



Research Paper

Mahesh Dattani: An Innovative Writer of Marginalized Community

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ABSTRACT

Many great writers have **contributed** to the development of contemporary Indian English Dramas. They are the dramatists who have **strengthened** the Indian English Dramas. Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sirkar Vijay Tendulkar, Girsh Karnad and Mahesh Dattani are the world **renowned** dramatist who continued to dominate the Indian English plays. Mahesh Dattani's name in contemporary Indian English plays is not a question. Dattani did not address any of the problems of the society, whatever the condition or not. No doubt Dattani tries to **establish** a new **innovative** empire through his thinking. He focuses on marginalized community and point out how they are compels to live a life of aloofness. They are brutally assaulted by upper caste people. It is strange that nobody wants to know their miserable condition.

Keynote Words: Contributed Renowned Empire
Innovative Strengthened Marginalized

Received 24 September, 2021; Revised: 05 October, 2021; Accepted 07 October, 2021 © The author(s) 2021. Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

Mahesh Dattani is a prominent figure of contemporary Indian English Literature. His literary genius can be seen that he is the only English dramatist who won the Sahitya Akedemy Award in 1998. His Sahitya Akedemy Award citation reads as:

Dattani..... probes tangled attitudes in contemporary India towards communal differences, consumerism and gender..... a brilliant contribution to Indian English Drama.¹

Dattani knows very well that English is a language of the entire world. It can link both Indian and Western. Therefore he wants to show the whole world a mirror on the present situation. He explains his own views in choosing writing in English in the following words:

You've got to be true to your expressions. English is for me a sort of given .It's my language as it is to a lot of Indians here and abroad.²

Dattani knows very well that the plays are written for the stage. Dattani focuses on human relationship. His handling with human relation is really superb. The themes of his plays are taken from Indian mythology, rituals and tradition and the contemporary problems of Indians society but highlighting these problems, Dattani touches them human emotions, love, passions and sensitivities. John Mc Rae writes in his introduction, "They are 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 of world drama."³

No doubt Dattani is a multifarious dramatist of the today. He presents new innovative ideas through his plays. He tells himself in his conversation, "Theatre to me is a reflection of what you observe—I write plays for the sheer pleasure of communicating through his dynamic medium." (Anita Nair 24) In his play Tara, Dattani focuses on the problem of gender discrimination and parental authority that leads the death of innocent girl Tara. Dattani shows here different aspect of the problem. Tara and Chandra are cojoined twins and if they are separated, it will bring a lot of chaos into the family.

The major issue which is shown by Dattani that Tara's parents wanted Chandan to be the beneficiary of the separation. This is much regretting that Tara's importance was not recognized by any person of the family. The result is that their separation becomes a mere illusion. Tara and Chandra were the objects of oppression

because of one unjust decision. But the irony of life is that though she (Tara) has done a great sacrifice still she has no value of her recognition.

Dattani's innovative outlook can be seen in his play, *Final Solution*. He deals the theme of Hindu-Muslims riots and its influence on society. It means the play presents the contemporary problem of communal division. The Disharmony between Hindus and Muslims has become a dynamic issue in the society. It is emerging rapidly day by day. In the beginning of the play we see two muslim boys Bobby and Jawed are trying to get shelter in the house of a hindu named Ramnik Gandhi. Normally the differences begin. Both have different way of living their religion, culture, habits and attitude. There is no similarity in. Both try to pose superior to another. The story runs from present to past. When Ramnik takes shelter in his family, his mother Hardika enrages.

Hardika: How could he let these people into my house?

Hardika: They killed his grandfather! (Collected Plays)

Dattani wants to tell the hatred for Muslims can be seen by the Hardika. Hardika thinks that these Muslims boys killed her father but in reality she is unaware of the truth. The truth is that her husband and her father in law ruined the life of Zarine, the close friend of them, Ramnik knows the truth and he wants to repentance by taking a job to Javed. In this way he would be able to wash away the guilt and we burnt it. Your husband my father and his father. They had burnt it in the name of communal hatred because we wanted a shop. Also they learnt that..... those people were planning to start a mill like our own. I can't take it any longer. I don't think, I will be able to step into that shop again. When those boys came here, I thought I would..... I hoped I would be able to set things right. I wanted to tell them that they are not the only ones who have destroyed. I just couldn't. I don't think I have the face to tell anyone. (Collected plays 226)⁴

The negligence of the police department is shown through the character of Javed because Javed is such a person who talks about the police department who novelty to arrest the real culprit. Dattani presents the major issues of politics that are rooted in society in his play *Final Solution*.

In the play 'Bravely Fought the Queen' indicates the emotional, financial and sexual crisis in contemporary Indian family. The story is related with two brothers Jatin and Lalit who run an advertising agency. The story of the play delineates the maltreatment of Indian husband on his wife. Jatin's father always harassed his mother Baa who bore tortures silently. Baa realizes that Jatin behaviour is similar to his father. Naturally she is inclined towards her younger son Nitin. There is the generation, sharing the same situation. On the other hand there is the lust of homo sexuality. Alka, the wife of Nitin feels that there is sexual relation between her husband and her brother Kanhaiya. Dattani presents Kanhaiya as the representative of homosexuality, in his way Dattani wants to present a part of 'sick society', in which women have no dominance in spite of gay, sublimates persons. Anindya Sen observes, "The rebellion finds its substance and meaning neither in the result nor in the course, it takes but in the 'cause' inspiring the rebellion, the ideology informing it and the 'power' against which the rebellion is directed." (sen321) Dattani depicts the increasing evil of homosexuality in the contemporary society through his innovative thinking.

In 'Dance like a Man' Dattani depicts the different facts of dancing in the contemporary society. The major problem in the play is that how the passion of an artist is quashed against the restrictions imposed on individual according to their gender roles. (24) This is very strange that the marriage of Vishwas with Lata is sealed by an agreement that Vishwas will 'Let' her dance after their marriage.

LATA: Vishwas when we are married - you will let me come here to practice won't you?

VISHWAS: Of course, Lata (Dattani 389)

The plays reveals before the audience or readers different gender role. Dattani focuses here in this play the problem of insecurity that becomes the essence in the character's life. For example Jairaj's insecurity for choosing dance as profession, Lata's for achieving professional success in future. Vishwas for choosing outcasts as a life-partner, Lata's parents for Lata's bright professional future and Amritlal's for Jairaj's appearance not being 'manly.' ["Grow up, Jairaj"] (Dattani 422)]

In this way it seems that his characters grapple with different themes like, gender identities and sexuality. The play 'Thirty Days in September', the play shows the character of Mira who is beautiful and intelligent young woman who is unable to bear the situation so she changes sexual partners every 30 days. Her mother becomes angry with her. It is strange that Mira was abused by her uncle but her mother ignored the complain of Mira by stuffing food in her mouth. The play depicts the many aspect of society how a person has to bear abuse and live a life of guilt. The play presents heinous issues, child sexual abuse. Her abuser is no other person but her uncle who damages her natural growth. Mira wants to forget her traumatic past and Deepak, Mira's friend helps her in changing life. Thus the play is about love and betrayal. The play evokes child sexual abuse and family relationship. The play was influenced by an NGO called RAHI which work is to help the survivors of child abuse. Sumanpati gives statement by the survey of RAHI in this concern.

RAHI's survey involving middle class and upper middle class women in the four metros of the country revealed 76 percent of them had been sexually abused as children. More than 40 percent of these were survivors of incest.⁵

The problem of incest and child sexual abuse has not been recognized in the contemporary society. This is only Dattani who focuses attention on such issues through his innovative feelings.

Dattani's play 'Ek Alag Mausam' present the major problem of today. The poet's aim is to highlight the suffering of the HIV positive victims and try to awake the nation to have.

Sympathy and compassion for such suffering humanity the character of Aparna, who is HIV patient, is in trauma. It is unexpected for her that she is HIV positive. When she realizes that her husband Suresh deceived her, she becomes upset and staggered. Dattani focuses that how to face a problem and live a hopeful life till the end of life in this suffering. Aparna is the model of such sufferings. Her husband lives to escape from shame and disgrace and he leaves the city without knowing the feelings of Aparna. Aparna has to face social disgust and avoidance of people that makes her life more horrible than the approaching death. On the other hand Dattani present a very sympathetic, kind and submissive character of George who renders his services of Jivan Jyoti. Dattani creates a new band of love and friendship in this play through the character of Aparna and George. Both indulge in their services to the patients of Jivan Jyoti. Aparna tells everything what had happened in her life, and then George says, "Your first day here and you are asking so many questions! Who do you think the bodies for cremation? The municipality van won't even enter the compound. Before me they had to bury or burn them all right here. So be carefull. If you come here often enough people will think you have AIDS also." (CPIT, 497) Dattani's main aim is to remove the false propaganda of this disease and synthesizes the mind of the audience or people towards HIV positive patients and gets awareness for this false belief. The some statements of George clear this point:

GORGE: So to conclude. Can HIV be spread through touch?

Manoj and Shyamu: No

GEORGE: Can HIV be spread through mosquitoes and flies?

Manoj and Shyamu: No

GEORGE: Can HIV be spread through living, eating, sleeping with an infected person?

Manoj and Shyamu: No

GEORGE: Then how can you get infected?

Manoj and Shyamu: Through Unprotected Sex with a man or woman. GEORGE: Any other way?

Manoj and Shyamu: Through injected blood and contaminated injection needles.

In this Dattani through this way try to realize people to make awareness towards the victims of such diseased person of the society and ready to help them with Compassion.

In his play 'Seven Steps Around the Fire' Dattani points out new emerging issues of marginalized group, especially the third gender (Hijra). The play focuses on the miserable plight of Eunuch in the society. We know that they are allowed only two occasions either at the time of marriage or at the time of child birth.

It is believed that if they one not permitted of sing and dance these they cruse the family. This is very strange that those persons who call for singing and dancing on such give blessing to the wedding could or child, they have no right to get such opportunities in their lives. Infact, they are considered neither male nor female. Dattani presents the inner vacuity of their lives. Outwardly how they seem happy but inwardly they are living a life of dilemma. In the murder of Kamla, Anarkali (a Eunuch) is prosecuted. No body shows sympathy for Anarkali except Uma Rao, who is the research scholar of Sociology and also the wife of Superintendent of Police, Suresh. Eunuchs are called barren. Dattani innovative out look presents here the problem of masculinity in the society. Uma has no issue. She is called barren. But no body even Suresh her husband is not ready to accept his own weakness inspite of this Uma is forced to take the treatment from a doctor. Only doctor suggest calling her husband for the testing of his sperm. In this way Dattani focuses not only one problem of society but also different concerns of society.

Dattani tries to show the unhappy life of hijras in the society where they deprive of any honour, sympathy and compassion. The following lines show their condition accurately:

Uma: Nobody seems to know anything about them. Neither does them. Did they come to this country with Islam or are they a party of our glorious Hindu tradition? Why are they so obsessed with wedding and child birth? How do they come to know of these wedding? Why do they just show up being invited? Are they just extortionists? And why do they not take singing lessons? (Pause) "Its true."(CP 16-17) Infact, they are the subaltern in the society.

Thus it is concluded that Dattani is an innovative writer per excellence. His plays are the plays of today. He is able to present all kids of problems which are emerging in the society. His plays are related with social political issues in urban society of India.



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