

Social Realism in select plays of Mahesh Dattani

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Abstract

The word drama has its origin in Greek. It is originated from word “dra” meaning ‘do’. In this way, ‘doing’ or ‘action’ is column beam of the whole dramatic premise. All communities accept that their later drama lies in its performance and the dramatic tradition influences the dramatist to choose his themes as well as techniques. Drama is a composite art in which the written word of the playwright attains complete aerostatic realization only when it becomes the spoken word of the actor on the mind of the audience. A play in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience needs a real theater and a live audience.

The real journey of Indian English drama begins with Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s ‘Is This Called Ciilization’, which appeared on the literary horizon in 1871. Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, the two great sage poets of India, are the first Indian dramatists in English worth considering. Drama became a true representation of the unedited realism of Indian social life. Realism emerged stronger than ever before in the Victorian Period and has been known to target the follies of people and society since then.

Various writers have portrayed the harsh realities and modern day society and as the fiscal problems were transformed into moral ones. No matter we believe it or not but the reality of society even today lies in fact that even if we call it a democracy, not everyone in the society are given fair chances to live, and not everyone in society are treated as human beings. Social realism is that branch of realism that is known to describe the realities of society. The study falls into four chapters. The first chapter of Introduction provides a critical slavery of works done on Dattani so far, and it also makes a statement on the topic, broad hints at working areas of the study and its objectives. An attempt has also been made to analyze briefly the influences on the playwright’s mind and art. The second chapter is devoted to the study of Social Realism in the plays of Mahesh Dattani. Gender Discrimination in the plays of Dattani is discussed in chapter three. The concluding chapter states the major findings of the studies selected dramas of Dattani in chapter four, Conclusion.

Dattani always focuses on the possibility of change in people’s attitudes and calls for a relaxation of social taboos, beliefs and value systems. He is known for putting forward the issues that directly concern the society. The dramatic performances of those times mainly included depiction of events of daily life accompanied by music. Dattani bags the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award for his wonderful work Fnal Solutions and other plays. He establishes that the love and humanity eliminates the dark shadows of prejudice; the solution lies not in external worlds but within man’s own consciousness.

The introduction of supernatural element is ery humorous and interesting one. Where There is a Will dramatizes the social realism in a ery comical and satirical way. Among modern Indian playwrights, Dattani stands forth with singular distinctness, striking artistic perception and immense

dramatic guts. Dattani's plays contain some important elements like human pathos, passions, conflict and appeal to human sentiment, which can immediately touch and stir common audience.

In the modern or post modern era the problems of the society have changed but their impact on people has remained same. The prominent theme in all of Dattani's plays is the unending adjustment and compromises people commit for the sake of a dignified position in the society, against all the odds. Dattani's dramatic genius is so innovative and radical that he can depict excluded and forbidden issues very successfully. He observes that there are certain issues which die in the minds of the persons. The gay desire is lying in the human psyche and is very essential to deal with in a proper way.

Dattani's presentation of problems from real life situations is significant contribution to Indian English Drama. He takes up serious problems prevailing in Urban India. He, very successfully, gives voice to the problems suffering of the marginalized people of our society. He is the most serious contemporary dramatist in Indian drama in English.

It is appropriate to say that the composition of drama is more difficult task than other forms of literature. Dattani adopted different forms of drama as a medium to represent the real depth and vitality of human experience. He has not only intellectual power to produce a play in text but also has an ability to get it staged successfully.

Characterization

We find a lot of characters in the plays of Dattani who struggle through the same patch to arrive at a point where all can agree to their decisions and live peacefully and be repeated in the society, instead they end up wearing masks for the rest of their lives. We live in a modern society and get carried away by all the developments around us, but Dattani through his queer observation, pulled characters from the same society we live in but never thought existed.

We worshiped women deities but refuse to respect the human counterpart. The social flaws and hypocrisies are highlighted by bringing in spotlight the sad realities that were always in front of our eyes and yet we were blind towards them. The condition of women in the past is represented by Daksha's character and the present situation is represented through Aruna, Daksh's daughter-in-law.

The realization of past error helps the character understanding present in a better way. It has got modern relevance. It is because of this Dattani's plays are seen and enjoyed again and again. We can see Dattani's characters moving around us as they have a touch of reality and authenticity. As far as the traditional element is concerned, the characters in Dattani's plays resemble the everyday human characters that we encounter in social plays of Sanskrit theatre such as Prakarana, prahasana and bhana. Another traditional element is the presence of a supernatural character on the stage in the form of a ghost in Dattani's comical play, Where There is a Will.

Dattani's characters are rooted in the urban cosmopolitan setting of modern middle class in India. Much more important is the revelation of the character through speech and action, through what the character says and what he does or does not do. The variety and range of the characters and the contrast they present add interest and richness to his plays. There are wicked and cruel male characters too such as Jiten, Nitin and Praful in Bravely Fought the Queen who with their black deeds make this world a hell for others.

Tara, in spite of being physically handicapped, is also strong enough to overcome the adversities in her life. In all his characters, Dattani presents the multi-faceted Indian woman.

In this way, Dattani gives a fresh lease of life to the tradition of Indian drama by skillfully portraying male, female and other characters from all walks of life that inhabit the modern Indian milieu.

Conclusion

India is a hierarchical society. Whether in north India or south India, Hindu or Muslim, urban or village, virtually all things, people and social groups are ranked according to various essential qualities. Drama has been a very efficient and influential genre of any society and has thrived with a deep involvement with the social and moral issues of its times.

The audience are made aware of these social issues and are left to contemplate the consequences after going through the plays. The dramatist became the mouthpiece of society to make people of the society realize the condition around them so that they can do something to improve this condition. Dattani's handling of social realities and sensational issues like unusual love relationships, women's exploitation, incest and child-sex abuse and communal disharmony has been favourite subjects of study for his critics.

Mahesh Dattani, is responsible for successfully launching the Indian Theatre in English. After reading his plays, one finds that the main reason of the pain in people's lives is their unhappy relationships with their families and society. In the hands of Dattani Indian English Drama transformed itself beyond the limitations of imitations. His dramatic genius is so innovative and radical that he can depict excluded and forbidden issues very successfully. He observes that there are certain issues which die in the minds of the persons. He wishes to highlight the issues of the contemporary society. He excels in art as well as symbolic exuberances and imagery. Mahesh Dattani is a modern playwright hence he is not only described the old flaws but also wrote about issues like homosexuality which is still considered western and people are reluctant to talk about. We live in a 'modern society' and get carried away by all the developments around us, but Dattani through his queer observation, pulled characters from the same society we live in but never thought existed. He is known for putting forward the issues that directly concern the society. Dynamic and innovative theatrical art of Dattani captures the stark reality of life.

In this way Dattani adopted different forms of drama as a medium to represent the real depth and vitality of human experience. He has not only intellectual power to produce a play in text but also has an ability to get it staged successfully.

Keywords

Social Realism

Gender Discrimination

Social Consciousness

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