

Mahesh Dattani: A Strategic Playwright

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Abstract

Indian English drama- a true feeling of human behaviour which is performed on the stage by the characters. According to my point of view, Indian drama is the mirror of the society and just because of this people can easily connected themselves with this amazing feeling. The playwrights like- Badal Sarkar, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Harindra Cattopadhyaya, Mahesh Dattani etc have won the heart of the audience. My research paper is focusing the wonderful artist, screenplay writer, director and multi-talented playwright Mahesh Dattani and his strategies as well.

Mahesh Dattani: A strategic Playwright

Mahesh Dattani is a well-known modern Indian playwright as well as the first Indian playwright to be awarded the Sahitya Academy Award in (1998), which is regarded as the highest award in writing field for one of his best creation **Final Solution And Other Plays**. He is not only a playwright but also a stage director, an actor, a screen writer, and a film-maker. He is continuing contributing the Indian-English drama. The theme of his plays is extremely out of mind and unconventional as he always focuses on the burning concepts of society like problems of women, gender-discrimination, taboos, husband-wife relationship etc. Dattani remarks himself, *“The function of the drama, in my opinion, is not merely to reflect the malfunction of the society but to act like freak mirrors in a carnival and to project grotesque images of all that passes for normal in our world. It is ugly, but funny”*. His plays are somewhere, subjective and he has successfully staged his plays in the whole country. He set himself as a successful playwright among some remarkable playwrights and directors such as Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and, Mahesh Elkunchwar, who no doubt contributed a lot to the growth and development of Indian drama. Dattani’s art of writing expresses different mental states, emotions and ideas, desires and aspirations, strengths and weakness, basic moral and social questions as well as individual predicaments. They also introduce a real and true picture of the social, political, economic and cultural life of present times. His plays like- *Where There’s a Will* (1988), *Dance Like a Man* (1989), *Tara* (1990), *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991), *Final Solutions* (1993), *Do the Needful* (1997), *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998), *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (1999) and *Thirty Days in September* (2001) broke all the barriers in the history of literature. For their keen insight, delicate aesthetic sense, structural skill, variety, dramatic and theatrical quality of the language, and excellence of stagecraft, they have a distinct place in world dramatic literature. In almost all his plays he has tried to bring on the Forefront the different aspects of Indian culture and class conflict. Mahesh dattani is famous for using unconventional issues and presenting the human relationship and cultural values on the stage through actors’ performance which connect the each and every people with reality. He uses the unique strategies, tools and techniques which play an important role in his plays and this is enough to win the heart of common people. I observed the two phase of Dattani. On the one hand, he started writing in English while at that time drama in English was not exactly flourishing; on the other, he often selects unusual themes for his dramas. As Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri comments, *“The preoccupation with ‘fringe’ issues forms an important element in Dattani’s work – issues that remain latent and suppressed, or are pushed to the periphery, come to occupy centre stage”* if we are discussing the issues or the concept of his writing, one of his plays *Tara* shows the discrimination issue which is badly prevalent in the society. *Tara* is the play which dealt with gender-discrimination in modern society. This is the story of an every girl child who becomes the victim of partiality presenting in male dominance in highly educated family in Bangalore. This is the story of twins born with three legs and the baby girl supplies the blood to third leg and this is extremely sad that the family including mother decide the fix the third leg to male child. This discrimination shows the sick mentality of highly educated family in the society. This is the reality of the people which is clearly shown in Dattani’s plays. No doubt, Dattani has a unique strategy to introduce his plays to the audience. Dattani has dramatized the Indian cultures realistically. He never forgets his values for a single second and this is what the India expects from him. Human relationships as well as cultural values play the

most important role in Mahesh Dattani's plays. In his plays *Where There's a Will*, *Dance Like a Man*, *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Final Solutions*, *Do the Needful*, and *Thirty Days in September*, Dattani introduces the family lives. The theme of *Where There's a Will* revolves around the life of a rich businessman, Hasmukh Mehta and his family. Although, the play begins with the patriarchy which is clearly shown in the attitude of Hasmukh but ends with the beginning of a new era in which there will be no patriarchal dominance and which will lead ultimately to the improvement of interpersonal relationships. Another play *Dance Like a Man* is a two-act play which is the story of three generations in Tamil Nadu, who stand for the dominant beliefs and sensibilities of their times and shows how they markedly differ from each other. The play also reflects the thrust of ambition for him or her and their children living in the family. We can find the glimpse of every field of society and regarding such a broad perspective of Mahesh Dattani, Beena Agarwal gives her views: "the play *Dance Like a Man* begins with a socio-cultural spectrum passes to psycho-cultural dynamics and culminates psycho-philosophical suggestiveness and her lies the distinction of Dattani's art."⁷³(104) *Bravely Fought the Queen* is the fourth play by Mahesh Dattani and he has won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1998. In the play he perhaps bothers about the deterioration of women in our society, which has hampered the spirit in Indian society. Women played a place of honour in Rig-Vedic Civilisation but now they, somewhere, have lost their dignity and status in contemporary situation. As I already mentioned above that Dattani's plays draw the attention of common people for his plays are directly connected with their heart. His most of the themes are based on family which is surrounded by cultural values. If we talk about the play *Do the Needful* Dattani uses the traditional themes of marriage which highlights the changing trend of marriages in Indian society. He is not only the writer of cultural values but also he throws light on each and every aspect of society like- gender issues, position of women, the political areas, economic condition of society, patriarchy, discrimination, gender identity, development of thoughts and the mental state of people. Somewhere, Dattani opposes the society which has no respect for women, the society like we can say *Lakeer ke Fakeer*, nothing interesting happens in the relationships. In short, he multi-talented playwright Dattani has no boundaries in his writing field. As we all of us know the fact, Mahesh Dattani is the playwright of modern Indian drama. As far as I am concerned, modern drama was not the beginning of playwrights. Gradually the ancient drama took the place of modern drama. This is the achievement for authors especially the playwrights who developed the art of their writing according to the situation. Mahesh Dattani is one of the modern playwrights who contributed to Indian drama a lot. He has an amazing sense of writing that can easily be seen in his plays he throws light on sensational issues like- homosexuality, gay relationship, taboos, the position of women, marginalized society, hijras community etc. For his writing capability, Mahesh Dattani thrives on the heart of each and every kind of people. He has no community because he has written for all communities for everyone.

Work-cited

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