. Kate Millett seems to support this view when she says that gender differences have “essentially cultural, rather than biological bases” that result from differential treatment (28–9). For her, gender is “the sum total of the parents', the peers', and the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression” (31). As a result, women are socialized into subordinate social roles: they learn to be passive, ignorant, docile, emotional helpmates for men (26). However, since these roles are simply learned, we can also ‘unlearn’ them.

Catherine MacKinnon in her book *Toward a Feminist Theory of State* develops a theory of gender as a theory of sexuality. According to her gender is created by sexual objectification of women whereby women are viewed and treated as objects for satisfying men's desires. She defines masculinity as sexual dominance and femininity as sexual submissiveness. In her view, genders are “created through the eroticization of dominance and submission” (113). To put differently, genders are hierarchical and this hierarchy is fundamentally tied to sexualised power relations. According to her, if sexuality ceases to be a manifestation of dominance, hierarchical genders will cease to exist.
Nancy Chodorow holds that gender is a matter of having feminine and masculine personalities that develop in early infancy as responses to prevalent parenting practices. It is because mother, as a caretaker, encourages her son to psychologically individuate himself from her thereby prompting him to develop well defined and rigid ego boundaries and unconsciously discourages the daughter from individuating herself thereby prompting the daughter to develop flexible and blurry ego boundaries. Feminine and masculine personalities play a crucial role in women's oppression since they make females overly attentive to the needs of others and males emotionally deficient. In order to correct the situation, both male and female parents should be equally involved in parenting (Chodorow 214).

Sally Haslanger argues that gender is a matter of occupying either a subordinate or a privileged social position. According to her societies in general tend to “privilege individuals with male bodies” (Gender 38) so that the social positions they subsequently occupy are better than the social positions of those with female bodies. But according to Stone this is not only undesirable but also false: “because norms of femininity can be and constantly are being revised, women can be women without thereby being subordinate” (Stone 2007, 162). To Linda Alcoff, gender is, among other things, a position one occupies and from which one can act politically (148).

Theoretical Perspectives:

Over the years several major theories have been proposed to explain gender development. These theories can be broadly classified into Psychologically-oriented theories, sociological theories and biologically-oriented theories.
According to biologically-oriented theories, gender differences arise from the different biological roles played by males and females in reproduction. As Karen Korabik has argued, "at the start of the 20th Century, the accepted notion of gender roles in Western culture was based on the doctrine of separate spheres" (Korabik 3). The denial of civil rights for women is justified on the basis of natural differences between men and women. Political thinkers as diverse as Aristotle, Aquinas, Rousseau and Hegel, believed that these natural differences were reflected in men and women’s social roles and functions (Ramsay 166). Carol Christ argues that the ideal of “the angel of the house” limits woman's political power and psychological freedom while it represents man's apotheosis of woman not only in her 'purity' but in her 'passivity and asexuality' (147). In the 1970s, sex differences were used to argue that women should not become airline pilots since they will be hormonally unstable once a month and, therefore, unable to perform their duties as well as men (Rogers 11). According to Wood and Eagly, “Physical sex differences, in interaction with social and ecological conditions, influence the roles held by men and women because certain activities are more efficiently accomplished by one sex” (702). Research has proved unequivocally that biological essentialism is unable to represent diverse range of male and female behaviour. However, the doctrine of separate spheres is still pervasive in many cultures.

According to social learning theory gender identity is the result of a number of social influences. This theory emphasizes the importance of environmental determinants of gender development and suggests that behaviours precede cognitions (e.g., “I have been rewarded for doing boy things, I must be a boy”) (Walter Mischel 1966). Children are exposed to stereotypical models in the patriarchal family through peers, at school and, of course, through the media, especially television (Bussey and
Bandura 329). Children imitate only those behaviours that are encouraged and reinforced which result “in a generalised tendency to imitate all same-gendered models” (Oakley 154). According to Maccoby and Jacklin, parents treat and dress girls and boys differently, give them differential toys which they believe to be sex-gender appropriate. At school too gender appropriate behaviours are encouraged. Even today girls are not allowed to play footfall considering it as boys’ game. However, the socialisation process is not the same for girls and boys. In this respect Maccoby and Jacklin state:

Boys seem to have more intense socialization experiences than girls. They receive more pressure against engaging in sex-appropriate behaviours, whereas the activities that girls are not supposed to engage in are less clearly defined and less firmly enforced. Boys receive more punishment, but probably also more praise and encouragement. Adults respond as if they find boys more interested, and more attention provoking. (348)

Despite these distinctions, boys and girls develop their gender identity through a learning process “that is essentially the same as other learning processes” (Oakley 154). Thus, the social learning theory states that gender appropriate behaviour is learned through observation, imitation, socialisation and conscious learning.

According to cognitive developmental theory, gender identity is based on sexual differences between males and females (Oakley 154). The theory treats children as active agents. Lawrence Kohlberg says: “Our theory, then, is cognitive in that it stresses the active nature of the child’s thought as he [she] organizes his [her] role perceptions and role learning around his [her] basic conceptions of his [her] body and his world” (83). Children develop the stereotypic conceptions of gender from what
they see and hear around them. Once they achieve gender constancy—the belief that their own gender is fixed and irreversible—they positively value their gender identity and seek to behave only in ways that are congruent with that conception. Kohlberg posited the cognitive processes that create and maintain such consistency: "I am a boy, therefore I want to do boy things, therefore the opportunity to do boy things (and to gain approval for doing them) is rewarding" (89). The cognitive theory emphasizes the importance of children’s growing understanding of gender categories and their permanent placement into one of them. The theory proposes that cognitions precede behaviours.

According to Gender schema theory children learn about what it means to be male and female from the culture in which they live and adjust their behaviour to fit in with the gender norms and expectations of their culture. A schema is a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual's perception. As children learn the contents of the society's gender schema, they learn which attributes are to be linked with their own sex and, hence, with themselves. Simultaneously, the child also learns to evaluate his or her adequacy as a person in terms of the gender schema, to match his or her preferences, attitudes, behaviours, and personal attributes against the prototypes stored within it. (Bern 1981)

**The Gender Inequality and India: A Brief Overview**

Women are human beings in truth but not in social reality (MacKinnon 216). The secondary status of women in society is one of the true universals, a pan cultural fact (Ortner 21). In India society, as elsewhere, the gender relations have gone a sea change since the beginning of civilisation.
It would be wrong to say that women played a second fiddle to men from the very beginning of the society. One of the most absurd notions taken over from the eighteenth-century enlightenment is that in the beginning of society woman was the slave of man (Engels 49). During the early Vedic period, the liberal attitude towards women did exist. Women were free to participate in the social and religious activities, to choose their partners in marriage, and to take education. The widows were allowed to remarry. This explains that during the Vedic period there was no discrimination on the basis of gender.

However, with the arrival of Aryan Brahmins, the social and religious situation of India changed. In the patriarchal Brahmin religion marriage involves male control over female sexuality. Many historians believe that the Aryans replaced the matrilineal form of family organization with the patrilineal in which birth of a male child is immanent as the line of descent is from father to son and the woman leaves her father’s house on marriage to live with the husband. As the economic and social status of sons began to ascend, the position of women began to descend. As per the patriarchal norms the ideal Hindu wife must be devoted to her husband. She must be ‘pativrata’, the self sacrificing wife. She is expected “to emulate Sita” (Nubile 11).

We cannot turn our blind eye to the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the great epics of India, while discussing the status of women in Indian society. They have played a vital role in shaping our attitudes towards women. They are replete with glaring instances of gender injustice. Draupadi in the epic Mahabharata is treated as a commodity by Pandavas and Kauravas. Right from the days of Draupadi in the court of Kauravas, the disrobing and the dishonouring of women in public has become a time honoured custom for us (K. R. Narayan 164). In Ramayana, Sita is made to face
the ordeal of fire to prove her purity by her husband Rama, the paragon of virtue and morality. Even today, women are expected to emulate Sita and Draupadi projecting them as role models.

With India’s march towards civilization, gender discrimination amplified. Besides Brahmanism, Jainism also discriminated against women. The Jain men also shared the universal prejudices against women and regarded them to be weak-minded, fickle, treacherous and impure. However, Buddhism treated women as equal to men. It was during the age of Dharmashastras that women were excluded from the social, economic, and religious spheres. Child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, killing of female infants, the practice of Sati—all these bad practices were encouraged due to the code of conduct prescribed by Manu, the progenitor of Hindu Dharmashastra. As Mrinal Pande writes, “to control women, it becomes necessary to control the womb and so Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity have all stipulated, at one time or another, that the whole area of reproductive activity must be firmly monitored by law and lawmakers”(07). Thus the woman becomes a mere “reproductive machine” since Manu’s time (Nubile 3). As soon as she gets married, she is expected to have a child. Vrinda Nabar states that “a woman in India is morally obliged to bear a son” (52). As a result, childless women are often marginalized and stigmatised.

The emergence of Islam did not help to improve the status of women in the Indian society. The strict observance of the system of purdah during the Muslim regime that resulted in the seclusion of women from men shows the status of women. The evil practices such as polygamy, sati, child marriage, ill treatment of widows already prevalent during the Dharmashastra age gained further impetus during the medieval period. In this age, the socio-economic status of women further deteriorated
as they became dependent on men for survival and maintenance. Marriage was a contract among the Muslims and they can divorce their wives without paying alimony. Women were denied the right to education and were confined to home.

With the advent of British rule in India, an era of change began. In the early period of the British rule no serious efforts were made to address and redress the social evils such as ‘Sati’, child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, and denial of educational and property rights to women. It was in the 19th century the status of women underwent a great change. To eradicate the evil practices prevalent in India, British rulers passed many Acts with the help of social reformers which affected the status of women positively. In 1929, the then Governor General Lord William Bentinck imposed a ban on the evil and inhuman practice of ‘Sati’ or ‘widow immolation’ with the help of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the great social reformer. Unable to tolerate the deplorable plight of young widows, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar began a movement for lifting the ban on the widow remarriage. Due to the efforts of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dayananda Saraswati, Pandit Vishnu Shastri, Sir R.G. Bhandarkar, Agarkar and D.K. Karve the British government passed the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act XV of 1856. Another social evil prevalent in India and responsible for women’s suffering was the child marriage. It affected the growth and development of children. Therefore, Harbildas Sarda, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen, and Mahatma Gandhi fought against it and made the Britishers to pass the Child Marriage Restraint Act in 1929 that fixed the minimum age at marriage for girls as 14 years and for boys as 18 years. Mahatma Jyoti Ba Phule, who dedicated his whole life for the cause of women, opened a school for girls in 1848 in Pune and the first school for dalit girls in 1852. Maharshi D.K. Karve was another social reformer from Maharashtra who gave a fillip to women’s
education by establishing educational institutions for girls and women. Mahatma Gandhi encouraged women to participate in the freedom struggle as a result many women took active part in the *Swadeshi* movement, the non-Cooperation (1920-22) movement, the Civil Disobedience movement (1930-34) and the Quit India movement (1942). Thus the British, with the help of social reform movements, tried to remove the impediments in the way of gender equality by passing laws. However, despite these laws, the condition of women did not improve as expected in the British era. The conservative society did not respond positively to the new laws passed by the British and practiced the social evils without taking heed of these laws.

It was only after India got independence, the constitution of India laid the foundation stone of just and equal society by giving women equal status to that of men. The article 14 of the constitution gives equal rights to both men and women. The article 15(1) prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the basis of sex. Besides the constitutional rights, the government of Indian passed many laws for liberating women from oppressive social customs and for protecting their rights. Some of these laws are: The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, and the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976. Due to these constitutional provisions women are setting out of the house and participating in social activities. Equal opportunities are being provided to them in education, jobs, and in every walk of life. They have proved their metal in every walk of life. Sarojini Naidu, Vijaylakshami Pandit, Indira Gandhi Medha Patkar, M.S. Subbulakshmi, Lata Mangeshkar, Madhu Bala, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Kiran Majumdar Shaw, Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams—these are some of the role models before Indian women.
Women’s status in society is on the rise. In spite of the socio-economic and political changes initiated for the benefit of women in India, the people’s attitude to equal status for women has not changed significantly. Still in many households the husbands are breadwinners and women the domestic servants.

Thus, constitutionally, women are equal to men. But it is not a social reality. Despite these provisions, women are still discriminated on the basis of their gender. As Clara Nubile says, gender discrimination begins in the womb and it goes on till death (23). In India the girl child is unwanted, as it brings dowry debts and misfortune. Dowry remains the main reason for female infanticide and feticide. Mala Sen, the Indian journalist, throws light on episodes of dowry deaths, female infanticide and sati in modern India in her book Death by Fire. She writes:

Tens of thousands of women in India die each year, mostly soaked in kerosene by their husbands or in-laws and then set alight… Commonly referred to as “victims of dowry deaths”, they have become statistics. So have the tens of thousands of girl babies killed each year, often by their mothers, simply because they were not boys. Considered a life long burden, their lives are easily snuffed at birth or soon afterwards, and the authorities rarely intervene. Among the middle classes, female infanticide has also become increasingly common in the form of abortions, following scans that detect the sex of the unborn child. That too has become big business in towns and cities, with unscrupulous doctors making vast fortune. It is a complete cycle of violence and oppression—from birth to death—and women themselves seem to have helped perpetuate this practice in the name of religion and
tradition. Many have seen their own lives as not worth living, and have tried to spare their daughters from a similar fate. (51)

According to Clara Nubile “Being a woman in modern India means to be entrapped into the inescapable cage of “being a woman-wife-mother” …The ideal Hindu good woman must be a wife first and then a mother. A woman cannot exist outside the boundaries of married life and motherhood. Otherwise she is perceived as useless and unworthy according to traditional Indian views. Moreover, in India a woman is an entity which exists only in a male-defined and male-related context.” (22)

Though Indian women have mastered everything that a woman can dream of, yet she has to go a long way to achieve equal status in the minds of Indian men. Men in India “advertise themselves as champions of the weaker sex, equal opportunities for women, female education and female emancipation” (Saraladevi 345) but in reality they live in the “shade of Manu,” depriving them from the human rights (Bagal 24).

It is against this background, the plays of Mahesh Dattani are analysed in the fourth chapter.

1.5 Indian English Drama: A Brief Survey

Indian English Literature, as M. K. Naik has said, is “a literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality” (HIEL 1). In the same manner, Indian English Drama can be defined as plays originally written in English by the Indian writers or written in regional languages first and then transcreated by them in English. The review of Indian English drama is strictly confined to the plays originally written in English.
Indian English drama did not flourish despite the rich tradition of Sanskrit drama. It is poor both in quality and quantity. It is pitiable in stage worthiness. Most of the Indian English plays are closet plays lacking in stage effects. In this respect K.R.S. Iyengar rightly remarks: “Modern Indian dramatic writing in English is neither rich in quantity nor, on the whole, of high quality. Enterprising Indians have for nearly a century occasionally attempted drama in English-but seldom for actual stage production.” (IWE 226)

Pratap Sharma’s *A Touch of Brightness*, Asif Currimbhoy’s *The Doldrummers*, Gurucharan Das’s *Larins Sahib*, Gieve Patel’s *Princess* and Shiv K. Kumar’s *Last Wedding Anniversary* have been successfully staged but these were sporadic performances which could not add to popularity and development of Indian English theatre. Talking about Indian English Drama is like talking about “snakes in ice-land” (Iyengar, IWE 730). Many reasons can be cited for the lop-sided development of Indian English drama. Drama, being a performative art, is different from other forms of literature. It requires a special skill and talent on the part of the dramatist in selecting a proper theme that is presentable on the stage and in picking up a technique that appeals to the audience. It is “a composite art involving the playwright, the actor and the audience in a commonly shared, and even created, artistic experience” (Naik and Mokashi-Punekar, PIDE ix). Therefore it requires a total commitment of the persons concerned for its success.

Language is one of the obstacles in the growth of Indian English drama. Indian English drama could not prosper in India due to the foreign language. The participation of the audience is made possible through the oral language. As majority of the Indians could not speak and understand English language, they could not go to
theatres. As a result, due to the lack of audience, Indian English drama could not flourish.

The second reason for the paucity of Indian English drama is its inability in using the rich store house of the Indian myths, legends, folk-tales, customs, cultural heritage and historical events. The Indian dramatists should have used this rich store house in their works. Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, and a few more tried their hands at them but they failed to do so as they dealt with the inner world rather than the outer world. In the modern time, some dramatists like Girish Karnad and Asif currimbhoy have adroitly employed ancient tales, myths, folk tales in their plays to “interpret contemporary social and political situations”( Satish kumar 2). But such attempts are very few and not enough for the growth of the Indian English Drama.

The third reason for the stunted growth of Indian English drama is “its unsuitability on the stage” (Dwivedi 2). Consequently, it is underprivileged in theatrical effects. While commenting on the arrested growth of Indian English Drama, M.K Naik has rightly observed: “A play, in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience, thus needs a real theatre and a live audience …It is precisely the lack of these essentials that has hamstrung Indian drama in English all along” (M. K. Naik, AIDE 181).

In spite of many obstacles, Indian English Drama began with the publication of Krishna Mohan Banerji’s The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta in 1831. It is a social play dealing with the hypocrisy of the Orthodox Hindu society. As far as technique and craftsmanship is concerned, it is “a crude presentation” (Satish Kumar 3). Besides, Krishna Mohan Banerji’s play, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, a Bangali playwright, translated his
Bengali plays *Ratnavali* (1858), *Sermista* (1859) and *Is this called Civilization?* (1871) into English. Ram Kinod Dutt contributed to the Indian English Drama by writing his ‘*Manipura Tragedy*’ in 1893.

Though Bengal had a rich literary tradition, there was obviously a dearth of dramatic tradition. Early Indian English drama in Bengal developed only as a closet drama with the emphasis on music and dance. Indian English drama was left to Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and H. N. Chattopadhyaya “to prepare a native tradition of Indian English drama and to establish it as an authentic mode of creative expressions” (Beena Agarwal 3).

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), the sage of Pondicherry, is an outstanding name among the Indian dramatists writing in English in the pre-Independent India. He wrote five complete and six incomplete plays between 1891 and 1916. He had profound knowledge of Eastern and Western thoughts. His mastery over Greek, Latin, English, Sanskrit and Bengali languages create in one the impression that he was a “born lord of language” (Iyengar, Sri Aurobindo 89). Sri Aurobindo’s plays appeared in “*Collected poems and plays*” in 1942. His five complete plays are *Perseus the Deliverer, Vasavadatta, Rodogune, The viziers of Bassora, and Eirc the King of Norway*. According to Dr. Satish kumar all plays of Sri. Aurobindo are “Conspicuous for romanticism, variety of themes and settings” (31).

Love is the recurrent theme in Sri Aurobindo’s plays. While commenting on the theme of love in Aurobindo’s plays K.R.S. Iyengar says: “All five plays underline the need for love, for love alone is the great solvent of all varieties of evil. Love is supreme truth and goodness and power, and it can defy death and can conquer it, and turn dross into gold.” (IWE 231)
Sri Aurobindo’s *Perseus the Deliverer*, a comedy in five acts, is based on the Greek story of Perseus. The play presents how Perseus, the son of Danae and Zeus, delivers the people of Syria from the clutches of the cruel priest Polydaon who intends to have both the throne of Syria and Princess Andromeda by killing her parents. Perseus thwarts the priest’s plan and delivers the people of Syria from the clutches of the priest.

*The Viziers of Bassora*, a dramatic romance on Elizabethan pattern, deals with the love between Nur Al-Din Ali, the son of good and benevolent Vizier Afzal and Anice-al-Jalice, a slave girl. Vizier Almuene, who represents wicked and evil, creates obstacles in the path of true love. Haroun al-Rashid, a compassionate Caliph of Baghdad, liberates the lovers from the guiles of Almuene and helps them to marry and to become the king and the Queen of Bassora. *Vasavadutta* (1957) is also a romantic comedy dealing with the love between Udayan, the young king of Cowsambie and Vasavadutta, the princess of Avunthie. The king Udayan, kidnapped and imprisoned by Mahasegn, is kept in a jail under the supervision of Princess Vasavadatta who falls in love with Udayan and marries him.

*Rodogune* (1906), a romantic tragedy located in Syria and published in 1958 in Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual, deals with the tragic love story of Antiochus, the son of the queen Cleopatra and Rodogune, the beautiful Parthian princess who is a slave girl in the play. The play depicts the conflict between Antiochus and Timocles, the two sons of the queen Cleopatra, for the throne and the beautiful slave girl Rodogune.

*Eric* (1912-13), published in 1960 in Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual, deals with the Viking culture of the Nordic race in ancient Norway. It depicts the enmity
between Swegn and Eric, the king of Norway. Swegn filled with hatred and revenge, sends his sister Aslaugh and wife Hertha in the guise of dancing girls to kill his enemy Eric, the king of Norway. But instead of killing Eric, Aslaugh falls in love with the king. Love defeats hatred. In the ensuing battle Eric defeats Swegn but spares both Swegn and his wife Hertha and marries Aslaugh. Like other plays, it also deals with the theme of love which alone can conquer hatred.

Sri Aurobindo’s plays reveal his obsession with the problem of slavery of his country and countrymen under the British rule and the slavery of women in the male dominated society. In order to present his urge for freedom, he employs the legends and myths.

Sri Aurobindo, a great scholar of Ancient Indian Sanskrit classics, was influenced by Elizabethan drama. He employs many Elizabethan technical devices—five act structure, sub-plots, horror scenes, lengthy speeches – which hamper the coherent development of the plot. Dr. Satish Kumar is of the opinion that Sri Aurobindo’s own distinctive voice which vibrates in his other literary creations has been hushed up in his plays (35). Regarding the influence of Elizabethan drama, M.K. Naik rightly observes: It is said that even in Prince of Edur and Vasavadatta, the dramatist could not throw off the yoke of Shakespeare, with the result that his characters seem to think, speak and act less like authentic Indians than like Elizabethan personages in Indian garb (HIEL 100-101).

Although Sri Aurobindo’s plays are remarkable for his command over English language and the use of blank verse, they lack in crispy dialogue. His plays appeal only to the scholars. No doubt, they show a great exuberance of thought and language
but they “can not fully meet the demands of the stage and are at best closet drama” (S.K. Bhatta 27).

Rabindranath Tagore is one of the pillars of the Pre-Independent Indian English drama. To be frank, he is a greater poet than a dramatist. He was familiar not only with the Sanskrit dramas of Kalidasa and Bhasa but also with the English dramas of Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Maeterlinck. But he followed neither the Sanskrit nor the English playwrights. He is a model for himself.

Most of Tagore’s plays were first written in Bengali and then translated into English. The Plays Tagore himself translated into English are: *Sanyasi or The ascetic*, *Malini, Sacrifice, The King and the Queen, Kacha and Devyani, The Mother’s Prayer, Karna and Kunti, Ama and Vinayaka, Somaka and Ritvika, Chitra, Autumn Festival, The Waterfall or Muktadhara*. Edward C. Dimock rightly says, “Tagore looked upon his English plays not as mere translations but as contribution to western literature as his foreign reincarnation” (34).

Tagore’s plays deal with varied themes. His are the plays of ideas, dealing with perennial problems of human existence. According to Dr. Satish Kumar, all “major aspects of human existence including love, religion, and faith” find a conspicuous place in Tagore’s Plays (18). Commenting on the variety of themes and treatment, K.R.S. Iyengar remarks:

Tagore could take many things granted: for example, an intimate knowledge of our epics and our main cultural traditions. . . . Idolatry in India is as old as the hills; condemnation of idolatry also is as old as
the Buddha, if not even more ancient. Asceticism and the failure of asceticism, casteism and the exceeding of casteism, the spectacle of husband being redeemed by wife or wife by husband or both by children, fanaticism striving with tolerance, pettiness striving with magnanimity – all are old, old themes. Tagore could start the play, strike the opening chords, name the characters, and memory and imagination would do the rest. Not the logic of careful plotting but the music of ideas and symbols is the ‘soul’ of this drama. Not the apparent meaning but its echoing cadence of suggestion – dhwani as the Sanskrit rhetoricians called it ; in other words, the richness of the undertones – is what matters, for this alone kindles the sluggish soul to a new awareness of life’s “deep magics”. (IWE 123)

Edward Thompson observes: “His dramatic work is the vehicle of ideas, rather than the expression of action” (47).

Sanyasi or the Ascetic (1923), a dramatic poem, presents the joy of attaining the Infinite in the Finite. It deals with the life of Sanyasi who withdraws himself from life in order to get salvation. But when he meets Vasanti, who stands for temptation of life, he is reminded of the worldly life and can not forget her. Ultimately, he realizes the eternal truth that one can realize the Infinite only in the Finite world. The play gives the message that life is not an obstacle in achieving liberation and true love is the only liberating and purifying force. Edward Thompson considers the play as “a sketch and not a finished composition” (51).

Malini is a play in two acts dealing with the conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism. It highlights the importance of love, condemning religious bigotry and
intolerance. Malini, the king’s daughter, incurs the wrath of orthodox Brahmans due to her championing the cause of Buddhism. They want to banish her. But when she appears before the angry Brahmans with her boldness, determination, and divine appearance, they are converted to her faith. She is hailed as Goddess and ‘the divine soul’ of the world. Malini is the embodiment of renunciation, sacrifice and human love. K.R.S. Iyengar comments: “Malini is indeed the new revelation, as in her own day in her own way Joan the maid was in France” (IWE 130).

*Sacrifice* (1923), a play of ideas, deals with the futility of religious dogmatism. It presents the conflict between the king and the priest over the issue of animal sacrifice. The king Govinda, at the request of the beggar girl Aparna, bans animal sacrifice at the altar of the goddess Kali, who stands for power of destruction of evil. The King’s order outrages Raghupati, the temple priest, who stands for orthodox religion. In order to punish the King for his interference in the religious ceremonies, the Priest orders his son Jaising to kill the King to quench the thirst of Goddess Kali. When Jaising realizes the true meaning of religion, he commits suicide. The suicide of Jaising makes the Priest realize the folly and futility of offering sacrifice before the ‘deaf, dumb, blind’ stone image of Kali. The beggar girl Aparna, who opposes to offer her lamb for sacrifice before Kali, awakens the spirit of true religion in the heart of Raghupati. The play shows that the observance of rites and rituals is not true religion. The true religion lies in following the righteous path.

*The King and the Queen* (1923) is also a play of ideas dealing with “the love story of the obsessive king Vikram and the duty conscious Queen Sumitra” (Nand Kumar, 29). The king Vikram neglects his kingly responsibilities to receive love from his wife Sumitra, making himself “the monarch of a sensual heaven” (Iyengar, IWE
125). On the other hand, the queen Sumitra, sacrifices her life in her attempt to save the kingdom from the usurpers.

_Chitra_ (1913), an English version of Tagore’s Bengali play _Chitrangada_, dramatizes the story of love between Arjuna, the Pandava and Chitrangada, the daughter of Chitravahana, the king of Manipur. It is “a succinct Tagorean version of Kalidasa’s _Sakuntala_” (Iyengar, IWE 136). The play presents “the evolution of human love from the physical to the spiritual” (Iyengar, IWE 137).

_Gandhari’s Prayer_ or _The Mother’s Prayer_, dedicated to the king of Tripura, In 1913, deals with the attitudes of parents – Dhritrashtra and Gandhari—towards their son, Duryodhana. It highlights the greatness of the character of Gandhari who asks her husband to punish their son Duryodhana who represents egoism, jealousy, cruelty and vaulting ambition. With regard to this play, K.R.S. Iyengar says, “Gandhari’s _Prayer_ is a study of a mother and her son, the great and magnanimous mother of the Kurus and her eldest ill-fated son, Duryodhana. Both Dhritrashtra the father and Gandhari the mother know that Duryodhana is wrong; but the father compromises, while Gandhari will not. She is a great character.” (IWE 138)

_Karna and Kunti_ is based on Mahabharata myth of Karna’s birth and his threat as a great warrior to the life of Arjuna. The play presents a dialogue between the illegitimate and abandoned son, Karna and the unmarried mother, Kunti. Kunti comes to Karna and accepts him as her eldest son. Karna, a great warrior who stands for manhood, loyalty, heroism, and friendship, is so broad-minded that he does not ask his mother about his abandonment. But when Kunti asks him to abandon Duryodhana and join the Pandavas, Karna asks her to leave him once again without pick. Being a man of loyalty, he can not leave his friend Duryodhana when he is in need of him.
The Water Fall or Mukta Dhara (1922) criticizes the modern technology which is divorced from humanity. According to Satya Vrata Mukherjee, Tagore articulated in Mukta Dhara “an eloquent protest against the onslaught of machinery on the ancient ramparts of man’s individual freedom” (Satish Kumar 24). It shows how the prince Abhijit sacrifices his life to liberate the Mountain spring for the use of the poor.

The Cycle of Spring is a play on the theme of the renewal of life. Red Oleanders is about “the triumph of humanistic values over the soul killing materialism” (Satish Kumar 25). The Post Office is a symbolical play of Tagore in which the innocent and naïve boy Amal is waiting for a letter from the King.

According to M.K. Naik Tagore’s “preoccupation with major aspects of human existence like love, religion, and death, make his plays a significant statement of his world view” (Naik, DIEL 172).

Rabindranath Tagore, a great and gifted technician, attempted to create a form suitable for the expression of his ideas. For him “the drama lies not in the revelation of character and the clash of personalities but in the basic confrontation of opposed approaches” (Naik, DIEL 177). While commenting on the form and structure of Tagore’s plays, M. K. Naik observes: “But though he probably took hints from both Jatra and Sanskrit drama, Tagore has followed neither model slavishly. His plays evince a great variety of structure, since he allows the fork of a play to be shaped by the needs of its theme.” (DIEL 174)

Tyagaraja Paramasiva Kailasam (1885-1946), a bilingual playwright and a talented actor, wrote both in English and Kannada. As he was well acquainted with the rich tradition of the Kannada theatre and the glorious cultural heritage of our
country, Kailasam could make use of Ramayana and Mahabharata adroitly for the dramatic purpose. His English plays include *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfilment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *The Curse or Karna* (1946), *Keechaka* (1949), and *A Monologue* (1933). All the English plays of Kailasam are based on the various myths from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. He prefers Mahabharata to Ramayana as “the characters in the Mahabharata are all like us living rooted to this world” (Iyengar, IWE 236). Though Kailasam uses various myths from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata for his plays, he gives different treatment to them according to his “vision, mission, and imagination” (Nand Kumar 83). Kailasam chooses the characters from the Mahabharata and interprets them in the light of human values. In Kailasam’s mythical characters we find “quest for greatness” (Naik, Desai & Amur 1). His plays are actable that is why he gives elaborate stage directions.

*The Burden*, first published in *Little Lays and Plays* in 1933, handles the theme that Bhasa dramatized in his Sanskrit work “Pratimanatakam”, but Kailasam’s play is different as he exalts the character of Bharata. According to K.R.S. Iyengar Kailasam’s play “has a power and beauty of its own” (IWE 236). Prince Bharata, while returning from the grandfather’s place to Ayodhya, gets at the terrible truth that his father Dasaratha is dead and his brother Rama has been banished for fourteen years. Bharata is so enraged that he becomes wrathful against his mother Kaikeyi and denounces her for manipulating kingship in his favour and renounces such a kingship. He even takes the Royal Priest Vasistha to task for not having saved his father. Finally, the Priest Vasistha consoles him and directs him to his duty which is actually a burden placed on the shoulders of Bharata. The play is a fine expression of tragic emotion.
Fulfilment (1933), a sequel to Purpose, is “almost the crown of Kailasam’s dramatic art” (Iyengar, IWE 237). It adroitly presents the terrible act of Lord Krishna’s murdering Ekalavya and his mother in order to fulfil the divine purpose. The play presents how Lord Krishna, who is the destiny of Ekalavya, stabs him stealthily and then reveals him his divine nature.

The Purpose (1944), a play in two acts, is “one of the greatest contributions made by Kailasam to Indian drama in English” (S.K. Bhatta, Kailasam’s English Plays 89). It “unfolds Ekalavya’s youthful idealism during his discipleship in archery” (Iyengar, IWE 237). When Acharya Drona refuses to accept Ekalavya as his pupil with an intention to make Arjuna a great archer, he returns to his forest, makes a clay-image of Acharya Drona and starts practicing archery. With his sincerity and deep faith in his “Guru” and dogged perseverance, Ekalavya becomes an outstanding archer. He is so devoted to his Gurujee that when Arjuna blames Acharya Drana for teaching Ekalavya secretly and making him the great archer, Ekalavya immediately cuts his right thumb and offers it to Drona as his “Gurudakshina” (fee). This act of Ekalavya exalts his character. Kailasam contrasts the character of Ekalavya with that of Arjuna and shows how Ekalavya’s purpose of learning archery was selfless and Arjuna’s selfish.

Karna: The Brahmin’s Curse, known as The Curse or Karna (1946), is Kailasam’s “more sustained dramatic adventure” (Iyengar, IWE 237). The playwright describes it as “an impression of Sophocles in five acts”. In The Curse or Karna, by distorting the facts of the Mahabharata, Kailasam has glorified the character of Karna. Like Oedipus, Karna suffers only because of his fate. According to K.R.S. Iyengar, there is something of an Oedipus fatality and glow in Kailasam’s Karna. He is “caught in the meshes, checkmated at every turn, thwarted and defeated again and
again …but also purified and glorified in the process” (IWE 237). Kailasam’s digression and innovations, though bold and iconoclastic, raise no storms among the readers of Mahabharata.

In *Keechaka* (1949) Kailasam presents Keechaka as “a brave hero genuinely in love with Draupadi” (Naik, DIEL 160). The play is Kailasam’s boldest stride in the direction of iconoclasm. Unlike the Vyasa’s Keechaka, Kailasam’s Keechaka is a tragic hero with all good qualities arousing the feelings of pity and fear. While commenting on the play K.R.S. Iyengar observes: Kailasam almost transforms Keechaka into a hero in his own right, a man of steady loyalties, a fighter and a man of honour; and the driving force behind his actions is love rather than lust. (IWE 239)

Kailasam’s *A Monologue* presents women’s dependence on men. The play considers patriarchal culture to be real.

G.S. Amur has a very high opinion of T.P. Kailasam. He, in his article “Kailasam’s Quest for Greatness” justly remarks: “A talented actor who appeared in the amateur as well as the professional stage, he brought to the writing of drama an intimate knowledge of the theatre. It is for this reason that his plays whether in Kannada or English have a uniform technical excellence.” (186)

A.S.P Ayyar (1899-1963) is another dramatis of some distinction. He is “a vigorous critic of contemporary life” (Iyengar, IWE 242). His famous plays are – *In the Clutch of the Devil* (1926), *Sita’s Choice and Other Plays* (1935), *The Slave of Ideas and Other Plays* (1941), *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* (1942). His plays are “message oriented” (Shukla 5). According to R.N. Rai, Ayyar’s plays are “idealistic and reformistic” (16).
*Sita’s Choice* is a play in five acts. It deals with the theme of widow marriage. *Brahma’s Way* deals with the social problem of caste system. *The Slave of Ideas* present the conflict between Rangaraju, a young lawyer with spiritual leanings and his materialistic wife, Subhadra who develops extra-marital relations with Thimmaraju. *The Clutch of the Devil* exposes the hypocrite priests who use superstitions to exploit poor people. Raghavan and his wife believe that the death of their children is the result of black magic. So they spend a large amount of money on religious rituals to exorcise the black magic. But the religious rituals performed benefit priests and moneylenders and drives Raghavan mad.

Ayyar’s *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* is an allegorical play with touches of humour and irony. It is remarkable for the use of modern green room technique for the personified roles. *A Mother’s Sacrifice*, a historical play, highlights the noble sacrifice of Panna, the faithful nurse who saves the life of Prince Udaya Singh by substituting him for her own son. Panna has been glorified for her sacrifice and motherly love.

H.N. Chattopadhyaya is another great name in the field of Indian English drama. He was the first dramatist who imparted realism to Indian English drama by introducing working class characters on the stage. He made drama a vehicle for social protest. His plays can be classified into two groups – social plays and hagiological plays. His *Five Plays* (1937), a collection of his social plays, consists of *The Window, The Parrot, The Sentry’s Lantern, The Coffin and The Evening Lamp*. In these plays, Chattopadhyaya shows his sympathy for the suffering masses of the Indian society. Commenting on his plays in his article “Haindranath Chattopadhyaya’s The Window: A Study”, K. Venkata Reddy observes:“Like the plays of Arnold Wesker, they are warm, humane, sincere, passionate, compassionate, brave, honest, energetic,
outspoken, full of enthusiasm, full of concern. The enthusiasm is largely enthusiasm for paving the way for an egalitarian society. The concern is mainly concern for the well being of the worker.” (79)

Five Plays reveal Chattopadhyaya’s acute awareness of social problems. They “contain some of the characteristic work as a playwright revealing his social consciousness, flair for realism and the like in his prose writing” (Iyengar, IWE 233). The Window, dedicated to the brave textile workers of Parel, Bombay, realistically presents worker’s life, their exploitation by industrialists, their unhygienic surroundings, rising taxation and feeling of rebellion and resentment among them.

The Parrot criticizes the conventional morality that gets women caged and constrained. It deals with the theme of marriage and aims at liberating woman from tyranny in a male dominated society. It is about a woman’s life which resembles the life of a parrot in a cage. The play is a plea for the release of women from the bondage. The Sentry’s Lantern, dedicated to all the victims of Imperialist gallows, deals with the evils of imperialism. In the play a poet, a merchant, and a worker are awaiting the dawn when they are to be hanged. The merchant goes crazy due to the fear of death and fear of losing his wealth, wife and family. The poet is sorry to leave the beautiful world. The worker questions the existence of God and believes in the revolution.

The Coffin, dedicated to the progressive writers of India, is a biting satire on a bourgeois artist and his false world. It criticizes the snobbish living of these writers who are totally cut off from the people and their problems. It is a powerful plea for a purposeful writing. Mohan, a poet who lives in an ivory tower, loses his control over his wife Nalini, who elopes with a rich man. His daughter persuades her father from
her death bed to “write about starving babies, about cruel masters, about poor sad women, about people who are shot because they asked for bread” (Five Plays, 138).

*The Evening Lamp* presents the life of a young man who loves his own shadows. Chattopadhyaya’s social plays are realistic and symbolic. They are the “manifestoes of the new realism” (Iyengar, IWE 234).

Chattopadhyaya’s hagiological plays – *Raidas, Chokha Mela, Pundalik, Saku Bai, Jayadeva and Tukaram* – deal with certain situations in the lives of our religious leaders, mostly Maharashtrian saints. They are playlets rather than full length plays. In these plays there is a conflict between virtue and vice, good and evil, proclaiming the victory of the good. All the hagiological plays expose social evils fostered by caste Hindus. *Raidas* presents the utter contrast between the insolence of the Brahmans and the humble devotion of the saint Raidas. *Chokha Mela* exposes the vanity of the Brahmans stating that any one with true devotion could be a saint irrespective of caste and creed. *Ekanath* deals with the process of transformation in the life of a hesitant devotee who realizes that God dwells in a low scavenger as much as a high Brahmin. *Pundalik* deals with the theme of miraculous change of an unbeliever into a devotee. *Saku Bai* deals with a couple of important situations in the life of the Maharashtrian saint Saku Bai. *Jayadeva* reveals the humility and magnanimity of Jayadeva, an unexcelled composer and singer of songs. *Tukaram* is the best play among Chattopadhyaya’s hagiological plays in respect of characterization and development of the plot. The play brings out the saintly ardour and humility of saint Tukaram. It was staged all over India. It “could be regarded as one of the best Indian plays in English ever written” (Balram Gupta 144). *Siddhartha – Man of Peace* (1956), a full length play in eight Acts, is a straightforward enactment
of Gautama’s life and message of love and compassion which is most relevant today than ever before.

J. N. Lobo-Prabhu is another worth mentioning playwright whose contribution to Indian English drama can not be overlooked. He is a prolific writer who has written over a dozen plays. His *Mother of New India* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945) appeared before Independence. His *Collected Plays*, published in 1956, contains six plays – *Apes in the Parlour, The Family Cage, Flags of the Heart, Winding Ways, Love Becomes Light and Dog’s Ghost.)*

*Mother of New India* deals with the theme of social reformation. Narsa, who is mentally perturbed after the death of Inder, her fiancé, devotes herself to the reconstruction of her village and succeeds in it. People of her village lovingly call her “mother”. *Apes in the Parlour* deals with the life of elite who seeks happiness in illicit sex with Indira, a film star. *The family Cage* presents the predicament of a widowed sister in a joint family. Regarding Lobo-Prabhu’s *Collected Plays* K. R. S. Iyengar remarks: “Lobo-Prabhu’s energy is obvious, he can write dialogues with facility, he can devise situations, but his characters are rarely alive, and his denouements are seldom wholly convincing” (IWE 242).

Bharti Sarabhai is the first woman dramatist who has contributed to the growth of Indian English drama by writing two plays—*The Well of the People* and *Two Women*. She is a pioneer in the evolution of realistic drama. In her two plays she presents “different facets of Indian womanhood” (S.K. Bhatta, IED 58). Her first play *The Well of the People* (1943) shows a distinct impact of Gandhian thought. The plot of the play is based on the real story published in “Harijan”. An old lame woman who is unable to go on a pilgrimage to Kashi decides to dig a well with her savings for the
untouchables of her village. The play gives the message that ‘service to man is service to God’. *The Well of the People* reveals Bharti Sarabhai’s dramatic talent. It is “probably the only articulate work of literary art giving complete expression to the Gandhian age” (Mokashi-Punekar 139). While admiring the play for its dramatic excellence, K.R.S Iyengar observes: “Round the bare bones of this story, Bharti Sarabhai has allowed flesh to grow and blood streams to flow, and the play has thus become a fabric of symbolism and poetry, memory and melody, and evokes all the heart aches that are Mother India’s” (IWE 240).

Sarabhai’s *Two Women* “dramatizes the conflict between tradition and modernity, the material and the spiritual, driving home the point that God is within” (Reddy and Dhawan 15).

V. V. S. Iyengar (1871-1954) is yet another playwright whose contribution to Indian English drama is worth noting. He is a master of social comedy who presents in his plays “the incongruous, ludicrous and droll elements in the lives of the sophisticated middle class people most frequently encountered in cities like Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi” (Iyengar, IWE 241). His *At Any Cost* (1921) deals with the good treatment given by Akbar to the wife and sister of Rana Udai Singh after the siege of Chittor. His collection of plays “*Dramatic Divertissements*” (1921) consists of *Blessed in a Wife, Vichu’s Wife, The Surgeon General’s Prescription, The Point of View* and *Wait for the Stroke*. These plays depict social life in India with humour and satire. *Blessed in a Wife* shows how some men torture their wives by neglecting them and visiting concubines. Ramanathan betrays his faithful wife by having sexual relations with a concubine whereas his wife Lalita disguises herself as a nurse and serves her husband when he falls ill. *Vichu’s Wife* is a pure fun. Vishwanath Iyer known as Vichu would like to marry the girl who is under sixteen, tall, charming,
cultured, soft, tender, and delicate in manners. In order to gull him, Vichu’s friend Mohangopal disguises as Miss Bharati with all the qualifications Vichu aspires for and courts him. Vichu proposes her. Soon the truth comes to light and Vichu realizes his mistake. *The Point of View* dramatizes the greed of Sundari Bai and Girija Bai, the mother and wife respectively of ailing Rama Chandra Rao who wait for his death to inherit his property. *The Surgeon General’s Prescription* presents a dictatorial father, Sitapati who tries to marry his daughter Kamala to a rich landlord against her wish.

A. C. Krishnaswami’s *The Two Twice Born* deals with the predicament of young girls who are married to old men. Niranjan Pal’s *The Goddess* (1924) deals with the theme of corruption in religion. It shows how corrupt priests exploit poor and illiterate people in the name of religion. Abhiman, the chief priest, amasses wealth by making use of the blind faith of the religious-minded people. D.M. Borgaonkar’s *Image Brakers* shows how a group of young people form a league of Image breakers and rebel against the conventional marriage system.

Khawaja Ahmad Abbas’s *Invitation to Immortality* (1944) is about the elixir of life that makes man immortal. In the play, the scientist invents the elixir that makes man immortal. He announces that he will give the elixir to a person who convinces him of his worth. A film star, a British officer, and a priest try their best to convince the scientist of their worth but nobody succeeds. At last a worker comes and tells them that ‘work is the real elixir of life’. Abbas’s second play *Barrister at Law*, written in collaboration with Pragji Dossa, portrays Mahatma Gandhi’s life in South Africa.

Nalini Mohan Chatterjee’s *Krishna* (1937) presents the miracles performed by the Lord Krishna during his stay in Brindavan. According to S.K. Bhatta, the play
looks more like a series of conversation about some episodes in Krishna’s life than a
dramatic presentation. Its lengthy speeches and lack of action make the play unfit for
the stage (59).

Swami Sivananda’s *Radha’s Prem* (1945) deals with Radha’s love for the
Lord Krishna. K.S. Ramaswami Sastri’s *Droupadi* (1939) is a verse play in five acts
dramatizing the important incidents from Droupadi’s life. Droupadi, by forgiving her
enemies like Aswatthama, rises to the spiritual heights making final appeal to the
Lord to absorb her in His love’s eternal sea.

S. Fyzee Rahamin’s *Daughter of Ind* (1940) is a tragic love story of a noble
but low caste Indian girl Malti who sacrifices her life to save her English lover,
Grahm. The play is notable for its well constructed plot, characterization, effective
dialogue, and technique. K.R.S. Iyengar appreciates the play and says: “Though a
sentimental story, it is scaffolded by singular dramatic machinery. There is prologue,
and there is an Epilogue, the narrator butts in and comments on the action, flowers
have tongues and speak eloquently. The icy wind of politics blows in – and satire and
symbolism stalk together.” (IWE 242)

Balwant Gargi’s *The Vulture and Other Plays* (1941) is a collection of four
playlets namely *The Vulture, Mung-Wa, The Fugitive and The Matriarch*. He too is
concerned with the problems of society. His *The Vulture* presents the inhuman
exploitation of poor peasants – Fazloo and Rahima – by a landlord in a village.
“Realistic dialogue, the note of pathos, real and life-like characters and well structured
plot make *The Vulture* a stage worthy play”(Satish Kumar 14-15). *Mung-Wa* is a war
play dealing with the theme of Chinese patriotism. *The Fugitive* presents the
playwright’s views on ends, means and art. *The Matriarch* shows the consequence of excessive matriarchal authority of Parmeshwari over her son Surjit and Kirpi.

A. C. Dutt’s *Milly* (1945) is a domestic play in three acts. Purushottam Tricumdas’s *Sauce for the Goose* (1946) is a farce on feminism. V. Rampall’s *Almighty Gold* is a story of an industrialist, Krishencher who worships gold and forces his son to marry a rich girl against his wish to marry a poor girl whom he loves. T.K.N. Trivikram’s *Zero B.C. or Christopanishad* (1947) glorifies the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

V. Narayanan is another playwright of note who has contributed to the development of Indian English drama by writing four playlets published in his collection of playlets *Where God Is Not and Other Playlets* (1933). *The Lawyer and His Daughter* shows how young widows are tormented in the name of religion in the patriarchal society. Padma, a virgin widow, escapes from the clutches of her adamant and orthodox father and marries Shankaran, the friend of her brother with the support of her mother Janaki and brother, Nathan. In *Where God is Not* Narayanan exposes the corrupt priests who organize temple festivals with a view to impress women with temple-wealth rather than to inculcate any religious values in them. Beauty is a Leveller of Castes presents the problem of inter-caste marriage in the orthodox Hindu Family. Narayanan attacks the dowry system in his play *You Are Not My Husband*. Commenting on the plays of V. Narayanan, S. K. Bhatta observes:

> On the whole, unlike V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar who only provides light entertainment, Narayanan handles his social themes with a greater seriousness and a more refined dialogue. He can maintain suspense, and does not in introduce unnatural sequences. Though his dialogue
harps upon social problems, he does not overdo it so as to eclipse action, thus making his plays more stage worthy. (73)

Annayya’s *The Bride of God* (1931) deals with the episode of Dara’s murder by his brother Aurangzeb and the escape of Dara’s daughter Dilara from the tyrant’s clutches. Mimalini Sarabhai’s *Captive Soil* (1945) and N.R. Deobhankar’s *The Absconders* (1947) deal with the freedom movement.

Thus, the Indian English Drama in pre-independent era was insignificant both in quality and quantity. Though they had the thematic variety, they were closet dramas written mainly to be read. However, the playwrights like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Bharati Sarabhai and T. P. Kailasam paved the way for the post-independent Indian English Drama.

**Indian English Drama after Independence:**

Though the Indian English Drama before Independence is known for its poetic excellence, symbolism, its commitment to social problems and moral values, it was seldom produced on the stage. A very few Indian dramatists had shown their concern in producing their plays. Asif Currimbhoy is one of the greatest modern Indian dramatists in English who wrote plays for the stage. He wrote twenty nine plays with the rapid speed of two plays in a year from 1959 to 1975. His plays deal with the social, political and religious problems of contemporary society. That’s why Faubion Bowers in his “Introduction” to *Asif Currimbhoy’s Plays* rightly hails him as “India’s first authentic voice in the theatre”. By fusing the elements of Pantomime, dance and song, he succeeds brilliantly in creating powerful auditory and visual images that go a long way in making his plays vitally theatrical. C.V. Venugopal, a great critic on the plays of Asif Currimbhoy, has praised the talented playwright in these words: “If
Indian drama in English has had a significant breakthrough of late, only a handful of playwrights can take the credit for it. Among these few, Asif Currimbhoy most definitely figures prominently. For sheer fecundity as a playwright, he has no equal.” (262)

Currimbhoy has handled almost every facet of drama including farce, fantasy, comedy, melodrama etc. He was invited as a playwright to America by Rockefeller Foundation in 1965-1966. His plays were performed at Universities, Repertory Theatres and an experimental Coffee House theatre in Greenwich.

Asif Currimbhoy is a unique playwright of the post independent era who has “abundant stage sense” (S.K.Bhatta 111). His plays provide “an excellent alternative to plays by foreign authors, which form the staple entertainment of English speaking audiences” (Melwani 105). According to K.R.S Iyengar, Currimbhoy’s contribution to the development of Indian English drama is both impressive and distinctive.


*Inquilab* (1970) deals with the theme of naxalite revolt that took place in West Bengal in 1970. It is a plea to solve the problem of social injustice with the principle of non-violence. *The Refugee* is devoted to the problems of Bangladesh refugees. The play gives the message that we should love humanity irrespective of nationality, caste
or creed of human beings. In *The Refugee* Asif Currimbhoy “explores the predicament of humanity caught in the political restlessness, moral mooring and psychological alienation” (P.B. Reddy 66). *Sonar Bangla* (1972) depicts the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971, the pangs and pains of Bangladeshi refugees and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation. It also presents the tyranny of Pakistan in East Bengal during the Indo-Pak war in 1971.

*The Dissident MLA*, based on the dissolution of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly in 1976, “reflects contemporary Indian political scene” (M.S.Babu 19). Currimbhoy’s *Darjeeling Tea* dramatizes the exploitation and oppression of the poor workers by the landlords of tea-estates. *The Doldrummers* depicts the life of the shack dwellers, in all its poverty and squabbles, its love and small joys, and their basic humanity (C.V. Venugopal 267). It also presents the life of sex and illicit drinks through a set of degenerate young people. *The Tourist Mecca*, a romantic play, is the story of two lovers—Keshav, a tourist guide and Janet, a tourist from U.S.A.—who in the end passively accept the continuance of ‘life movement’ in a separation. Currimbhoy’s *This Alien…Nature Land* presents the disintegration of Indian middle class Jewish family. It also shows that sex and love are necessary for a healthy life.

*Goa*, a political play, presents a story of an Indian boy’s love for a Goan girl highlighting colonialism and colour prejudice. *An Experiment with Truth* deals with Gandhian theme—the fast unto death of Gandhi to restore the Hindu-Muslim unity, the historical Salt-March, the conflict in Gandhi and finally Gandhi’s assassination. The play is a fine balance of ‘achievement’ and ‘fallibility’ of Mahatma Gandhi. Currimbhoy has used the stream to consciousness technique for the first time in the history of Indian English drama.
The Miracle Seed dramatizes the severe drought in Maharashtra in 1972-73. The Clock presents a salesman Henry’s frustration and rebellion against the existing order. The Dumb Dancer, a psychological play, portrays the story of a Kathakali dancer who begins to think himself Bhima while playing the role of Bhima.

Om is a religious play in three acts in which the playwright tries to trace the development of Hinduism from Vedic days. Om Mane Padme Hum! deals with the Chinese invasion over Tibet and Dalai Lama’s flight to India. The Captives is a play on China War and Abbe Faria is about the 19th century Goan priest. Angkor is concerned with the vicissitudes in the history of Indo-China.

D. M. Borgaonkar is another playwright of note. His One Act Plays (1957) consists of ten one-act-plays many of which deal with the social problems. His Bhasmasura presents the dehumanizing effects of science on man through Professor Dinesh Chandra, a man of science who sacrifices human values and loses his wife Shanti in his quest for scientific knowledge. His Cancelled presents the conflict between the prosaic husband Kailas and the romantic wife Leela. In Rakhi Borgaonkar criticizes the false pride of people who deny the offer of help from the people of low social status. The Temple Entry is about the social deformity that did not allow untouchables to enter into the temples of Hindus.

Lakhan Deb’s Tigers Claw (1967) and Murder at the Prayer Meeting (1976) are the historical plays that have widened the scope of historical drama in Indian English literature. His Tiger’s Claw, a verse play in three acts, effectively dramatizes the killing of Afzal Khan by the Maratha King Shivaji. The play depicts Shivaji as a wise, shrewd and ruthless warrior and a generous and noble man. Commenting on the theme of The Tiger’s Claw, K.R.S. Iyengar remarks: “The Shivaji-Afzal Khan theme
has elements of pure drama, and Lakhan Deb has presented a credible enough Shivaji whose heroic stature and essential nobility are hardly affected by the grim necessity that drives him to deal with his adversary in the way he does”(IWE 264).

Lakhan Deb’s *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* dramatizes the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathu Ram Godse, a Hindu fanatic. Gurucharan Das wrote three plays—*Larins Sahib* (1970), *Mira* (1971), and *Jakhoo Villa*. But his fame rests on *Larins Sahib*. It is a historical play in which Das “succeeds admirably in evoking the nineteenth century colonial Indian background” (Naik, HIEL 262). The play is based on events in the Punjab in 1846-47 after the death of Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab. The play shows how Henry Lawrence, the Resident in the court of Dalip Singh, 12 year old son of Ranjit Singh, emerges as the well-wisher of the people of Punjab and kisses Rani passionately. The play also shows how he assumes the role of the Lion of the Punjab and refuses to give the Koh-I-Noor diamond to Rani. The East India Company doubts his intentions and dismisses him from his post. Thus, he gets the reward of his misdeeds.

*Larins Sahib* differs from other Indian English plays in its use of Indian English for dialogue. By writing natural and crisp dialogue in Indian English, Gurucharan Das has given a new dimension to the Indian English drama. He has used “the kind of hybrid English we speak, interspersed with Indian expression” (Bijay Kumar Das 6). By using the Indian expressions like ‘kya yar’, ‘chalo Bhai’, ‘Angrez Badshah’, ‘Sat-sri-akal’, Shabash’ etc, he has imparted naturalness and typical Indian flavour to dialogue.
Mira (1971), another play by Gurucharan Das, deals with Mira’s Divine love for Lord Krishna. It was successfully produced as a ballet in New York and as a play in Bombay. Jakhoo Villa presents the decadence of a Hindu family in Simala.

Nissim Ezekiel, a great poet, has also contributed to the Indian English drama by writing Three Plays (1969), Song of Deprivation (1969), and Don’t Call It Suicide? Three Plays consists of Nalini, a comedy in three acts; Marriage Poem, a tragic comedy; and The Sleep-Walkers, an Indo-American farce. These plays deal with the hollow middle class life in cities and the social institution of marriage. Nalini exposes Bharat and Raj, the two advertising executives, who are full of vanity and hollow within. Both are ignorant of art but pretend that they have interest in art. In order to please Nalini and therein to win her favour, Raj and Bharat decide to organize exhibition for her paintings. When Bharat offers his help to Nalini to organize exhibition, she unmasks him and shows him that he is not what he seems to be. She declines his offer of help and walks out. The play exposes the middle class snobbery and affectation.

Marriage Poem is a domestic tragi-comedy in one act. It shows that extra-marital relations make the married life miserable. Naresh is married to Mala who loves him sincerely. But Naresh flirts with Leela and Malti, wives of his friends. His extra-marital relations with other women make Mala’s married life unhappy. The play ends happily with the children making their appearance in a reunited family.

The Sleep-walkers is “a hilarious rollicking farce” (Karnani 121). It satirises the fascination of Indian middle class for Americans because they are rich. We Indians do not hesitate to compromise our self-respect to Americans. M. Morris, an American journalist and his wife are warmly greeted on their arrival in Bombay by
Mr. Varma, Mr. Raman and Miss Ganguly. Thus, Ezekiel shows the depravity of so-called elite in India.

*Song of Deprivation* is a comic morality play in one act. In the play the two lovers who fail to meet in real life choose to make love on telephone. The play exposes the hypocrisy of Indian society that does not allow boys and girls to make love freely.

Ezekiel’s *Don’t Call It Suicide?* (1993), a tragedy in two acts, deals with the suicide of Mr. Nanda’s eldest son who was sensitive idealist and Mr. Nanda’s suicide at the end of the play. It is “a criticism of the contemporary society which looks down upon the failed persons and discriminates against the weak. It exposes the ills of the society like unfair treatment given to the women in general and widows in particular in our time” (Bijay.Kumar Das 125).

Ezekiel’s plays are stageworthy. There are elaborate stage directions in his plays. They are full of irony, wit, humour, and parallelism. His plays are glimpses of “cross-sections of contemporary society” (S.K.Bhatta 147). Though these plays have certain weakness, yet they are stage worthy. Chetan Karnani comments:

> In his satire of current fashion, in his exposure of pose and pretence, he comes very close to the spirit of some English social satirists in the theatre. Like them, he gives elaborate stage directions, visualizing his plays as a thing not meant to be read but to be seen. This gives a certain totality of effect which can not be imagined in cold print. (126)

G.V. Desani’s *Hali* (1950), an allegorical play in poetic prose, is a presentation of everyone’s quest for fulfilment. It is an autobiographical play
depicting Desani’s tragic love affair leading to frustration and failure. The protagonist of the play Hali is named after the Muslim saint who stands for humanity at large. It is a story of “Hali’s confrontation with the power of creation and destruction, life and death, his realization of the supremacy of love transcending time and space” (Satish Kumar, 39). Hali, also known as Girija, faces a series of misfortunes—death of his mother Mira and his fawn Isha, and his beloved Rooh. After ten days he passes through a nightmare of passions, visions and dreams. Ultimately he realizes the essential truth of human existence that beauty is evanescent and man must accept the reality of existence. He realizes that godlike love is the summit of human attainment. The play is noted for its symbolism. It has been admired both by European and Indian critics for its originality, symbolism, vividness of imaginary and sheer apocalyptic quality. It was staged at the Watergate Theatre London in 1950 and was also staged in India.

Satya Dev Jaggi’s two one-act plays—The Point of Light and End of Hunger—appeared in 1967. The Point of Light is about a dreamy teacher and artist Rajan who lives in his Guru’s ashram at Haridwar by deserting his wife. His End of Hunger deals with the unending sexual hunger of Surinder who talks of love and poetry all the time.

Girish Karnad is one of India’s leading playwrights. He is an adept practitioner of the performing arts. His contribution to Indian Drama in English rests on Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala, Tale-Danda and The Fire and the Rain which he himself transcreated into English. These plays brought him international identification as a distinguished playwright.

Girish Karnad, a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford from 1960 to 1963, a Bhaba Fellow from 1970 to 1972, is a recipient of the Sangeet Akademi Award for playwriting and Kamala Devi Award for his best play Hayavadana. He also chaired
Sangeet Natak Akademi for a five-year term in 1988. R. K. Dhawan in his article estimates Girish Karnad’s contribution to Indian theatre and drama as under:

Girish Karnad is the foremost playwright of the contemporary Indian stage. He has given the Indian theatre a richness that could probably be equated only with his talents as an actor-director. His contribution goes beyond theatre; he has directed feature films, documentaries, and television serials in Kannada, Hindi and English, and has played leading roles as an actor in Hindi and Kannada art films, commercial movies, and television serials. He has represented India in foreign lands as an emissary of art and culture. (13)

Karnad is a man of multi-faceted personality. He has enriched the Indian drama in English by his effective use of Indian myths and folk tales to represent contemporary reality. His *Tughlaq* dramatizes the life and turbulent reign of Muhammad-bin Tughlaq, who ruled over India from 1324 to 1351. Karnad presents Tughlaq as a shrewd politician who kills his father and brother for the political power. In the course of time Tughlaq takes many innovative and ideal decisions such as giving equal rights to Hindus, introducing copper currency, transferring the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, abolishment *jiziyā* tax, compulsion of the five times prayer a day etc. These decisions are ideal in principle but fail because of his inability to win people’s support, his failure to foresee the flaws in schemes and the corrupt officials in his reign.

In *Tughlaq*, Karnad presents the conflict between idealism and realism. Karnad was fascinated by Tughlaq’s reign because it reflected the political mood of disillusionment that prevailed in sixties in India.
Girish Karnad’s *Hayavadana* (1975) “gives expression to the Indian imagination in its richest colours and profound meanings” (Dhanavel 9). It is based on Thomas Mann’s *The Transposed Heads* and *Kathasaritsagar*. It presents the theme of “physical deformity caused by the alienation of the mind (head) and the body” (M.S. Babu 84). The play also deals with the search for identity and the pursuit to attain completeness. Karnad begins the play with the worship of Lord Ganesha who is an embodiment of imperfection or incompleteness. All the characters in the play – Devadatta, Kapila, Padmini and Hayavadana—try their best to achieve completeness but only Hayavadana succeeds. Hayavadana, a horseman, in his pursuit of completeness becomes a complete horse instead of a complete man. Padmini cannot achieve a perfect husband with Devadatta’s clever head and Kapila’s strong body. The reunification of the head and the body is the only solution to the physical deformity or incompleteness.

*The Fire and the Rain* (1998) is based on the myth of Yavakri that occurs in the Vana Parva of the *Mahabharata*, and which is narrated by the ascetic Lomasha to the Pandavas as they wander across the land during their exile. The play deals with the theme of betrayal from time immemorial. It presents the Aravasu’s betrayal by his brother Paravasu, the chief priest performing a Yajna to bring rains to the draught-stricken land.

*Naga-Mandala*, dedicated to Ramanujan, is based on two Kannada folk-tales that Karnad heard from A. K. Ramanujan. Story, a beautiful young woman, narrates the story of Appanna and Rani to a playwright who is cursed with death for making his audience bore. The play presents the agony and anguish faced by women in gender-biased society. It questions the moral values formed by patriarchal society to oppress women.
The play *Naga-Mandala* “uncovers the injustice of the patriarchal moral code which demands the faithfulness of a woman to her husband but not the faithfulness of a man to his wife” (M.Sarat Babu 37). The play is a serious warning to the patriarchal society to consider the sexual needs and desires of women. If they are deprived of sex by locking them in, they are bound to commit adultery either knowingly or unknowingly. “At the higher level of symbolism, Naga represents a cultural leader who is instrumental in bringing about a socio-cultural reform” (M.Sarat Babu 248).

Karnad’s *Tale-Danda* “exposes the ugly deformity of the Hindu society by depicting the twelfth century communal struggle in the city of Kalyan in North Karnataka when Bijjala was the King” (M.Sarat Babu 46). To draw attention to the caste consciousness, Karnad presents an episode of inter-caste marriage between Kalawati, a Brahmin girl and Sheelavanta, a Panchama boy. The marriage leads to the fateful war between *Sharanas*, devotees of Lord Shiva and orthodox caste Hindus. The play shows how the caste Hindus resent Basavanna’s philosophy of equality.

Pratap Sharma is another playwright who has contributed to the development of India English drama with his bold treatment to the theme of sex. His two plays – *The Professor Has a Warcry* (1970) and *A Touch of Brightness* (1973) – deal with the theme of sex. *The Professor Has a Warcry* presents the anguish of Virendra, an illegitimate son of a mother who has been successively raped by a Muslim and an Englishman after having been deserted by her husband Professor Gopal. The play also throws light on how helpless women are sexually harassed and raped in a male dominated society. At last Virendra and The Professor kill each other in a fight. The play is a melodrama with effective dialogue.

Sharma’s second play *A Touch of Brightness* is a realistic presentation of the red-light area in Bombay where women sell their bodies for the sake of money. The
picture of Bhabi Rani’s brothel and its surrounding is realistic. M. K. Naik, while praising the thematic boldness of the play says, “The play is to be commended for its thematic boldness, which however, is marred by an obvious attempt to dish out sensational superficialities to titillate a foreign taste” (HIEL 261).

Rajender Paul is a talented playwright who contributes to the Indian English drama by using non-conventional technique in *Ashes Above Fire* (1970). The play dramatizes four realistic situations to illustrate four different aspects of love. It is a play in four episodes with different titles. The first episode *Tea Leaves in Cold Water* presents a nineteen year girl Anju’s strong yearning to marry Shammi, a youth. The second episode *Boiling Kettle* depicts the love of Mrs. Anjali Kumar, a woman of thirty three, for Sham Kumar. * Ember Light*, the third episode, presents a maid servant Anjali’s desire to make Prof. S. Kumar as her life partner. And the last episode *The Duet* is about an old couple—Anjali Devi and Sham Nath in their sisties and Sham Nath’s affair with Nikki, a young maid servant. Stage worthiness, crisp dialogue and life-like characters *Ashes above Fire* a memorable play.

Dina Mehta’s *The Myth Makers* (1969), the Padamsree Prize winner play, exposes provincial parochialism and intolerance of the people living in Bombay against those who have come from other states. Arati Nagarwalla’s *The Bait* (1969) is a three act play dealing with the unpolluted loyalty of an aboriginal villager Panna to his wife. Shri Devi Singh’s *The Purple Braided People* (1970) is a poetic drama dealing with the theme of the decay of aristocracy.

Murli Das Melwani’s *Deep Roots* (1970) portrays the conflict between tradition and modernity in the upper middle class of Indian society. Arvind marries a
girl of his choice named Neena against the wishes of his father. The play presents the conflict between son and father, modernity and tradition, younger and old generation.

Shiv K. Kumar’s *The Last Wedding Anniversary* (1975) deals with the theme of marriage. The wedding anniversary of Lalit Khanna, a sensitive editor of famous magazine and Rupa, a popular socialite, turns out to be the last wedding anniversary as their marriage breaks up with the arrival of Neela, Lalit’s first love, on their second wedding anniversary. The play is noted for its portrayal of characters and for crisp and effective dialogue.

Deben Laha’s Play *Naked in the Mirror* exposes the hypocrisy of modern people. V. Subba Rao’s *The Tool of the Gods* (1958) deals with man’s greed for money. Kaiwara Raja Rao’s *The Accused* (1961) is a Bhavan’s Journal Prize-winning play. It presents the distress of an idealist who is a victim of man-made laws. Husenali Chagla’s *The Director General* (1968) shows how a corrupt Director General of Munshi Boots misuses his power to amass wealth by deceiving his master.

M. V. Rama Sarma is another significant dramatist writing in English. His *Collected Plays* appeared in 1982. His *Shakuntala* and *Urvasi* show his knowledge of eastern drama whereas *Youth and Crabbed Age, Like to Like* and *The Busy World* show his knowledge of Western theatre. His play *Towards Marriage* deals with the problem of marriage and *The Carnival* brings out the clash of interests between the rich and the poor.

Vera Sharma’s *Life is Like That* (1997) Derek Antao’s *Give Us This Day Our Black Sheet* (1980), Gieve Patel’s *Mister Behram* (1988), Dina Mehta’s *Brides Are Not For Burning* (1993), and Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Harvest* (1998) are some of the worth noting plays written during the last two decades of the 20th century.
Manjula Padmanabhan came to the lime light when her play *Harvest* (1998) won the first prize in the first Onassis International Cultural Competition. She is the first Indian dramatist writing in English to win an honour abroad. *Harvest* is a futuristic play in which the sale of human organs has become all too common. The time of this dystopia is the year 2010 and the setting Bombay.

Padmanabhan’s *Lights Out*, which appeared in *Body Blows: Women, Violence and Survival: Three Plays* (2000), deals with the victimization of women in Indian society. It presents “the tragic spectacle of the daily rape of women, watched at a distance by the middle class characters. Leela and Naina are anguished by the cries for help, but the men—Bhaskar and Mohan—quieten their conscience by arguing that the victims are after all only prostitutes, not “decent” women.

Polie Sengupta’s *Mangalam* is another play that appeared in *Body Blows: Women, Violence and Survival: Three Plays* (2000). In *Mangalam* Sengupta presents Tamil Brahmin joint family whose members comment on a play about the victims of a rape, who themselves are involved in domestic violence. Sengupta has used ‘a play within a play’ technique to heighten the ironic effect.

Zubin Driver, Ninaz Khodaiji and Ramu Ramanathan belong to the generation of writer-directors. Zubin Driver, who was influenced by Harold Printer, set up a Theatre Group called Spontaneous Assembly in Mumbai in 1991. His recent play *Missing People* is a collection of powerful and moving monologues exploring the lives of a television presenter, a lonely house wife and a madman against Mumbai’s unforgiving urban landscape. His *Wormplay*, a play in two acts, falls into the Theatre of the Absurd tradition. It emphasizes the purposelessness of human life.
Ninaz Khodaiji has had a passion for the world of theatre. After completing her graduation in English literature from St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai, she did an M.A. in Theatre Directing from Middlesex University, New York. She was writer in Residence at Oval House Theatre, London from July 2005 to March 2006. *Insomania* and *Strangers* are worth mentioning plays written by her. Her play *Insomania* was not only performed in India but also in London at the Nehru Centre in April 2004 and at the Oval in November 2005.

Ramu Ramanathan’s *Mahadevbhai*, first premiered at the Prithvi Theatre on 15th November 2002, criticizes the politics based on caste and religion and politicians who play the anti-Gandhi card for their selfish motives. His play *Collaborators* won the BBC Radio playwriting Regional Award in 2003. His play *3 Sakina Manzil*, set in 1944, deals with the Bombay harbour blast. His recent plays are *Medha and Zoombish, Cotton 56, Polyester 84*, and *Three Ladies of Ibsen*.

Thus, the Indian English Drama after independence is marching on the right path in the hands of a few dramatists like Girish Karnad, Manjula Padmanabhan, and Mahesh Dattani. I remember the words of S.K. Bhatta who rightly commented on the future of Indian English Drama. He says, “On the whole, the prospect is certainly not bleak provided we have playwrights solidly grounded in the Indian tradition and yet willing to experiment, and also a living theatre to subject their art to the kind of test which alone can prove the authenticity of their dramatic genius” (202).
1.6 Mahesh Dattani: A Multi-Dimensional Personality

Mahesh Dattani was born on 7th August, 1958 in Bangalore where his parents moved to from Gujarat. He was admitted in Baldwin High School and St. Joseph College of Arts and Science, Bangalore for high school and college education respectively. He graduated in History, Economics, and Political Science and did his post-graduation in Marketing and Advertising Management. He began his career as a copy-writer in an advertising firm. Then he joined his family business. He has been interested in drama from his childhood. His association with business and management did not diminish his interest in theatre. In early 1980s he joined Bangalore Little Theatre and started taking part in workshops, acting, directing plays. He took lessons in western ballet under the guidance of Morley Andre at Alliance Françoise de Bangalore from 1984 to 1987. He also took lessons in Bharatnatyam under the guidance of Chandrabhaga Devi and Krishna Rao in Bangalore from 1986 to 1990. As a child, he was greatly influenced by the popular Gujarati plays staged in Bangalore and by Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, the American playwrights. The Indian playwrights who influenced him a great deal are Madhu Rye and Vijay Tendulkar. In his interview given to Lakshmi Subramanyam he says, “The playwrights Madhu Rye influenced me a great deal in his portrayal of middle class Gujarati hypocrisies. Vijay Tendulkar’s Silence! The Court is in Session and Sakharam Binder impressed me with their complex portrayal of women characters” (Lakshmi Subramanyam 134). He founded his own theatre group named Playpen in 1984 in Bangalore and started directing plays.

Dattani has a multi-dimensional personality; he is a director, actor, dancer, teacher and writer all in one. Initially he was interested in acting, but afterwards he
turned to directing plays. As a director he felt the scarcity of Indian plays written in English. Therefore he started writing plays in English out of necessity and it became a passion with him. He makes himself busy in conducting workshops for actors, directors and playwrights. He also teaches theatre courses at the summer session programme of Portland State University, Oregon, U. S. A. His experience in Bharatnatyam dance finds best expression in his play *Dance like a Man*.

**Dattani’s Radio and Stage Plays:**

- Where There’s a Will (1988)
- Dance Like a Man (1989)
- Tara (1990)
- Bravely Fought the Queen (1991)
- Final Solutions (1993)
- Night Queen (1996)
- Do the Needful (1997)
- On a Muggy Night in Mumbai (1998)
- Seven Steps Around the Fire (1999)
- The Swami and Winston (2000)
- Tale of the Mother Feeding Her Child (2000)
- Thirty Days in September (2001)
- Clearing the Rubble (2001)
- The solos and Dear Diary (2005)
- Brief Candle

Besides these plays, Dattani has also written some screen plays. They are: *Chalo Memsahib* (1992), *Hum Tum aur Woh* (1994), *Ek Chingari Ki Khoj Mein*
Mahesh Dattani is “one of India’s best and most serious contemporary playwrights writing in English” (IHT Quoted on cover page, CP). He is the promising playwright of modern India. He is “a national treasure and has honed his skills and made his name not only in theatres worldwide, but in the cinema, and in writing for BBC radio” (Multani 54). His plays “speak across linguistic and cultural divides— they will work equally effectively in England or Italy, India or Brazil…They use Indian mythology, Indian traditions, Indian dance, Indian English and Indian social problems—yet speak of themes which touch any audience: the search for individual identity inside and outside the family, the need for happiness, love, sexual fulfilment, security; the loneliness and emptiness of superficially successful lives; belonging and not belonging, the pain and pathos of keeping up appearances”(John Mc Rae 56).

Like Ibsen and Shaw, Dattani deals with social issues such as forced arranged marriages, sex and gender discrimination, gender inequality and injustice, violence against women, communal differences and distrust, child sexual abuse etc. He has “Ibsenite talent for revealing the secrets of family, but…Unlike Ibsen’s plays, Dattani’s are plays of healing rather than of destruction” (Mc Rae 57). His plays are “very much plays of ideas, with big issues at their heart. But they are plays of ideas with action, constantly in movement and constantly throwing up unexpected shifts of perception, changes of tone, and new insights into character” (Mc Rae 57).

Dattani’s is the voice of the marginalised people. With his microscopic eyes, he handles the invisible issues of Indian society. The problems of hijras and homosexuals occupy a central place in his plays. In this connection, Asha Kuthari
Chaudhuri says: “The preoccupation with ‘fringe’ issues forms an important element in Dattani’s work—issues that remain latent and suppressed, or are pushed to the periphery, come to occupy central stage quite literally” (47).

Mahesh Dattani, in an interview with Angelie Multani, states: “A writer always has a theme, a place, a character that proves to be a source of energy without which the writer will not have the creative, emotional or intellectual stamina to last through the process of writing. With me it happens to be marginal people amongst others. Women interest me a great deal. I draw a lot of energy from the women I know” (Multani 166). That’s why his plays dramatise the subjugation of women in the middle class patriarchal society.

Thus, the plays of Dattani chronicle the social ills, hypocrisy, follies and foibles of the middle class people living in metros, and sex and gender bias of the heterosexual society. They are “the plays of today, sometimes as actual as to cause controversy, but at the same time they are the plays which embody many of the classic concern for world drama” (John McRae 55).

Mahesh Dattani’s plays are set in the middle class Indian society. His plays, as Dattani says, are “true reflections of my time, place and socio-economic background” (Preface, CP xv). To him, theatre is the reflection of what you observe. But he also admits, “The function of drama . . . is not merely to reflect the malfunction of society, but to act like freak mirrors in a carnival and to project grotesque images of all that passes for normal in our world. It is ugly, but funny” (Quoted in Chaudhuri 26).

Dattani prefers English as a medium of expression as it unites a larger community in India and abroad. He wanted theatre to meet the challenges of multilingual community of India. Dattani says, “You’ve got to be true to your
expression also. English is for me a sort of given. It’s my language as it is to a lot of Indians here and abroad" (Menon, Rajiv and K.S. Prakash 2003).

Mahesh Dattani gives importance to language as a means of communication but he gives more importance to the performance of a play than the language because in drama communication of ideas takes place through performance. He sees himself as a craftsman and writes plays “to be performed” (CP xi).

Dattani has enriched the Indian English Drama by experimenting in both the theme and techniques. He has used dramatic devices dexterously. The use of ‘Chorus’ to represent the violent mob on the stage and the use of ‘diary’ as a narrative technique in Final Solutions, use of ‘Thought’ and ‘Voice-over’ to peep into the psyche of characters in Do the Needful and Seven Steps Around the Fire, direct address to the audience in Where There’s a Will, elaborate stage directions, use of flashback technique to highlight the past, multi-level stage and simultaneous actions in nearly all the plays are some of the example of his adroit use of dramatic devices.

Thus, Mahesh Dattani’s greatness as a dramatist lies in dramatising the contemporary social reality. The dextrous mingling of form and content, use of everyday English spoken by most of the middle class Indians, more emphasis on performance of his plays, and innovative experiments in dramatic techniques make him unique in the field of Indian English Drama. He has proved himself a great dramatist by winning the Sahitya Akademi award for his book of plays Final Solutions and Other Plays in 1998. That’s why Alyque Padamsee rightly proclaims, “At last we have a playwright who gives sixty million English-speaking Indians an identity” (CP cover page).
The following pages are an attempt to study Mahesh Dattani’s plays in the light of above observations.