

Chapter - I

Introduction

“Theatre is life, there is no art, no life, no craft, no learning, and no action which cannot be seen in it.” (*Natya Shastra*)

As Dipti Agrawal says:

Drama, as a dynamic art form, is present in almost every society through the ages; it reflects human experience and sensibility; representing life as well as a way to seeing it. The drama of India has a universal history, originality and longevity and universal presence (Aggarwal, 1).

It is the oldest, authentic, and the most appealing form of literature. Indian drama has a very distinct identity, having its own specific aesthetics, artistic objectives and creative methods, which are relevant even today. Indian drama has history of more than two thousand years old. From the time of composition of *The Natyashastra* (450 B.C.) in India it was the performance, which was of prominent importance rather than the written text. The theatre in India is a mixture of poetry, prose and drama. It has close affinity and affiliation with religion since time immemorial. It represents everyday life through dialogue and represents manners and feelings of people. Our great epics *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* also define drama and Dramaturgy. The great ancient poet and the creator of *The Ramayana*, Valmiki uses the word ‘Nat’ or Narakata – meaning an actor or a performer.

The word “Drama” has Greek origin. It has its root in word “dra” meaning “do”. In this way ‘doing’ or ‘action’ is central in whole dramatic premise. Aristotle has also acknowledged ‘action’ as the predominating component of drama. Crompton-Rickett defines drama ‘as an articulate story presented in action.’ (Rickett, 89)

India is country where everything is plural in nature whether it is religion, language or customs/traditions etc. We have twenty-two national languages and more than eight hundred dialects prevailing in our country so it is very hard to enter into the vast arena of “Indian theatre” which is heterogeneous and polyglot in nature. About Indian drama Dipti Aggarwal opines:

It contains the classical (*Kathakali*, *Bharatnatyam* etc.), the Ritual (*Raas*, *Ramlila*, *Theyyam* etc.), the folk (*Chhau*, *Therukuttu* etc.) and the modern (“living news papers” productions, theatre for educational purposes and large scale commercial plays and musicals) and even a single performance difference elements combined such as dance, drama, mime, song, instrumentation, puppetry too. (Aggarwal 2)

Due to this plurality of language and heterogeneous traditions, it is very difficult to create historicity of “India Drama” and the intensely problematic relations of such concepts as modernity, contemporaneity and post-coloniality to drama, theatre and performance in modern day, India. Thus we have access to a theatrical inheritance that includes diverse acting traditions and genres that have no parallel in other country, history and civilization. The main motive of ancient Indian drama was first and foremost arousing one or another ‘rasa’ by the production of drama, which is also called ‘juice’, sap or ‘flavour’. Bharata the originator of *Natya Shastra*, emphasized that when all the components of drama, beginning with *Vibhava* and *Anubhava* are presented, the realization of rasa manifests itself in the spectator. There is no theatre without rasa. The rasa’s recognized in Sanskrit poetics are *Sringara* (erotic), *hasya* (comic), *karuna* (pathetic), *raudra* (furious), *vira* (heroic), *bhayanaka* (terrible), *bibhatsa* (odious), *adbhuta* (marvelous) and *santa* (peaceful). Therefore, Sanskrit theatre became a means of realization of rasa or aesthetic experience. But the ‘rasa’

have also changed with span of time and so Vasudha Dalmia assessts, these can be categorized differently:

Traditional categories need re-interpretation and expansion if they are to remain comprehensive and solve new needs. The chief goals/ designs, *uddeshya*, of theatre demonstrate the heterogeneity – the mixture of aesthetic with socially oriented goals –, which is an indication of the categories that are replacing and supplementing the older classifications; *rasa*, for example, is still a consideration, but has much reduced significance. The goals of theatre are five fold: (i) Comic, (2) Erotic, (3) Spectacular, (4) Social reform and finally (5) Patriotism. The first three are barely discussed. It is the last two, which call for remark: these are to be created by interpretation of old tales by the creation of a public forum where social issued can be discussed and where the love of the country is to be generated. (Dalmia, 37)

In Modern India, some plays gave a new visibility to drama and theatre beyond national borders. The intermingling of ancient Indian theatrical elements with that of western theatre has greatly influenced all area of theory, aesthetics, institutional organization and translations. Therefore, the influence of western textual models produced a body of new drama and dramaturgy, which is not colonial or pre colonial but a new drama which is based on political independence, cultural autonomy and new nationhood. Although at present it is confined to urban audience; but it has been developing as a multi-lingual, multi-cultural India theatre. The forms and institutions of performance are borrowed from western theatre but the content of Indian theatre has become deeply embedded in Indian myth, history, literature, society and politics. Since theatre constituted an important part of cultural life in India from pre-colonial times – whether performed in enclosed theatre houses or in the street in

the form of puppet theatre, folk drama or mythological drama – examining theatre as a place of socio political struggles take on significance. As Chaman Ahuja states:

Our contemporary theatre has been neither all western kind of theatre nor it all been derived from the ancient classical tradition. A lot of interactive has inhered the productions of the last forty years – dramatization of myths reinterpretation of old myths for contemporary relevance; old plays in old forms, old plays in new style; classic plays in folk forms; eastern plays for classical stage; new plays in folk forms, classical plays adapted to realistic stage; western plays in western style, western plays adopted to folk forms; new plays in plays in classical tradition, new themes for western stage – plus non – conventional theatre like street plays, solo performances, poetry – on – stage etc. Here is indeed, God's plenty which even Polonius would have found to club into categories. (Ahuja, 72-73)

Modern drama in India is an urban phenomenon, which was introduced by the British Colonizers in 19th century. They introduced a new kind of writing which is quite alien to Indian dramaturgy. The purpose of ancient drama was to create pleasure or bliss (rasa) by representing different situations, mental states and feelings of human beings. On the other hand, the purpose western drama was to reveal struggles of life in their various forms. Thus, the imitation of reality proved alien in the country of so deep moral and aesthetic values. It is created primarily for the people of middle or upper middle class.

Drama is still evolving and searching for its own identity, as poetry and novel have made their mark – Drama is complete and live only when it is performed. It is more expensive than other arts like painting, writing and singing. It needs patronage for supporting and funding for its performance. In ancient India, Sanskrit drama

flourished under the patronage of Gupta. So that it became 'Golden Period' for Indian drama:

Since ancient time Sanskrit, theatre enjoyed royal patronage. Bhasa mentions one Raj simha as his patron king. Ashvaghosh flourished under Kanishka's patronage. Chander Gupta Vikramaditya was the king is whose court Kalidas found patronage. Shudraka himself was a king. Vishakhadatta's patron king was Parthivas Chandragupta who is identified as Chander Gupta 2nd and Sudraka who wrote three plays: Ratnaval, Priyadarshika and Nagananda was a king himself. (Agrawal. D,7)

Sanskrit drama in India declined after the muslim invasion in the eleventh century and it gave a way to the birth of variety of theatres in different regional language of India as *Jatras* in Bengal, '*Bandinata* and *Bharatlila* in Orissa, the folk plays of Tamil Nadu, the '*Yakshagana*' of Andra Pradesh the *Ramlila* plays of North India are few to name. There were other folk forms of theatre also as *Swang*, *Nautanki*, *Tamasha* aimed at providing entertainment. But until the arrival of British, no original and significant drama was written or performed.

After the battle of Plassey, East India Company became the ruler of Bengal, British theatre formed part of cultural life in India as early as in 1757. The Calcutta theatre, the Sans Souci theatre and Chouringhee theatre were the prominent playhouses. Calcutta theatre built in 1775 was patronized by leading members of Calcutta Society, based on western model encouraged by the Governor-general and consisted of actors who "were all respected people." (Das Gupta, 187). To give natives a taste of "authentic" British culture, English officials henceforth encouraged "proper" productions of the plays in schools. In 1837, students at Hindu College and Sanskrit College presented plays of Shakespeare on special occasions such as prize

ceremonies. These theatrical activities became successful, because there was no significant theatrical activity prevailed in India after the downfall of Sanskrit Theatre around A.D. 1000.

In 1765, one Russian drama lover Horasin Lebedef and Bengali drama lover Gulokhnath staged two English comedies ‘*Disgaji*’ and *Love is the Best Doctor*’, which were considered as first modern Indian drama. However, the real beginning and development was in translations of Sanskrit and English dramas. Through translations, adaptation and intercultural appropriation, Indian theatre of the colonial era maintains an extensive inter-textuality with classic and European Drama. *Jone’s in 1789* translated Kalidasa’s *Abhijana Shakuntalam* a sanskrit play into English (commonly known in the west as Sakuntala). H.M. Wilsons select specimen of the theatre of the Hindus (2 Vols.,1827), marks the first significant translation of old Indian text – Wilson translated six major Sanskrit plays, summarized of twenty three others. It gave a brief discussion of dramatic texts available; the task of translations were taken over mainly by Indians who wanted to share in revival of their own national theatre and performed in the plays in the modern languages of the sub-continent. These translations had two-fold importance: Firstly, ancient Indian dramatic works, which were eclipsed for a long time after the decline of Sanskrit theatre, began to revive again and secondly it helped in popularizing and rejuvenating the precious Indian Dramaturgy again. Consequently, the large-scale translations and adaptations of Europeans and as well as Indian canonical plays in Indian and Western languages had been done. In English, mostly the plays of Shakespeare were adopted for regional translations as *Comedy of Errors*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Cymbeline* *All Well that Ends Well*, *A Mid Summer’s Night Dream*, etc. Besides, Gold Smith’s *She Stoops to conquer* was a favourite play among Indian

translators. In Sanskrit drama *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa, *Mrichchakatika* by Sudraka and, *Ratnavali* etc. were translated into English and different vernacular languages.

As a result, modern Indian dramatists began to assimilate these foreign methods and techniques into their original dramatic works, which may be called a perfect synthesis of Sanskrit, folk and western culture. Hence, a real Indian drama came in to existence. Indian drama, written both in English and translated into English from other languages, has registered a phenomenal growth in recent years. These translations had forged a link between the East and the West, North and South. It also contributed to the growing richness of contemporary creative consciousness as a result it gave birth to a new kind of dramaturgy in which the plays were western in form but Indian in content.

Ultimately, in the pre-Independence period, because of European influence a cultural stream of urban drama developed that was largely influenced by Anglo-European traditions. The performance of European plays and classical Indian drama were patronized by men of wealth and respectability, who performed plays in their homes or in theatre. These plays were presented to the public through a policy of tickets. The style of drama also became Western by adopting the conventions of the proscenium, foot lights, the drop curtain and prompting from behind. However, each coin has two facets; likewise, the influence of western drama had two contrary significant effects on Indian drama: it is true that it took a shape completely different from Sanskrit and folk theatre, but it gave a new lease of life to the crippled drama and witnessed a revival as both cultures influenced each other. Before the emergence of western dramaturgy, the drama in India was confined to small regions of India in different forms and there was not any significant dramatic genre or drama as such. Foreign tropes came to India, performed many English plays, and did significant

translations of ancient Indian plays. Mahesh Elkunchwar also mentions the importance of western influence on Indian theatre and says:

The liberalism, the catholicity of taste, Spirit of enquiry into human life, a Stress on individuality rather than on system of accepted social and moral values: All these are gifts to us given by the West. (Elkunchwar, 22)

The development of new theatre came into existence in different Indian languages began mostly in those cities, which were the commercial, industrial and administrative centers for British rulers and English Merchants. These cities were Calcutta, Bombay and Madras etc. The drama in Bengali and Marathi became most affluent and famous. A new urban theatre had existed in these languages since the mid-nineteenth century and they have a complex history of anti-colonial resistance, between 1872 and 1910. Then there was development of theatre in other regional languages such as Hindi, Kannada, Gujarati, Tamil and Malayalam and the places of their development were the urban cities like Delhi, Jaipur, Lucknow, Bangalore, Mysore, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Madras and Trivendrum. The theatre in other languages like English, Punjabi, Urdu, Manipuri and Telugu also came into performance, which had some popular writers. In the other languages like Kashmiri, Sindhi, Oriya and Assamese had no modern urban theatre tradition developed; they remained to their regional form. The theatre of Bangla, Kannad and Marathi etc. associated with the innovativeness of English theatre and gave a new and fresh look to Indian Natya. All these theatres came into existence during the British period and a new contemporary drama came into existence. The subject matter of drama changed from the narrative forms of heroes or Gods as in classical Sanskrit drama period, to true representation of Indian Social life. These theatres started giving new understanding about contradictions and conflicts, and protest and power struggles

among colonizers and colonized; shaped by notion of class, gender and religious differences. These theatres were started with the aims of private entertainment, but gradually it became the weapon protest against the British Rule.

English drama in India came into existence in the late 17th century with the arrival of ‘East India Company’ and extended with the establishment of three presidency towns by the British – Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Around the same time, three major universities were established in these three cities and English medium of education was started. With this, an entire class of intellectuals came in to contact with western literature and drama. The urban middle class audience helped English drama in India to represent life and culture of the British people, but the English drama established at the same time, it also depicted the British exploitations, social injustices, corruptions, instances of the poverty, suffering and agony of the common people. In this way, it became the weapon of the protest against the British raj.

Indian English drama saw the first light of the day when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta* in 1831. The play dealt with the conflict in the mind of a sensitive Bengali youth between orthodoxy and the new ideas ushered in by western education. *The First Parsi Baronet*, perhaps the earliest Indian English verse play, was written by C. S. Nazir in 1866. Michael Madhusudan Dutt translated three of his own Bengali plays into English – *Ratnavali* (1858), *Sermishta* (1859) and *Is This Called Civilization?* (1871). After a long gap of a few decades it was in the early twentieth century that Indian English Drama gathered momentum under the influence of British Drama as Krishna Kriplani points out that modern Indian drama, “owed its first flowering to foreign grafting”. (Kriplani, 40)

Before Indian Independence, there were only few Indian dramatists, who wrote memorable plays in English. Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, the two great sage-poets of India, are the first Indian dramatists in English worth considering. Tagore wrote primarily in Bengali and later translated, rather transcribed them into English. His collection of lyrics *Gitanjali*(1913) brought him the honour of being the first Asian Nobel Laureate in literature. His best known plays *Chitra*, *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice*, *MuktaDhara*, *The King of The Dark Chamber*, *The Cycle of Spring*, and *Sanyasi* were firmly rooted in Indian ethos and ethics and display a unique blend of simplicity and complexity as well as conventionality and modernity. Tagore was the first playwright to have invested Indian English drama with symbolic overtones and allegorical significance. To understand his plays based on dictionary meaning would be a futile attempt. His plays are suffused with beautiful and apt images, which make them poetic. Diana Devlin writes:

...the philosopher, writer and teacher Rabindranath Tagore set out to unify Indian and European traditions creating plays, which have been described as a mixture of Bengali folk drama and western medieval mystery plays. (Devlin, 30).

Tagore's greatest contribution to Indian drama was lyrical excellence, symbolic overtones and allegorical significance.

Sri Aurobindo inherited and carried forward the tradition of Elizabethan poetic drama of Marlowe and Shakespeare. His dramatic genius is amply revealed in his five complete plays- *Perseus*, *Vasavadutta*, *Rodogune*, *The Viziers of Bassara* and *Eric*-, which were originally written in English. Sri Aurobindo can be said near to Shelly and Tennyson in his lyricism. One of his best-known plays is *Vasavadutta* which is a historical romance, dipped in the colours of both realism and romance. It deals with

the love story of Udayan, the young king of Cosambie with Vasavadatta, the princess of Avanti. Their love is so strong that it recalls Shakspeare's lines, 'Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds Admit Impediments' and ends in the re-union of the two. *Rodogune* shows how the suffering in this life helps man to exalt his consciousness to a higher plane. *Perseues* is based on a Greek legend, which gives vent to Sri Aurobindo's vision that the world moves through evil towards the attainment of a blissful state. *The Viziers of Bassara* takes its theme from the Arabian Nights, while *Eric* is his nearest approach to the classical form of drama as it observes dramatic unities. It presents various stages of love and establishes man's kinship with the universe. A study of Aurobindo's plays reveals him as a competent dramatist and an accomplished artisan in verse. His dramas are steeped in rich poetry and romance. Sri Aurobindo opened up new vistas in Indian English drama by displaying his robust optimism about the future of mankind.

T. P. Kailasam's English plays are inspired by puranic themes taken from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. However, he presents the story in such a manner that they become contemporary. His genius finds full expression in his English plays as *The Burden*, *The Purpose*, *Karna*, *Keechka*. His first play *The Burden* takes its theme from Ramayana where Ramchandra is exiled for fourteen years followed by Dashrath's death, which compels Bharata to fulfill his duty as a king, thus establishing the fact that one should not shirk one's duty. *Fulfillment*, based on *Mahabharata*, depicts Lord Krishna's blind love for the Pandavas who ruthlessly destroyed anyone who dared to oppose them. Eklavya's decision to join the Kaurvas not only brings his assassination but also of his mother's. *The Purpose* dramatizes Ekalayya's single-minded devotion to the art of archery for protecting the lives of weak from the tyranny of the strong. *The curse or Karna* deals with the tragic story of

Karna, the illegitimate son of Kunti who was killed by Arjun. The play demonstrates that the purpose of the killing that decides the nature of the deed- just or unjust and not the means and manner. *Keechaka* reveals Kailasam's original approach to mythical figures. Kailasam's English plays display his 'quest for greatness' and his bold and original approach to the characters in the epic. Most of his plays were a great success on the stage. G. S. Amur holds a high opinion of Kailasam and remarks:

A talented actor who appeared in the amateur as well as the professional stage, he brought to the writings 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.(Amur,186)

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya added a new dimension to Indian English drama with his leftist leanings and revolutionary zeal. He began his dramatic career with his famous play *Abu Hassan* (1918), a light play in both prose and verse. He is also known as a dramatist of several religious plays, based on the theme of the lives of the saints like Pundalik, Sakku Bai, Meera Bai, Jayadeva, Eknath, Tukaram, Raidas etc. His social plays, *The Window*, *The Parrot*, *The Coffin*, *The Evening Lamp* and *The Sentry's Lantern* reveal the artificial morality of society, the dark side of acute imperialism, awareness of social problems and the playwright's deep sympathy for the suffering masses. *The Window* explodes like a bomb on the hardhearted capitalists, presenting an account of the miserable condition of the workers living in the slums. *The Parrot* raises a revolt against conventional morality that cages the women whereas *The Sentry's Lantern* portrays the evils of imperialism. *The Coffin* is a satire on the bourgeois artist. The protagonist, Mohan, suffers a lot when his wife runs away with a rich man and his beloved daughter dies of a broken heart. The playwright tries to present a manifesto of the new realism through his plays.

Bharati Sarabhai is the first most distinguished woman dramatist, who gave a Gandhian touch to Indian English Drama. Her first play *The Well of the People* (1949) upholds Gandhi's well-known picture of 'Daridra Narayan'. It is the story of a Brahmin widow, who is unable to go to Kashi and Haridwar and so she decides to build a temple well for the Harijans of her village. Her second play *Two Women* (1952) dramatizes the conflict between tradition and modernity, the material and spiritual. She seems to be advocating the counsel offered by Tagore in one of his songs of *Gitanjali*: "Leave this Chanting and Singing and Telling of Beads". The paucity of women dramatists is due to the fact that drama is essentially a public art and our culture does not encourage women to have a public role or public voice.

J. M. Lobo Prabhu is the last great name in the list of pre-Independence Indian English drama. He wrote over a dozen plays but only *Mother of New India: A Play of the Indian Village in three Acts* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945) appeared before Independence. His *Collected Plays* was published in 1956. Lobo Prabhu was adept in writing dialogues and in creating situations though his characters did not appear life-like and convincing to the audience.

Although the pre-Independence Indian English drama is notable for its poetic excellence, thematic variety, technical virtuosity, symbolic significance and its commitment to human and moral values, it was not meant for actual stage production. Very few Indian dramatists had shown interest in producing drama for the stage. In the post-Independence era, Indian English drama does not make a noteworthy presence like poetry and fiction. A major factor being that drama is a composite art involving the playwright, the actors and the audience. Drama as a literary genre has many problems to face from which other literary forms are free. Another fact attributed for the slow development of Indian drama is that the natural medium of

conversation is the mother tongue and not English. However, the winds of change has begun to blow, changing the climate of Indian English drama and produced numerous playwrights like Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Gurucharan Das, Nissim Ezekiel, Girish Karnad and the list goes on.

The most prolific writer of this period, Asif Currimbhoy wrote and published more than thirty plays on a wide range and variety of subject matter. History and contemporary politics, social and economic problems, the east-west encounter, religion, philosophy, art were the several issues he wrote on and has rightly been hailed as “India’s first authentic voice in the power” (Bowers, xii). Asif was deeply influenced by western culture and was exposed to theatre during his study at the Wisconsin University and the University of California. As a non-practicing khoja Muslim, he was able to adopt the role of an outsider and observed Indian society objectively. Some of his titles reflect the definite philosophical basis of plays – *The Doldrummers*, *The Hungry Ones*, *The Captives*, *An Experiment with Truth*, *Om Mane Padma hun*. *The Doldrummers* is a story of a group of young men & women like Rita, Liza, Zoe and Tony who are caught in predicaments at Juhu Beach in Bombay. *OM* is a spiritual play suffused with the religious theme of the ‘quest of the self’. K.R.S. Iyengar in his own critical framework appreciates the creative caliber of Currimbhoy: “Farce, comedy, melodrama, tragedy, history, fantasy: Currimbhoy handles them all with commendable ease.” (Iyengar, 732)

Nissim Ezekiel, recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983 and Padamshri in 1988, became familiar with trends in the theatre during his stay in London. His three plays *Nalini*, *A Marriage Poem* and *The Sleep Walkers* expose the hollowness of the urban middle-class life, fickleness of modern lovers, greedy fascination for American life and the hypocrisy and inhibitive nature of contemporary

Indian society. He is an excellent artisan and his plays are fine examples of symmetric construction, abounding in irony, wit and humour. Chetan Karnani opines, “In his satire of current fashion, in his exposure of pose and pretence, Ezekiel comes very close to the spirit of some English social satirists in the theatre”. (Karnani, 126)

Some playwrights like Lakhan Deb and Gurucharan Das made a significant contribution to the development of historical play. Lakhan Deb’s *Tiger’s Claw* (1947) portrays killing of Afzal Khan by heroic Shivaji and *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976) deals with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, reminding us of T. S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral*. Gurucharan Das’s *Larin Sahib* (1970) is based on the events in Punjab during 1846-47. The playwright has not only succeeded in recreating history but also succeeds in evoking the nineteenth century colonial Indian background.

Gieve Patel and Pratap Sharma are the other contemporary writers who have distinguished themselves with their works. Gieve Patel is the writer of first Parsi play *Princes* (1970) based in the locale of Sanjan –Nargol area of south Gujrat, focusing on two Parsi families and their conflict for the possession of a sole male child. It is remarkable for its experiments with language and brilliant handling of situation, character and dialogue. It portrays the obsession of Indians with male child. Pratap Sharma wrote two plays – *The Professor has a Warcy* (1970) and *A Touch of Brightness* (1970). Sex remains the prime theme of his plays. The first play reflects the mental anguish of a man when he comes to know about his illegitimacy and the second play presents a realistic picture of the red light area in Bombay.

In spite of all this record of Indian English drama, the fact remains the same it yet lags far behind Indian English poetry and Indian English novel. The Indian playwrights in English failed to draw upon the rich and varied Indian dramatic

tradition, Indian myth and Indian historical heritage. Indian English Drama has also suffered due to the lack of a real theatre and a live audience. An eminent Indian critic M. K. Naik in his article “The Achievement of Indian Drama in English” has rightly observed:

Drama is a composite art in which the written word of the playwright attains complete artistic realization only when it becomes the spoken word of the actor on the stage and through that medium reacts in the mind of the audience. 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. (Naik, 180-181)

Adya Ramacharya, one of the pioneers of modern drama in Kannada advised in his article ‘Classical Indian drama and Modern Indian Theatre’ to the *Indian English playwrights* to “study classical Indian drama and make a re-assessment of it”(Ramacharya 41). So that there is no reason why Indian Drama in English should lag behind Indian English poetry and fiction in a country, where drama was hailed as the ‘fifth Veda.’

The realistic plays in their presentational style focus more on contemporary life than traditional theatre. Their actions are invented, not derived from pre-existing narratives; their setting is urban or semi-urban and their primary level of significance is literal rather than analogical or allegorical. The common subjects of these plays are domestic setting, love, marriage, parent-child conflict, generational shifts and the pressures of urban life. In pre-independence period no significant realist plays appeared on Indian Dramatic scene. But after independence such playwrights as Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sirkar, G.P. Deshpande, Mahasweta Devi and Satish Alekar

offered variations on realism in their plays of different languages with assimilations of historical, environmental, political and a absurdist theatre. But the major practitioners of contemporary theatre, who have given the realistic mode, an identity far from colonial era, are Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Elkunchwar and Mahesh Dattani. The social realism of these playwrights has created radically modern perspectives on caste, class, sexuality, gender, family relationship home and nation

Contemporary Indian drama in English has made bold innovations and experiments in the field of both theme and technique. The playwrights are looking back to their rich heritage of history, legend, myth, folklore and tapping it. Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad are some of the most representative contemporary dramatists. Mohan Rakesh has established himself as a writer of considerable standing in the field of short story when his play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* was published in 1958. He is to be hailed as a potent new voice in Indian drama. His plays dramatize the suffering of men and women who fall a victim to socio-economic hierarchy and cultural hegemony. He tries to lay bare the sufferings of the marginalized and it is the aspect, which accounts for his success. His play *Adhe Adhure* presents the gloomy and dismal picture of a middle class family. For Mohan Rakesh life is always lived on a logic level. He says, "The major function of theatre today is to help man know and discover himself in relation to his environment"(Maharishi). He was highly influenced by Marxism and tried his best to create something new and innovative in theme and technique.

Badal Sircar, barefoot playwright, uses contemporary situations to project the existential attitude of modern life. He created a people's theatre known as 'Third Theatre', which was supported and created by the people. The theatre is a composite art of a four way flow of influences- actor to actor, audience to actor, actor to

audience and audience to audience. Sircar's plays *Procession*, *Bhoma* and *Stale News* are based on the concept of third theatre. *Procession* is about the search for 'a real home' – a new society based on equality. He presents a new ideal society where man does not exploit man, but one works according to his ability and gets according to his needs. *Bhoma* presents a picture of the oppressed peasants in rural India, socially and economically exploited.

Vijay Tendulkar is the next in line who symbolizes the new awareness of Indian dramatists to depict the agonies and cries of the middle class society. In almost all of his plays, he harps upon the theme of isolation of the individual and his confrontation with the hostile surroundings. Tendulkar's creative genius sharpened by his keen observation and seasoned by his journalistic plays. He sensitizes reader-audience to the domestic-socio-political tensions in the Indian urban milieu. His plays *Sakharam Binder*, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Silence! The Court is in Session* created a storm in the society. The playwright raises several questions about love, sex, marriage and moral values prevalent in Indian society and exposes the hypocrisy in the traditional Indian society. Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* is a realistic portrayal of the political and moral decadence. It is a bitter satire on the so-called corrupt politicians of the contemporary society. It was the time of Ghashiram's cruel dictatorship and even today do we not find the same picture in Ruchika Grihotra's case, when we come to know the story of the atrocities meted out to her family by DGP Rathore? *Silence! The Court is in Session* again pulls out a contemporary issue by portraying the plight and predicament of Miss Leela Benare, whose bodily wealth is plundered by a gang of selfish man. Recipient of many awards, Vijay Tendulkar changed the face of Indian theatre and demolished the traditional pattern of three act plays and created new models. The women are at the centre in most of Tendulkar's plays. Leela Benare in

Silence The Court is in Session, Laxmi in *Sakharam Binder*, and Sarita in *Kamala* play a leading role in a world dominated by males.

Girish Karnad, a playwright, film director and actor was honoured with Padma Bhusan in 1992 and was conferred the Jnanpith Award in 1999. He chooses to write in Kannada, though he translated many of his plays into English. Karnad bases most of his plays on folklores and myths as he finds contemporary values in them. He combs the past for myths to analyze the present. He has dealt with history in a new way as he employed it to present the pathetic and corroded state of Indian politics. Karnad's *Yayati* retells the age-old story of the mythological king who in his longing for eternal youth sought to borrow the vitality of his own son. He takes traditional puranic themes but gives them a fresh interpretation. Karnad's *Nagamandala* and *Hayavadana* demonstrated how Indian English drama could revitalize itself by employing experimental models. In *Nagamandala*, the naga assumes a human shape off and on. In *Hayavadana*, the shape shifting can be seen at several places-gandharva shifting into the shape of a horse and then back to gandharva. *Hayavadana* offers a valuable lesson that if Indian English Drama wishes to go ahead, it must go back first.

Only a purposeful return to its roots in the rich tradition of ancient Indian drama, both in Sanskrit and folk drama in the Prakrit's can help it shed its lean and pale look, increase its artistic haemoglobin count, and make it cease to be the 'sick man' of Indian English literature.(Naik and Narayan, 201)

Tughlaq is a historical play, which is based on the story of the idealist king, Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, who is more famous for his idiosyncratic behavior. He is a cynic, a tyrant who shifts his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad to rule Southern India more effectively. The beauty of his plays lies not in their historical and mythical background but in his treatment of myth and history in respect of contemporary

social, historical and political situation. In fact, his contribution crosses the frontiers of theatre as he has not only directed films, documentaries and television serials but also represented India in foreign lands as an emissary of art and culture.

One other important name in the contemporary drama is Marathi Playwright Mahesh Elkunchwar. He is different from others due to his autobiographical and self-reflective writings. He became interested in writing for theatre after watching Tendulkar's play *Mi Jinkalo Me Harlo* (I Won, I lost, 1965). He deals with issues of gender and family. His important plays are *Rudravarsa* (*Angry Rain*, 1968), *Garbo* (1973), *Vasanakand* (*Period of Desire*, 1974), *Pratibimb* (*Reflection*, 1987), *Wada Chirebandi* (*Old Store Mansion*, 1985), *Magna Talyakathi* (*Pensive by the Pond*, 1994), *Yuganta* (*End of an Age*, 1994), *Atamkatha* (*Autobiography*, 1988), *Vasani Jirvani* (*As Discarded Clother*, 1996), *Dharamputra* (*Godson*, 1997) and *Sonata* (Premiered in English translation, 2001).

Elkunchwar plays deal with the dis-integration of traditional joint family and village life under the onslaught of modern forces of urbanization and industrialization. Marriage is one of focal point of his plays. Women are presented as victims of the caste bias and patriarchal thinking, but they are also shown as agents of change. His plays hope for a system of family based on the basis of mutual respect, love and understanding.

Women dramatists also tried to enrich the soil of Indian Drama by projecting the inner world of feminine psyche in the theatre. It can be called as 'Theatre of Protest', because women writers expressed their resentment against the politics of exploitation based on gender discrimination. The issues like subjugation of women, the horrors of dowry deaths, female infanticide, violence against women, identity crisis and prostitution have been successfully presented through dramatic performances.

They are revived the myth of Sita and Savitri and try to reinterpret the epics from women's point of view. The dramatic works of Usha Ganguli and Mahesweta Devi can be placed in this category. Mahasweta Devi emerged as a dramatist having quest to explore something challenging and new. Her plays are characterised by an inflicting commitment and passion for weaker and exploited section of society. She observes:

Once I became professional writer, I felt increasingly that a writer should document his own time and history. The social economic history of human development has always fascinated me. But some of the greatest political happenings of my times like Tebhaga revolt of Bengal peasants of the partition and its aftermath has passed me by before I had become a writer. So I chose to resurrect older periods in history in their immediate physicality, as if they were nothing less than contemporary. (Quoted. In Bandyopadhyaya, VII-VIII)

She documents authentically the spirit and passion of time without any touch of romanticism. Her five plays are *Mothers of 1084*, *Aajir*, *Urvashi*, *O'Johnny*, *Byen* and *Water*. The play '*Mother of 1084*, is a moving account of the anguish of an apolitical mother, who had witnessed the horror of Naxalite Movement. In *Aajir*, She deals with the issue of the fast deterioration of values and their effects on society, particularly on illiterate people. *Urvashi O'Johnny* is a play for emergency through a love affair of Johnny with Urvashi, a talking doll. The play *Byen* presents a moving account of harsh reality of a women's life in rural India. The play *Water* is the story of a professional water-diviner, Maghai Dome who is an untouchable boy. Her plays present profound concern for human predicament and sincere hope for the better future of human race

Very recently, Indian English drama has shot into prominence with the appearance of younger luminaries like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan on the horizon. These writers have infused new life into this genre. Padmanabhan projects the terrifying world of utter poverty and inhumanity. Her pioneering play *Harvest* begged Alexander Onassis Cultural Award for theatrical plays 1997 and became immensely popular. The play was written for the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation International Competition, which asked for a new, original, unproduced, unpublished play, which deals with the problems faced by man on the threshold of the 21st century. She presents from a futuristic angle a dark, bitter, cannibalistic future that awaits the poor, helpless, innocent, gullible folks of the third world nations like India. *Harvest* deals with the struggles for survival of the slum dwellers in Mumbai, marginalized and alienated from the main stream. The play portrays the dehumanized world where mothers sell their sons for the price of rice. Om Prakash, a twenty-year old boy, forced by hunger and unemployment decides to become an organ donor and mortgages his body to a White First world buyer. *Lights Out*, *Gaslights* and *Getting There* are her other plays dealing with human problems. The social evil of rape and the contradictory reactions of men and women to this crime are vividly portrayed in *Lights Out*. Padmanabhan raises a whole range of issues- is a prostitute not a woman? Can she not seek justice against sexual violation? The men in the play clearly believe that only decent women can be raped, a whore is not decent, so a whore can't be raped. Naina responds, If only decent women can be raped, what is the point in being decent?

However, Padmanabhan fails to be a great success on the stage owing to the intellectual quality of her plays. The winds of change have started blowing strongly and the issues untouched are finding a place in the writings.

Mahesh Dattani, another major English playwright is rightly regarded by the International Herald Tribune as one of India's best and most serious contemporary playwrights writing in English. Born in Bangalore on 7th August 1958 Dattani had his education in Baldwin's High School and St. Joseph's college of Arts and Science, Bangalore. He recalls his experiences in the Christian institution, Baldwin, where the medium of communication was strictly English as his mother tongue is Gujarati and speaking in the vernacular in school was frowned upon.

... [U]npleasant distinctions were made between the 'vernies' and the ones who were fluent in English. Snob values were inculcated early on and you generally were made to feel privileged to belong to that school. We were taught English literature with a capital E! (Ayyar, 2006)

He with members of his family used to attend the Gujarati plays that were performed at Bangalore to keep in touch with their roots. Dattani was struck by the aura of the stage and the illusory world of the theatre. As a child, his favorite playwrights were Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. He accepts:

The playwright 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. (Subbramanyam, 134)

At St. Joseph Dattani was neither a student of literature nor did he show any signs of his literary imagination. He was expected to spend a normal life and joined his family business. In early 1980s while he was still in the college, Dattani joined Bangalore Little Theatre and started participating in the workshops of acting and directing plays. He underwent western ballet training under Molly Andre at Alliance

Francaise de Bangalore (1984-87) and got Bharatnatyam training under Chandrabhaga Devi and Krishna Rao, Bangalore (1986-90).

In 1984, he founded 'Playpen', his own theatre company and began to look for good Indian plays in English. Dattani chose English to be his medium – English as a 'hybrid language' that is spoken normally and unobtrusively by his characters. He wrote his first play *Where There's a Will* in 1988, which was performed at the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival and this marked the beginning of the playwright. He did not look back after that and in 1993, he also started writing script for cinema, television and radio. The success of a drama does not rest on reading alone, but it is the performance, which accounts for its success. Dattani was well aware of this fact. He first tries all his plays at Playpen, where he puts the concluding touches on his dialogue in rehearsal, using the input from his actors. His work place, Mahesh Studio has a mini amphitheatre with three rows of semi-circular seating, spotlights and high mud walls covered with bougainvillea and jasmine. In this environment, he writes his plays, works on performance dynamics and stages a small production.

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

The purpose of a good and complete theatre is always to enrich the audience. It will make them aware and acquainted with those aspects of life that they may not have been acquainted with clarity. The audience goes away not only satisfied, but with some new sensibilities, some new awareness, and some new ideas.

The plays of Mahesh Dattani are the harbinger of new aesthetics, new themes, new theatre and new dramaturgy in modern Indian Drama. Mahesh Dattani emerges as compelling playwright, who re-arranges the social fabrication and projects the post-colonial dichotomy operating at different levels. Dattani chooses realist representation of contemporary urban social experience as the appropriate subject of drama and theatre. As a theorist, he invokes the dominant legacy of realism and naturalism in modern western theatre and the strong traditions of social realism in Indian from the 19th century to the present. He has a definite point of view of drama; He says, “It is a craft of communication through the language of action” (Das gupta, maheshdattani.com)

He uses music, dance and in theatrical productions and which give it an interdisciplinary outlook. He is used to write social-domestic drama, with credible portraits of urban family, and domestic interiors. He presents psychological studies of man-woman relationship, often coupled with a desire for social reform. Human relationships and family unit has been the core of his dramatic representation. This realistic trend, he owes from the playwrights like Galsworthy, G.B. Shaw and most importantly, Henric Ibsen. He presents ordinary individuals than exalted one. The plays of Dattani act as mirror reflecting to society. The characters are easily belived in by the audience and they can see themselves in them.

Dattani’s realism gives expression to not only the marginal voices in Indian at present times but to the main stream also, the educated middle-class upholders of norms and also those who carefully defied them and who are responsible for creating a modern society. The setting and themes in his plays co-mingle to produce visual, psychological and emotional experience of spectatorship. In India Girish Karnad is his role model:

I think Girish Karnard was a kind of role model. He once told me that he enjoys theatre, and he acts in commercial films for the money. He is the most important living playwright we have in country. Other models are Mahesh Elkunchwar, Vijay Tendulkar and of course Madhu Rye. I also admire Badal Sircar for doing what he believed in. He stopped doing proscenium theatre when he did not believe in it any more. (Banerjee, 9)

He takes upper class urban tragic comedy as subject in his inventive dramaturgy. He represents several domestic spaces simultaneously or several spaces among which home is central. In his plays home is a place of resentment, neurosis, confrontation and barely suppressed violence, until a last minute reversal exposed some guilty secret from past that his fueled the mundane family antagonisms. For him, the spectrum of the play involves differing dimensions of confrontation with self and other, as well as different categories of performance and their effect on audience as he says: "...the sheer fact that I'm projecting a milieu that is close to audience— I think that may itself be an achievement. That's what makes my theatre alive. (Mohanty, 171)

Therefore, his plays are primarily realistic entertainment, and this is what brings the audience to the theatre. His plays are fine pieces of drama, absorbing, entertaining and containing within the elements, which makes a feeling in the audience that they are taking something precious after the play is over. He speaks to the audience straight from heart. Anita Nair summarizes his motive, "He aims not changing the society but only seeks to offer some scope for reflection in the hope that his plays will give the audience some kind of in-sight into their lives". (Nair, 2)

Dattani does not provide readymade solutions or fully resolved ending and let the audience itself speculate over this. He says in an interview:

‘I see myself as a crafts man and not a writer. To me being a playwright is about seeing myself as a part of the process of production. I write for the sheer pleasure of communicating through the dynamic medium’ (Nair,2).

Dattani has given new values into the empty shell of theatre. He believes in distilling new meanings from social rapport. Dattani belongs to the category of radical theatre artist and does not follow the history as Karnad and Bharti did. However, he does believe in history as for him without a great history, further development cannot happen in any place or country and to explore new forms, we do need a strong base of the precious history. Indian Modernity also has a history in the meantime. Similarly, the director Rajinder Nath expresses his views:

When the use of traditional and folk form is argued, the stock phrase used is ‘discovery of roots’ or ‘going to the soil’. True, but are all our roots ancient? There can be modern roots too, which one has to discover to deal with contemporary reality and experience. (Nath, 77-78)

Dattani himself asserts about traditional theatre forms:

Yes, they’re wonderful, they’re very sophisticated, they’re impressive but are they really India? That’s something I would like to question and challenge. Are they reflection of life as it now, that the question I would like to ask. They’re fine, but there is a danger that if you look at them as if they’re quintessential India, you’re doing them a great disservice, because you’re not allowing them to change. What we need to do now is to look at those forms and say we’re approaching the twenty first century, this is who we are and this is our legacy, so where do we take that. That’s not happening, and that is a matter of serious concern. (Mee, 162)

Furthermore, he asserts that contemporary urban experience, with its emphasis on city, home and family is no less 'rooted', 'authentic' and 'Indian' than the pre-modern material of indigenous performance. Mahesh himself says, "I have tried to expose the underbelly of society through my own feelings and sensitivity, and explored the portrayal of a subaltern culture." (Banerjee, *The Pioneer*, 4)

Dattani desires national identity of this new theatre of country and opines:

To form our cultural identity we need all three: traditions, continuity and change. It is when we accept the need of all three in our theatre that we can truly have a movement that is inextricably link to the development of cultural, social and individual identity. (Dattani, 1)

Therefore, his apparently westernizes Indian modernity and the new modernity and realism lead alike to invention-both theoretical positions influenced his theatre, that had not existed before him: He opines:

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

Dattani, being a radical and dynamic artist, locates himself as the changer of prevailing norms and traditions, but without regressing into the past, it is a venture to crane new tradition. He asserts:

I do feel myself as the change element of that thread. I am not so sure even, I went to go back to my roots. I don't need to resist it. I'm more interested in pushing it forward I am pushing. I am pushing the audience. (Vardhan I)

According to Dattani, people generally come to see theatre to find them in and may be disillusioned and stop believing in it if they could not see themselves in. He says:

If traditional and continual theatre is linked to our roots, radical theatre is linked to our spirit, it soars like a bird exploring new horizons and offering us, vintage points that we didn't know existed. Both form and content have been enriched by radical thinker in our theatre. (Dattani, 3)

Mostly situations are subject to change, they are not fixed for once and for all. Therefore, we do need a change and the dramatists need to develop new forms and languages according to the needs of contemporary society. Only than a drama can be appreciated and popularized by the audience. He is a playwright, actor and director at the same time but he never compromises among the three roles as he says:

The actor, the playwright and the director are all complementary to each other in production. It is like gardening; where whole is made of many parts. So many conditions determine a garden's lusher, its beauty. (Nair, 2)

Mahesh Dattani, who has been benefitted from the experience of the language writers, has moved ahead of Asif Curimbhoy and Nissim Ezekiel in the use of language. He comments on the language of theatre in his talk on 11 Feb. 2001 at Rabindra Kala Kshetra as part of a Krishi Festival plays to celebrate the 50' Anniversary of Bengali theatre in Bangalore. He observed:

Man has created a very complex language called theatre. A language that has the ability to redefine the natural concept of time, space and movement. A language that goes beyond the physical. Through the language of theatre he has been able to see himself for who he is, what he has made of himself and what he aspires to be. (Dattani, 1)

He has brought up an extremely localized theatre committed to identity, nationalism, differences, to find an outlet to suppressed and silent feelings of the oppressed. He has a wide range of themes, which focuses on the Indian middle class life, morality and taboo subjects like homosexuality, child sexual abuse, gender identity, human relationships, communalism and plight of cancer and AIDS patients.

In his career of thirty-five years, his dramatical output includes two collections of his plays: *Collected plays* (2000) and *Collected plays (Vol. II)*, (2005) published by Penguin India Ltd. The first collection contains eight plays : *Seven Steps Around the Fire, One Muggy Night in Mumbai, Do the needful, Final Solutions, Bravely Fought The Queen, Tara, Dance Like A Man, and Where There Is A Will*. The Second Collection contains ten plays – eight new and two early plays *Dance like A Man* and *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. The eight new plays are *Thirty Days in September, Clearing the Rubble, Mango soufflé* (a screen play), *The Swami and Winston, Morning Raga, Uma and the Fairy Queen, Ek Alag Mausam* and *The Tale of Mother Feeding Her Child*. Besides the above “Three Plays” published by Penguin in 2010 includes *Brief Candle* (a stage play), *The Girl Who Touched the Star* (A radio play). In 2014 Penguin published *Me and My Plays* (2014) which contains *Me and My Plays* (an essay), *Where did I leave My Purdah ?* (a stage play) and *The Big Fat City* (a stage play). Besides writing plays, he has also written screen plays ,which are *Hum Tum aur Who, Ek Chingari Ki Khoj Mein, Ek Alag Mausam* and the screen adaptation of *Dance Likea Man* and *Mango Souffle*. *Morning Raga* is an original screenplay. Regarding the themes of his plays, he says in an interview to Utpal K. Banerjee, “I’m strongly affected by social issues, especially when it comes to power-play in class and gender. A lot of my plays deal with them and they remain leitmotif of my plays.” (Banerjee,166)

In modern theatre, it has been acknowledged that drama cannot survive in isolation. To seek harmony of theatre and thought, drama must take into consideration the emerging issues related with socio-cultural practices. Dattani depicts a kind of social Satire, which attempts realist portraiture of same time. He raises some of the prominent issues concerning the various maltreatments of the society and he ceased to be didactic in his attitude. He asserts, theatre “is a reflection of what you observe. To do any thing more would be to become didactic and it ceases to be theatre.” (Nair, 2)

Some people dismiss his writing, as being “not Indian”. His reply to this is, “I am an Indian: This is my time and this is my place, and I’m reflecting that in my work and that makes it Indian.” (Mee, *PAJ*, 24)

In his all plays the sense of identity dominates which he chooses to deal with the themes related to the complex working of modern urban family. His protagonists are in search of their identities within the often-oppressive structure of custom, tradition, gender and sexuality within the milieu. The main reason behind this may be his own personal experience of life as his roots are in Gujarat and settled in Bangalore, as a result, he is constantly in search of his identity in a place with different linguistic environment and the constant need to use third language for communication. His plays reinforce the experience and narratives of marginalized in society, where stereotypes hold center stage; ridden with prejudice, guilt and dishonesty, where survival is not easy for ‘misfits’. Therefore, he not only presents a truthful picture of contemporary society but also creates characters from his own life. Thus, sometimes, he becomes autobiographical in his approach, “My family, my friend’s acquaintances – They have all in some way or another, figured in my plays.” (Banerjee, 4)

Mahesh can be rightly called as the ‘Sutradhara’ in the modern theatre. Today directors play multiple roles: they write plays, design stage, select lighting and costumes and he is one of them. Dattani, like his predecessors Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar, opines that a playwright should write about the evils present in the contemporary society and present it before the audience. He has offered an array of themes in his plays and the issues, which he has chosen, are not only topical but also most controversial ones; themes related to sexuality and gender are the issues usually set aside as perverse by authors and dramatists. *Tara, Final Solutions, Dance like a Man, Bravely Fought the Queen, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, and Mango Soufflé* are some of the plays deal with such issues. In 1998, Dattani won the Sahitya Academy Award for his book of plays *Final Solutions and Other Plays* published by East-West books Chennai. The Sahitya Akademi Award Citation says:

[Dattani’s work] probes tangled attitudes in contemporary India towards communal differences, consumerism and gender... a brilliant contribution to Indian drama in English.(CP- I, Cover Page)

Mahesh Dattani is India’s first English playwright to be honoured with this prestigious Shatiya Academi award and is rightfully labelled by Alque Padamsee as one of the most serious contemporary playwright. He is a man of multiple facets- director, actor, dancer, teacher and writer, all rolled into one. He has not only directed but also acted in many of his plays. Nair states:

The actor, the playwright and the director are all complimentary to each other in a production. It is like gardening; where a whole is made of many parts. So many conditions determine a garden’s lushness, its beauty. (Nair, 2001).

So do the multiple facets of Dattani as a dramatist impart perfection and glamour to his kaleidoscopic personality.

Dattani in an interview 'Personal Agenda' published in Brunch on March 21, 2004 says, "The love of my life is drama and I want to write more plays". Drama is all in all to Dattani and haunts him like a passion as did the beautiful forms and objects of nature to Wordsworth. The most charismatic quality of Dattani's plays is his focus on the marginalized people. He uses Indian mythology, Indian tradition, Indian dance, Indian English, Indian social problems- yet speaks of themes which touch any audience; the search for individual identity inside and outside the family, the need for happiness, love, sexual fulfillment, security, loneliness and emptiness and of superficially successful lives. He takes on what he calls the 'invisible issues' of Indian society. He pulls out taboo subjects from under the rug and places them on stage for public discussion. He brings those subjects to limelight, which does not belong to a mainstream stage.

Dattani through his plays focuses on such hidden issues that have been existing and unconsciously accepted by us, but are never spoken about. He tries to teach us to live not only with individual demons but also the demons of the society like communalism, class, female infanticide, domestic abuse, homosexuality, discrimination based on gender. Dattani admits:

I write for my milieu, for my time and place – middle-class and urban Indian... My dramatic tension arises from people who aspire to freedom from society.... I am not looking for something sensational ... some subjects, which are under explored, deserve their space. It's no use brushing them under the carpet. We have to understand the marginalized, including the gays. (*The Hindu, 2009*)

Dattani in the manipulation of events is conscious to seek the moments of 'emotional identification' for the desired change in audience. He is neither, a preacher

nor a social critic but certainly a devout humanist. He has sympathy for the silent emotional crisis for the characters struggling against the odds of social constraints. The emotional contentment, different from sentimentalism, can impress a large number of audience. It can seek their participation in theatrical performance and stir their conscience to bring immediate changes in their vision and attitude. They are not imposed from outside but must strike deeper in the heart. The emotional crisis of Shanta in *'Thirty Days in September'*, George and Aruna in *'Ek Alag Mausam'*, Bharti in *'Tara'* and 'Jairaj' in *'Dance like man'* presents the most suitable occasion for dramatic action. It not only brings the purgation of pity and fear but it also brings an elevation of human sensibility to modify the conventional ideologies rooted in human psyche. He is a crafts-man, whose emphasis is on performance rather than literary excellence. His target might be upper middle class, because in English theatre among Indian audiences is still not a matter of masses. However, his dramatic art has the potential to communicate some of human experience that would be a concern for all involving the communication of strong ideas. Drama as a literary genre has immense possibility with the fast growing alienation and rootlessness in man against the turmoil of value crisis, gives drama a huge scope for flourish. Dattani, with his innovative approach against conventional canons and his daring spirit to bring new and radical issues in theatre has witnessed a new dawn of Indian drama with an Indian identity, representing Indian soil and influencing Indian sensibility.

Dattani's first play *Where There is a Will* (1988) is a comedy with farcical touch through which he focuses on the prejudices, follies, foibles and social victims of Indian society. Dattani through the character of Hasmukh Mehta, a rich and successful businessman wants to present his theme- patriarchal men invariably fail to exist as true human beings. Hasmukh has no love for his wife Sonal or for his daughter-in-law

Preeti and his son Ajit also fails to arouse any feelings. Ajit is the Joint Managing Director of his firm. Hasmukh throws away his project proposal without reading it. His opinion about his son is very much clear from his remarks “If I let him have his way, we would all be paupers. He was bankrupt up here (points to his head) the day he was born. God just forgot to open an account for him” (CP-I, 49). Hasmukh dies of cardiac arrest but his ghost continues to linger on in the house. Hasmukh has left a will where he has made his mistress Kiran Jhaveri, the Trustee of his property. The son is not to inherit any thing until he is forty five years old and Kiran is to live with the family. Ajit, Preeti and even Kiran talk of Hasmukh as a slave driver, a weak man with false strength.

Finally each member discovers his or her own identity and liberates from Hasmukh’s overwhelming self. The truth is revealed when Hasmukh is exposed as a man who was rude to everyone, because he was insecure and who wanted a woman to father him. The end of the play with the baby kicking in Preeti’s womb symbolizes a fresh new life for all the members of Mehta family and banishment of Hasmukh’s ghost indicates exorcism of the past.

Dance Like a Man (first performed in Bangalore in 1989) examines the life of Bharatnatyam dance couple, Jairaj and Ratna. Jairaj’s father Amritlal Parekh is a representative of the society of the nineteen thirties and the forties. He is a freedom fighter and reformist but opposes his son’s profession. He believes that Bharatnatyam is the “craft of prostitute to showoff her wares” (CP-I,137) and anyone who “learnt such a craft could not be a man” (CP-I,137). He approves of the marriage of his son with Ratna as to have a daughter in-law from outside his community would add to his prestige. Amritlal manages to buy off Ratna to thwart Jairaj’s career as a dancer. Ratna continues with her shows as Jairaj gets addicted to drinks. He hopes of teaching

his son, Shankar the dance “of Shiva, the dance of man” (CP-I,185), but unfortunately the child dies. Their daughter Lata, who loves Viswas, is full of ambition. A problem arises when the , who was to accompany at Lata’s dance performance, gets leg injury. It is overcome and Lata’s dance performance wins rave reviews in the newspapers like *Herald*, *The Times*, *The Express* etc. She is described as a shining Star in the sky of Bharatnatyam. In the opinion of a reviewer her ‘heaving bosom conveyed all that was humanly possible’(CP-I,175). Lata clarifies that she was breathless but Viswas says ‘it was too erotic’ (CP-I,176). Thus once again Dattani projects that the misconceptions about dance are still prevailing in the society.

Dance like a Man is play where the clash of motives of Jairaj with his wife and father involves the issues of identity crisis, the stigma of gender binary existing at the centre in socio-cultural thought and the perpetual conflict of man’s desire and force of destiny. Dattani forces us to “examine our own individual and collective consciousness.” (Devanesan, CP-I,383)

There is perpetual clash of human motives and desires with the traditions of the family. Prejudice of society and the code of culture constitute the dramatic structure of the play. The issue of gender discrimination is seen, not only in a socio-cultural context but it is found to be an integral to human consciousness and is closely associated with individual choices of self development and self identity. The role models, professional achievements, habits, dresses and morality are expressed in terms of gender bias and therefore, the panic of stigma that ‘dance’ is a feminine act and man’s attempt at being dances would be a prelude to the tragedy of man as happened with Jairaj. The conflict in the life of Jairaj with his father is a conflict of colonial sensibility and progressive ideology, social expectations and individual choices. But, Jairaj, the protagonist having a passion for dance, is ready to challenge

all the restrictions imposed on him by his father, Amrit Lal, an embodiment of patriarchal authority.

The main protagonists in the plays of Dattani might be eunuchs, gay or handicapped or women who dare to think differently from their husband/fathers or marginalized Muslims or AIDS suffering people. In his dramas, there are the seeds of clash of the 'self' of individual against the predetermined schemes of society. In the plays like *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Where There Is A Will*, *Thirty Days in September* and *Dance Like A Man*. Dattani expresses his concern for gendered roles, where not only the women but men also suffer terribly from the restrictions of gender specified models. He takes the ground that the helplessness of an individual against the compulsions of the society, general frustration and rebellion. In these plays, he projects female characters that are not weak or nervous but they are aware and confident to retaliate against the oppressive forces.

The play *Bravely Fought the Queen* is set in the background of familial relationship, and is a portrait of the emotional, financial and sexual intricacies of joint family in modern life. It tries to expose the position of women in conventional society and presents the clash between the traditional ideology and contemporary culture that has created a new canvas of familial relationship. There are five female characters in the play, entrapped in the conventional society in different ways. Dolly survives in her domestic spaces through the inner suffocation and frustration. Alka is translated too, but she does not remain silent and becomes a boozier and drinking-addict. Lalita is an emissary from the male world. Besides, the pressure of Baa in the play is the assertion of patriarchal authority, who does not allow freedom of choice to her daughters-in-laws. Daksha, Dolly's daughter has a silent presence in the play but her presence is very essential for the painful reminder of violence, wracked by Jitin.

The play *Tara* is basically related to the issue of gender bias. It is a pathetic dramatic representation of the suffering of two Siamese twins, Tara and Chandan, like several other plays, the plot of *Tara* is arranged around familial relationship, where each individual in one's own way has to bear the burden of social values and their efforts to go beyond them, bring happiness in their lives. Bharti's motherhood was subordinated to the expectations of patriarchal society. This made Tara crippled and this gender discrimination spoils the whole life of Tara and Chandan. Bharti and Mr. Patel could not forgive themselves so as Chandan, who went to London after the death of Tara with a new identity 'Dan', discarding all his old identity, because of the guilty feeling that he is responsible for Tara's suffering. For him Tara was an inseparable part of his own inner self. The separation and death of Tara becomes a prelude to his doom. More than social dilemma, the psychological tension of each character is more prominent.

The play *Thirty Days in September* focuses on the issue of child sexual abuse. It is a family play based on incestuous relationship in which, Dattani shows, how women are humiliated and exploited by male members of the family. Both female characters, the mother Shanta and the daughter Mala, are physically exploited by the same men in their childhood, who happens to be Shanta's brother and Mala's uncle. Dattani categorically points out that the negligence in familial relationship is responsible for the growing discontent in children. Mala, the protagonist, is a victim of child sexual abuse but she maintains silence against injustice. On that, the silence of her mother also works as a stimulus in her life and she gradually becomes hostile and aggressive. For her, life becomes intolerable both inside and outside the family. She behaves like a trapped animal that seems no

possibility to escape. It was not only the humiliation of her body, but also the rape of her spirit, her innocence and her privacy.

In *Final Solutions*, Dattani depicts communal disharmony through religious distrust. The title of the play is suggestive enough to show us the deep-rooted hatred in the minds of two communities against each other, which does not seem to be solved ever. This inner hatred is same even today, as it was seventy years ago, when the massacre took place during the partition of India and Pakistan. The playwright, through Ramnik Gandhi shows some courage and maybe he is representing Dattani's own voice, but Dattani hesitate to make any plain solution of the situation. The different questions asked by chorus are the questions associated with the national identity of the minority, who have taken recourse to carnival to protest their interest. It is not the question of society and community, but of the identity of individual also. The issue of religion is associated with national identities, cultural identities and social identities. Dattani establishes that love for humanity eliminates the dark shadows of prejudice; the solution lies not in external worlds but with in man's own consciousness. As in the words of Bobby "...if you are willing to forget. I am willing to tolerate." (CP-I, 225)

Dattani knows that Indian mind does not accept same sex love and marriages either in life or in literature, yet he is audacious enough to take such taboo subject in his play on a *Muggy Night in Mumbai*. Although recently we find well-known writers like Vikram Seth and Shobha De are supporting the cause of same sex marriages. The concern for the 'gays' is a radical issue and to bring it to the stage in the value oriented society in India, especially for urban audience since it all about urban life gay/lesbian relationship, came as a challenge both to the director and the producer.

This play is later adopted as a screen play 'Mango Shouffle'. Dattani admits that he has no overt agenda or message in the movie – only an exploration of relationships that is necessarily suspected by the social givens. It is celebrated as first Indian movie to address homosexuality, addressing gay issues within the territorially distinct identity of its subject.

Besides the stage plays, Dattani also exhibits his expertise in radio plays. Crime and corruption in our society and the resulting frustration are the focus of three of his plays, which are going on as a sequence of detective drama or trilogy, centering Uma Rao as the main protagonist, who is a daughter of vice-chancellor of Bangalore University, the daughter-in-law of the Deputy Commissioner and the wife of Superintendent of Police. The names of the plays are *Seven Steps around the Fire* (first broadcasted as seven circles around the fire by BBC *Radio 4* in 1999), *The Swami and Winston* (2000) and *Uma and Fairy Queen* (2003). Though it is really very difficult to show the real feelings of the characters through the medium of radio plays as it depends on only voice and because there cannot be any facial expression. But Dattani gets success through adding brilliant techniques of 'thought' and 'voice-over' in the these plays, which on the other hand he has used it for ironical effect on the audience to expose the injustice prevalent in the society.

In *Seven Steps Around the Fire* Dattani highlights the plight of hijras in our society. He dives deep into the psyche of hijras to portray characters like Kamla Champa, Anarkali and few others. The people treat them as untouchables and again utilize their services of time of marriage and childbirth, speaks the volumes for double standard in our society. For the research on transsexual Uma meets Anarkali in jail and Champa and other hijras in their living place. In the process, she indirectly gets involved in the investigation of the mystery of the murder of Kamla, a hizra. But in

the end, even after the solving the case, Uma gets silent, as the murderer is a minister and she has her limitations for exposing this. So that the case is hushed up and it is not even reported in the newspapers. While solving the murder case, Uma gets absorbed in the world of Hizras, and simultaneously embarks on a quest for her own individuality. The position of Uma is no better than Kamla and Champa. They at least enjoy their individuality and freedom in their specific domains but Uma has no freedom of choice in her home. If Anarkali is a gendered subaltern, Uma is also a subaltern in comparison of her husband. The women like Uma in our society, who are intellectual women, both inside and outside of house. They face a threatening challenge continuously in their daily life and therefore they are lost in the sea of identity politics.

In *Swami and Winston*, Dattani exposes the fake sadhus through Sita Ram Trivedi, who wants to cheat peoples in the name of religion and by building Ashrams inside and outside of the country.

In *Uma and the Fairy Queen*, the sensual nature and criminal nature of the character Nila is shown. She is famous TV star and an immoral women in order to gratify her lust. She used to sleep with her co-stars, for which she murder's her second husband Michael.

The play *Clearing the Rubble* was broadcast by BBC Radio on the first anniversary of Bhuj earthquake tragedy. The play bears to surface the aftermaths of the earthquake as everything is reduced to heaps of rubble. It also reveals the merciless attitude of the government in distribution of compensation. The victims have to give a proof that their loved ones lived and died.

The film *Mango Souffle* was produced by Sanjeev Shah and which brought laurels to Dattani. It has been screened at various film festivals and is the official

Indian selection of the London gay and lesbian film festival. The screenplay *Morning Raga* was also directed by the author and was a part of Cairo Film Festival in 2004. Dattani explained its theme “It’s about a meeting of two worlds. A story that brings together the modern and the traditional, unites the past with the present, Carnatic music with western music, fate and coincidence with individual choices.” (CP-II, 331)

The short play *The Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child* was broadcast in 2000 on BBC Radio 3. The play was commissioned as a part of 2000 Tales, a landmark drama series celebrating the six-hundredth death anniversary of Geoffrey Chaucer. It is the story of an English woman Anna Gosweb, who has an affair with Jaman Gopalia, a farmer from Gujarat. She saves the starving wife and daughter of Jaman from death and then goes back.

Ek Alag Mausam was released in India on 4 February 2005. The story narrates the traumatic experiences of the persons who suffer from HIV positive. Most of the people suffer for no fault of their own and the revelation comes as a great shock. Aparna, was expecting and the gynecologist advised her to terminate pregnancy as she was HIV positive. Her husband, who gifted her with this virus, deserts her and then she comes in contact with an organization, which was taking care of such patients. She meets George, who teaches her, to see life in this deadly disease. Dattani himself remarks that the film is not about AIDS, but about human dignity and pride.

Mahesh Dattani through his plays focuses on such hidden issues, which never find their way into print; he believes that theatre is a reflection of life. He can be compared to Bernard Shaw, who also presented the contemporary society and its evils in his plays. Dattani provides a platform to such issues so that the people become aware of the reality. Dattani himself in his Preface to *Anthology of Dramatic Works*,

Collected Plays proclaims “I am certain that my plays are a true reflection of my time, place and socio- economic background”(CP-I,XV). The struggle of individual human beings for space in the society is uppermost in his mind and therefore, he attempts to create ‘Space’ for them. He feels that female infanticide, communalism, homosexuality, AIDS are the subjects that people want to discuss, but they are afraid to do so because of social taboos. Hence he speaks for the unspeakable and uses them as themes in his plays to give a chance to the people to look into the problem.

Mahesh Dattani is at the peak of his creative powers, still experimenting with new forms and manners of expression. He is not a stereotypical playwright, his characters neither speak quotable lines nor his thematic material rise to extraordinary heights, but still he is held as a playwright of world stature. The reason for his magnificent stature is his honesty, with which he speaks to his audience. He has successfully managed to spellbind his audience and they begin to forget that they are watching an English play. Dattani is certainly a new and unconventional voice in Indian theatre. The echo of his theatrical art both in term of form and content anticipates his prominence in the theatrical world at globe level .The flexibility and ease of expression, breaking the barriers of tight fisted dramaturgy and initiating a penetrating insight into the psycho-philosophical spectrum of human behavior affecting human relationship at personal and interpersonal level would add new dimensions to the area of theatrical canons.In Dattani’s dramatic world, drama instead of being an expression of art, has become a realization of life and it is a preface to the tradition of unconventional popular Indian theatre.

The title of the present research is “Debating the Contemporary: A study of Mahesh Dattani’s Plays”, therefore it is essential to discuss the title at the very first step. According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s dictionary, ‘Debate’ means to discuss

or think over something. So in the present research work there is discussion over the contemporary. The next key word is 'Contemporary' which means 'the present times', or 'belonging to the same time'. In the present thesis, an attempt has been made to discuss the contemporary social realities presented in the plays of Mahesh Dattani. It is an authentic study of Dattani's plays and it does not discuss or debate over the contemporary drama and theatre as such.

The chapter second deals with issue of gender discrimination. The word 'discriminate' originated from the Latin word 'discriminat'. According to Oxford English Dictionary, 'Discriminate' means "the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the ground of race, age or sex".

The term Gender comes from a latin word – 'generate' which means 'to beget' and the latin stem of this word is 'genes' which means 'race or kind' an absolute English meaning is 'to copulate', while Modern English Dictionary meaning is 'Concept of Sex', or 'Sexual differences'.

Gender is one of the most important factors of life. It is about power relations between men and women as it affects the whole life. Untill 1960s, 'Gender was used solely to refer to masculine and feminine words, like le and la in French. However, the psychologist Robert Stodler used the term 'gender' to recognize the amount of femininity and masculinity a person exhibited. Gayle Rubin defines gender as the 'social imposed division of sexes'. (Rubin, 179)

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" (Nicholson, 81). That is according to this interpretation, all human beings are either male or female; their

sex is fixed. But culture interprets sexed bodies differently and projects different norms on them by creating feminine and masculine persons.

West and Zimmerman, in their 1987 article 'Doing Gender' focuses on the process of how individual "do gender" as a "routine methodical, and recurring accomplishment" (West and Zimmerman, 126). According to Butler, gender subjectivities are constructed through performances. She says:

"Gender proves to be performative that is constituting an identity, it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always doing, though not a doing by subject who may be said to pre exist the deed." (Butler, 25)

It is not "a stable identity or locus of agency from which various act follows: 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, 'women' 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." (Butler, 43)

There are various theories developed or proposed to explain Gender development. These can be classified under the following heading: psychological - oriented theories, sociological theories and biological – oriented theories.

This chapter analysis how the gender stereotypes are constructed and how they perpetuate discrimination to 'others' owing to being stereotyped with the help of gender theories.

The chapter three explores and analysis the issue of Homosexuality and Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). 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 same sex. Prior to that, the English language only had words

‘Buggery’, ‘Pederasty’, and ‘sodomy’ to describe certain kinds of sex acts between members of same sex. There is no consensus among the scholars on the definition of ‘homo-sexual’, Until 1970s, research on homosexuality was dominated by medical doctors and clinical psychologists whose primary concern was to examine the etiology and the perceived psychopathic of homosexuality.

The term ‘homosexual’ was, therefore, very much clinical in nature. Due to growth of multi-disciplinary research on homosexuality in the 1970s, two opposing perspectives – the ‘essentialist’ and ‘social constructionist’ perspectives emerged. According to ‘essentialist’ perspective, homosexuality is a biological disposition, which is constant in human behaviour. The ‘essentialist’ perspective emphasizes the underlying biological causation of homosexuality across cultural boundaries. So, it argues that the certain people who are biologically pre-disposed to be erotically and emotionally attracted to members of the same sex can be categorized as ‘homosexual’ on the basis of their sexual essence.

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 the socially constructed category on the grounds of the sexual behaviour of its members. Foucault in his seminal book *History of Sexuality – An Introduction* systematically applies a social constructionist paradigm to human sexuality, calling it a cultural construct. Homosexuality is present throughout the world. It is a social reality in all cultures, whether tolerated or not. There are many misunderstandings about homosexuality and homosexuals. The Elizabethans used to consider homosexuality as a sin. Homosexuality in India is generally considered as a taboo subject by both civil society and the government. One of the prominent issues prevailing in present day

Indian society is the identity crisis, where only male and heterosexual male are considered as a major element of social system and while female and homosexuals etc. are considered as deviant or 'others'. In the present chapter Lesbian and Gay literary theories, post-structuralists & Queer theories are explored to define homosexuality along with Dattani's point of view about homosexuality. Dattani through his plays asserts that it is homosexuality, which causes social exclusion and he portrays homosexuals sympathetically, for their inclusion into our society. He tends to favour equal rights and protection for persons of all sexual orientations, including right to marry, with special right to none. The central theme of Dattani's plays on homosexuality is the notion that lesbian and gay pose no threat to either heterosexuals or the social system, but they can be integrated into society, for its rich variety. Dattani's liberal approach dissolves the differences between lesbian and heterosexual women, gay and normal man. It shows a tendency to deny as well as minimize the difference between lesbians and gay and heterosexuals.

Part II of the third chapter brings out the issue of child sexual abuse, which is also a taboo subject, but it is prevalent across the world. Technically, abused is defined as verbal, or physical behaviours by a person (perpetrator) towards another victim, as an act that could significantly upset, demand, harm and be traumatic. Abuse can be of various types: verbal, psychological and physical. Today globally, adolescence is in a crisis. The media reports of gun-toting school children in the U.S, killing or injuring class-mates point towards the increasing trauma and social alienation among them. In contrast, Indian children are more victims than offenders. Torture Prevention Centre of Indian conducted a survey in the most progressive states like Delhi, Kerala, Mumbai etc. and found that children are increasingly becoming victim of abuse and torture including sexual abuse. This was demonstrated by recent

reports in the media that how two teenaged school girls became mothers. One twelve years old school girl was sexually abused by an auto-rickshaw driver in the neighbourhood and she became mother. Another 15-years old girl was impregnated by her own uncle, who was her mother's sister's husband. However, it is not only girls but boys are also sexually abused by their teachers, coaches, older friends and servants. So the both boys and girls are the victims of sexual abuse. Thousands of children in India today are victims of CSA. Most of the perpetrators are relatives, neighbours and some-times even parents. The world Health organization (WHO) described a possibility of one out of every four girls and one out of every six boys are being sexually abused.

'RAHI' a Delhi based organization that provides support to victim of sexual abuse, reports that out the 1000 upper and high middle class college students were interviewed and found that 76% children has been abused and out of which 31% and 40% are abused by someone known to the family and by the members of the family respectively and even the 50% of the victims are below the age of 12. When an adult involves a child in sexual activities for his or her gratification, the child is said to be sexual abused. Every child is vulnerable to sexual abuse. The victim's silence, unsupportive families and feeling less society and insensitive courts – all work to provide protection to the perpetrator. Children are scared to tell anyone about that they have been abused. Often they don't have the language to describe what has happened to them. Most of the adults are unable to understand what the children are trying to tell them. Sexually abused children learns to hide all feelings of pain. The victim finds no one enough sensitive to have sympathetic ear to his/her plight and bound to reel under their trauma .As a result, she/he may have problems expressing her/his feeling for the rest of life. Depression and feelings of isolation are very

common sign of child sexual abuse. The present chapter highlights the invisible issue of child sexual abuse. It is an effort to bring awareness among the people about this heinous crime, which is most of the time ignored.

Chapter four in the present thesis examines the issue of communalism. Conflicts between ethnic groups are a serious growing challenge to domestic and international security. It is often said that communalism is a modern phenomenon. It was “a pretty bourgeois question par excellence” (Bipin Chandra 41). Now- a day it has spread to all the corners of the world. It has been integral part of Indian politics ever since the introduction of the separate electorates for Muslims by the British rulers. The history of Indian national movement, unfortunately, is also a history of the communalism in the Indian Society. In India, the monster of communalism has succeeded in spreading its tenacles in every nook and corner of the country. It is ironic that the virus of communalism has spread rapidly in the land of Gautam Budha, Kabir, Guru Nanak and Mahatma Gandhi.

The term ‘communalism’ was first used in Indian context in the debate on Morley-Minto (1909) and Montaigne- Chelmsford (1919) reforms. P. Agrawal defines communalism in 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. (Agrawal, 23)

The communal differences between Hindu and Muslim have been a recurring feature of modern Indian Society. The partition of India has given a limited distinctive identity to both communities within their territorial location. Therefore, a forceful religious division has now become our complete national identity. The gruesome and ghastly rioting, which took place in 1947 has continued to throw-up counters of such incidents in independent and secular India. The confronting and negotiating responses to the post-Babri Masjid demolition and brutal blood-shed while the post Godhra Hindu-Muslim violence in Gujarat 2002 are most shameful example of this.

Since Independence, Muslims in India have endured corruption, inequality, exploitation, political manipulations, police brutality, bureaucratic callousness, religious fanaticism without any serious social protest. The politicians charge the social atmosphere with communal passions by inflammatory speeches, writings and propagandas. They exploit the deep religious traditions of both the communities and highlight the differences in their respective practices and rituals. The leaders also try to use economic arguments to instill fear and suspicion in the minds of people and prepare their followers to start a riot at least provocation. Dattani's play *Final Solutions* exposes the fundamentalist and orthodox persons, who use religion as cover (or mask) to fulfill their interest. Religion is mere ploy in their hands to cherish their desired goal. Identity politics is the underlying cause of the Hindu-Muslim tension in India, which has to be clearly grasped to explain the communal riots, that has taken place in recent years. Besides this the present chapter analysis the issues of hatred, aggression, the monetary and political exploitation of communal riots, the chauvinism and parochial mindset of fundamentalist in the context of India in the 1940's interspersed with contemporary India.

Chapter five of the thesis critically analyses the various innovative dramatic techniques used by Dattani in his plays. Dramatic Techniques are used in multiple ways by Dattani to convey different angles of the plot, whether it is lighting pattern, which follows the dialogue or music to show the plays mood. He uses various theatrical and technical modes to illustrate continuous struggle of contemporary urban Indian in familial, social and cultural spheres to create his identity and for depicting conflict. The playwright chooses expressionistic technique. In this technique, the dramatist uses divided stage settings at different levels to unmask the distorted psyche of modern man and to picture of whole society and its troubles in mechanized world. Apart from multi level sets, various symbols and symbolic devices are used. The technique of flash back and flash forward is used to move the plot backward and forward to illustrate a considerable or highly disturbed time sequence on the stage. The time in Dattani's plays is short. The plays are set in the present and action takes place in very limited time –from a day or some months. He uses all these techniques to enhance dramatic effect and performance.

The present research is based on practical criticism. The best method of approach for practical criticism is eclectic method. This means that a critic should try all possible ways and knowledge for appreciation of a given work of literature. He is not tied any particular method exclusively. Majority of critics, David Daiches rightly observes:

Have rarely used a single and easily method in their practical criticism. The academic critic, in particular, with his various kinds of scholarly information- biographical, historical, textual- is often tempted to combine information, explanation, elucidation, and praise in his given work or given writer. (Daiches, 281)

In the present research work, also every chapter has been analysed using different theories of criticism.

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