

SLAUGHTER OF THE SOUL IN PURSUIT OF PERFECTION: A STUDY OF MAHESH DATTANI'S CHARACTERS

Umed Singh

ABSTRACT

Dramatic art has been of great interest in oriental as well as occidental world since times immemorial. The genre became very popular in the western part of the globe, especially in Greece and Britain, and with the passage of time it travelled to the British colonies. But the tradition of drama in India existed even before we became a British colony. Its history goes back to 500 B.C. when Bhasa wrote plays like *Urubhanga* and *Karna* and became the oldest known dramatist. Later Sanskrit drama flourished here with the contribution of great playwrights like Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti. Soon the glory of Sanskrit drama vanished because it distanced itself from life. Drama regained vigour when the British, who were fond of going to theatre in moments of leisure, set up their government in India. But since then drama in English has not sailed smoothly in spite of the presence of the sage poet and dramatist Rabindernath Tagore who made a notable contribution to the enrichment and revival of Indian drama. Fortunately the contemporary Indian drama in English is continuously being enriched by creative and socially committed writers like Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmnabhan. These playwrights have shown a special penchant for the study of man and his milieu and have produced interesting and stageable plays. Their plays have been acted and appreciated all over the globe and have brought recognition to both Indian drama and Indian dramatists.

(Keywords: *Indian drama, Communication, Perfection, Sectarianism*)

Mahesh Dattani is one of the most vocal dramatic voices in India who gave fresh life to the otherwise neglected field of Indian theatre in English. He is the first Indian playwright writing in English to be awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award for his brilliant contribution to the world of drama, and has been hailed as “one of India's best and most serious contemporary playwrights writing in English” (*International Herald Tribune* 27 July 1994). Just like Henrik Ibsen or Bernard Shaw, Dattani explores social and familial issues of vital importance. His plays are contemporary in theme and style beyond doubt: “I'm certain that my plays are a true reflection of my time, place and socio-economic background . . . in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally” (Preface, *Collected Plays:2000*). In addition to being contemporary his plays bring to the fore several live issues that plague the post-independence Indian society. The present paper proposes to analyse the major characters of three of Dattani's plays namely *Where There's a Will* (1988), *Dance like a Man* (1989) and *Final Solutions* (1993).

Varied in form and diverse in content Mahesh Dattani's plays deal with the theme of lack of communication: between different communities, between individual and society, parents and children, and between man and woman. Dattani underlines the difference between tradition and modernity in exploring the conflict between the tradition and modernity and between the old and the new generations. The new generation has a fresh sense of freedom and it refuses to be a blind follower of the preceding generation. The older generation lives by age old traditions and customs which it would like to preserve at all costs while the younger generation abhors everything of the past and chooses a free way of life much to the chagrin of the elderly people who set a lot of store by old values. So there is permanent antagonism between the two generations. Dattani's characters live in this transitional world where the old values are dying but the new values are yet to be born. The playwright lays bare the deeds of his characters that seem to sacrifice their noble virtues like love, compassion, sympathy and humane attitude in pursuit of perfection.

Dattani is not a preacher who would put his characters in the middle of a puzzle and solve the riddle in the end of his play to teach his readers/spectators a lesson. He believes that “theatre . . . is a reflection of what you observe. To do anything more would be to become didactic and then it ceases to be theatre”(*The Gentleman* May 2001). This ideology of the playwright makes one of his interviewers conclude: “He aims not at changing society but only seeks to offer some scope for reflection in the hope that his plays will give the audience some sort of insight into their lives”(ibid). This seems to be the guiding principle of Dattani’s dramatic art. But the question arises why the playwright wants the audience to reflect and “question their [your] own personality”?(ibid). The obvious answer is that he wants to see a better society, a society where there is a good rapport between parents and children, husband and wife, individual and society and between different communities. Like a true artist Dattani lets preaching come as a by-product and never addresses the masses from the stage directly and lets his characters do the job for him. He admits:

I also know that I have a lot to say and am probably not saying it well enough. But my characters have a lot to say too, and they seem to be doing rather well at having their say. Every time a critic says something awful about my writing, I realise that they are pointing out something that I have wanted to say and have, as usual, been hopeless and unconvincing. ...I am completely aware that it is my character that has done the work for me. (Preface, *Collected Plays*).

Thus it is through his characters that he makes his purpose known. He brings characters on the stage who suffers from inadequacy and incompleteness and who constantly strives for wholeness. The characters in his play *Where There’s a Will* are denied freedom throughout by the domineering patriarch Hasmukh Mehta. Ajit, the son and Preeti, the daughter-in-law have to strive hard to get rid of the ire of the unfatherly father. But in the process of their search for identity and perfection they slaughter their own soul and fall prey to dishonest practices. The same concern echoes in *Dance like a Man* where the imposing father revisits in the form of Amritlal Parekh who has been represented as a powerful social reformer. To live up to his image of a stern reformer, Parekh seeks to have a complete control over the activities and life of his progeny—son, Jairaj and daughter-in-law Ratna. He wants the two to keep away from undignified profession like dance. Jairaj, who has been asked to ‘dance like a *man*’ by his father and refused to be accepted as a man by his own wife, searches for his manliness. His wife Ratna also strives for a perfect career in dance. But in both the cases the virtue of humane attitude is lost and the communication between the characters collapses. The play *Final Solutions* not only underlines the existing lack of understanding between Hindus and Muslims but also explores how people can be irresponsible in the discharge of their familial and societal duties and, blinded by the greed of petty gains, can turn deaf ears to the voice of their soul.

Fettered with the chains of social and familial expectations, Dattani’s characters dream of a perfect world of their own imagination and wish to model themselves as free individuals who admit no impediments in their way. For instance, the domineering patriarch Hasmukh Mehta in *Where There’s a Will*, tries to put such free birds in the cage of his own conception of the self. He exercises hegemonic power over his dependents and wishes to perpetuate it not only when alive but even after his death also. The wrath that Hasmukh has in his blood must have passed on to his son Ajit whose resistance he has to face throughout to exercise his hegemony. Ajit has his own sense of identity and he refuses to obey his father. The lack of communication between the two is very evident:

AJIT. . . . you want me to be you.

HASMUKH. . . .Yes, I want you to be me! What's wrong with being me?

AJIT. And what becomes of me? The real me. I mean, if I am you, then where am I?

HASMUKH. Nowhere! That is just my point! If you are you, then you are nowhere. . . (Preface, *Collected Plays*).

When Hasmukh refuses to give Ajit a separate individuality and identity, the latter tries to create it through his act of defiance. Similarly he commoditise the women who come into his contact—Sonal, Preeti and Kiran-- everyone is treated as an object of sex. About this bossy-natured head of Mehta family Kiran concludes: "Hasmukh Mehta was living his life in his father's shadow. . . .

[He] didn't really want a mistress. He wanted a father. He saw in me a woman who would father him!" (WTW 509-10). And Sonal endorses what Kiran feels. In this way Hasmukh's quest for complete control over his family ends in fiasco; yet the fact that Hasmukh's intentions are full of malice towards his family stands well established.

Hasmukh hands over the reins of the family to Kiran Jhaveri through his 'will', and now all the members of Mehta family, who have been searching throughout for a life of liberty, love and affection rather than of anger and governance, get a democratic and caring head. But all of them appear to be driven by selfish ends in one way or the other. They slay the soul of joint family system for the greed of gold. Sonal never enjoys conjugal felicity with her husband, and their son Ajit and his wife Preeti follow suit. Preeti goes to the extent of facilitating Hasmukh's untimely death by replacing his medicine meant for controlling his blood pressure with her own vitamin tablets. What she is actually eyeing on is the wealth that she and her husband will inherit from Hasmukh Mehta because she seems to believe that a perfect life is one which is lead in affluence. Thus Preeti, like many characters in the play, slaughters her soul in pursuit of perfection.

The sense of feeling of failure and incompleteness again affects the life of the dancers Ratna and Jairaj in *Dance like a Man*. Ratna has passion for dance and wants to become a perfect Bharatnatyam dancer. Her following cry, when she is talking to Jairaj, speaks volumes about how much she craves for perfection.

RATNA. Finished! . . . Yes, your father was right. Dance has brought us nowhere. It's his curse on us. Nothing seems worth it anymore. Oh, it is all so . . . worthless. You should have listened to your father. He was right. We were never anything great, never will be, and nor our daughter be anything but an average human being. (DLM 402)

This lament of Ratna on being average and not extraordinary underlines her desire for perfection. She is indeed tirelessly running after a career in dance which can bring her name, fame and recognition from society. She leaves no stone unturned to fulfil this aim and crosses all the hurdles in her way erected by her father-in-law Amritlal Parekh: she sharpens her talent by practicing hard, takes lessons from a *devdasi* named Chenni Amma never minding what people think of her being associated with a *devdasi* and even sacrifices her son Shankar on the altar of her ambition by administering an overdose of opium to the child so that it might not stay awake and weep when she is away for a dance performance. Dissatisfied with her mediocre success Ratna goes to the extent of leaving her father-in-law's house so that she can achieve accomplishment in the art of dance. She is engrossed in dance that she agrees to stay in her uncle's house in spite of his attempt to molest her. To her husband Jairaj, who is very upset about the incident, she says that her uncle is a "harmless old man"(Screenplay Prod. by NFD Co.)

But Jairaj thinks the other way round, and this clash poisons their relations permanently. When she comes back to her father-in-law Amritlal Parekh's house, he proposes her a secret agreement that she will be allowed to dance if she co-operates him in stopping Jairaj from dancing. And she accepts the pact readily. Thus to see her dream fulfilled at any cost, she has no qualms about her irresponsible behaviour towards her beloved husband, whom once she loved and married against all odds. When she fails to achieve the desired completeness, with all her efforts and practice in the field of dance, she tries to realise it through her daughter Lata. Jairaj, in spite of his deep love for his wife, never forgives her for what she did to Shankar, their son, wittingly or unwittingly. Neither could he forget her stubbornness and willingness to stay in her uncle's house after what he (Ratna's uncle) did to her. These two incidents which show the souring of the relationships between the couple, advance the action of the play very substantially. Thus Ratna's mad race for perfection seems to be the root cause of her unhealthy relations in her family. It remains a fact that Ratna's efforts and sacrifices were great though the end was tragic. The irony is that Ratna, who expected garlands of appreciation to come around her neck on her success as a dancer, could bring only a deadly albatross of her son Shankar's death to hang around her neck for the rest of her life.

Like his wife Ratna, Jairaj is also obsessed with his career as a dancer. But he is not as committed as Ratna is. It is perhaps his interest in dance that makes him marry Ratna in spite of his father Amritlal Parekh's objections. Again it is to realise his ambition that Jairaj proposes to his wife the idea of leaving his father's house when the latter protests against the couple's choice of dance as a career. It is their common decision that derives them to the house of Ratna's uncle. But the couple

returns to Amritlal Parekh as the uncle tries to molest Ratna in Jairaj's absence. Jairaj has to bow before his father's efforts and Ratna's pact and get consumed by drinking rather than by dance. He takes to drinking and painfully complains how Ratna used him as a tool, as a stage prop, as a choreographer to her dance items, and never considered him a co-dancer. His search for a career in dance takes him nowhere and in the end he admits: "We were only human. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God" (*DLM* 447).

Just like his search for a bright career in dance, his desire for good relationships with his father and his wife also ends in despair. Jairaj and Ratna's search for career in dance gets realised only in the next generation when their progeny Lata, with the help of their efforts, becomes a consummate dancer and brings meaning to their life. So far as Jairaj's manliness is concerned he is no brute or ruffian who would make others say that he is a 'man' but a sensitive and sophisticated human being whom people like Amritlal Parekh and Ratna exploit for their personal satisfaction and gains.

In *Final Solutions*, Ramnik Gandhi and Babban are secular-minded human beings who feel a need for better communal understanding. The latter is a cool customer and has no selfish end behind his secular behaviour while the former tries to atone for the sins committed by his father and grandfather, taking in Babban and Javed and protecting them against the fury of the fierce Hindu mob. In the process he makes his own mother feel slighted whose father was murdered by Muslims in communal riots. He faces disapproval and bears curses not only from the mob outside but also from his wife Aruna. But he is determined to put off the guilt that has been torturing him since long. Apart from his guilt, his intentions are to make a better relationship with the Muslim community and that's why he offers Javed a job in his shop. But his efforts bear no fruit. It is Smita, his daughter, who emerges as the real icon of equality and fraternity in the two communities. She gives a sense of completeness to the life of different members of her family, and her Muslim friend Babban helps her in doing so. She makes her mother realise her mistake, tells her father that she will not join him to make a force to debase her mother, makes the two Muslim boys believe that they are no 'demons' but human beings made of flesh and blood like Hindus are. She hands the "God's vessel" (214) over to Javed to be filled up with water to establish the belief that our prejudices are totally futile and that we do not do any good to any one by using our religion for destructive purposes. Babban's act of holding Hindu god in his hand towards the end of the play symbolises oneness of all human beings who, otherwise, keep fighting in the name of religion, caste, creed and region.

Aruna appears to be the one who mercilessly debases the spirit of religion. She glorifies her religion and discredits Muslims as demons, thrusts her wishes on her daughter to make her feel stifled and ignores the human virtues like mercy, tolerance and selfless love. She differs from her husband Ramnik Gandhi in taste and temperament. Ramnik is a liberal, open-minded non-ritualistic Hindu, while she is full of prejudices. He is haunted by the guilt of the past and wants to improve relations with Muslims, while she is narrow-minded and encourages the antagonism between the Hindu and Muslims. She believes in the perfect observance of Hindu rituals and in the process gets alienated from others and gets alienated in her own family. She wants their daughter Smita to learn from her grandmother Hardika "the truth" that Muslim "people are all demons" (173). Two individuals, husband and wife, with different principles naturally come against each other. The husband is a humanist who believes in filling the chasm between the two communities while the wife is a religious extremist who believes in spending a lot of time in "pooja-paath" and nurturing hate for other religions. And this "pooja-paath" exhausts her energies and she finds herself overburdened by work and feels irritated most of the time. When she complains of uneasiness, her husband asks:

RAMNIK. Nobody is asking you to pray all day.

ARUNA. Who do you think is protecting this house?

RAMNIK. Who do you think is creating all this trouble? (*FS*173).

This short dialogue between the two indicates that Aruna and Ramnik are mentally travelling in opposite directions. In addition to her over religiosity, she is highly prejudiced against the Muslims. When the two Muslim youths, Javed and Babban, save themselves from the ferocious Hindu mob by hiding in the Gandhis' house, Ramnik goes all out to protect them but Aruna wants to throw them out to the blood-thirsty mob. It is only on Ramnik Gandhi's request that Aruna unwillingly serves water to the boys.

This kind of attitude is another form of violence. "Physical violence is not the only form of violence. This kind of distancing, humiliation and indignity does not do the inter-community relations any good"(Jain189). This kind of behaviour on the part of Aruna adversely affects her relationships not with Muslims only but also within her own family. Secular minded Smita and tolerant Ramnik naturally develop some kind of dislike for her.

So is the case with Muslim families in the play. Javed does not live with his parents, but goes to meet his sister in her hostel and is concerned about her happiness. Therefore it can be said that love-hate relationship is there among the members of Gandhi family as well as Javed's family. Thus Dattani seems to explore the causes which contribute to the collapse of communication between people at social and familial levels and which prevent people from forming meaningful relationships. Probing into the reasons behind such tangled familial relations in this play, a stage director Alyque Padamsee observes:

This is . . . about transferred resentments. About looking for a scapegoat to hit out at when we feel let down, humiliated. Taking out your anger on your wife, children, or servants is an old Indian custom. . . . Ramnik, the father, transfers his resentment at his own father's black deed . . . Smita, the daughter, hits out at her mother, Aruna, when she can't cope with her hidden love for Babban, the outsider. ("A Note on the Play '*Final Solutions*'")

Dattani makes use of appropriate symbols which not only enriches Dattani's dramatic art but also highlight the key issues in the play. In *Final Solutions*, the darkness of night is symbolic of bitterness and revolt while the morning light denotes acceptance and fairness in relationships. The light dispels darkness which eventually paves the way for a better understanding among people. Javed admits his faults; Hardika realises her mistake, and Ramnik accepts the blunders of his parents.

The darkness in which the whole action of the play takes place gets replaced by the advent of dawn towards the end of the play.

Dattani, a keen observer of the social order around him, moves in past and present and underlines the ills and evils of contemporary society which are eating into its the vitals. He seems to feel pain at the spectacle of traditional enmity: between the Hindus against the Muslims as the two communities lived in harmony before the advent of the British in india. In *Final Solutions*, he underlines the intricate bond that exists between Hindus and Muslims. There are Hindus who love their Muslim friends: Daksha loves Zarine, Smita is a friend of Javed and Babban. But there are individuals who love to hate the 'other' community: Javed hates the Hindus, Hardika and Aruna hate the Muslim community. The playwright explores all the factors that create and sustain enmity between the Hindus and the Muslims and sustain it. Daksha, the protagonist of the play, while she is writing her diary, recalls one of the violent incidents that took place during Hindu-Muslim riots in the past:

The windows broke, one by one. My mother and myself, we hid in the pooja room. The stones came smashing into our home . . . I could see the fire they were carrying, reflected in the broken glass lying around us . . . and suddenly I had the most horrible thought. I feel afraid to repeat it . . . A stone hit our gramophone table, breaking it . My entire collection of records broken . . . (FS167).

After this flashback in time, the scene shifts to forty years later in present times and Daksha appears with a changed name Hardika, the mother of Ramnik Gandhi and grandmother of Smita, the young girl. The news on television reveals a fresh incident of Hindu-Muslim riots. A Hindu rath yatra has been pelted with stones in Kareem Bagh, a Muslim mohalla. The poojari has been stabbed. The axle of the chariot has broken and it has keeled over right there breaking the Hindu idols. The Hindus blame the Muslims for this broken chariot and want the Muslims to be sent back to Pakistan as their hearts belong there. About the Muslim community, the Hindu mob makes the most hurting remarks like "It is in their blood to destroy!" (FS 168) and "Kill the sons of swine!" (169). Soon the Chorus with Muslim masks appears with rancorous remarks about Hindu gods:

CHORUS 1. Their chariot fell in our street!

CHORUS 2. Their God now prostrates before us!

.....

CHORUS 4. A manufacturing defect!

CHORUS 5. Doesn't their God have a warranty? (FS 171).

Such comments hurt religious feelings of the masses, create enmity between people belonging to different faiths, promote sectarianism and enflame religious feelings. The age old enmity between the Hindus and the Muslims is kept alive and the present is not allowed to be different from the past. Indeed the problem lies with us who denigrate other religions and faiths. A director of Dattani's plays is right when he comments:

The demons of communal hatred are not out on the street . . . they are lurking inside ourselves. The mob in the play is symbolic of our own hatred and paranoia. Each member of the mob is an individual yet they meld into one seething whole as soon as politicians play on their fears and anxieties. ("A Note on the Play 'Final Solutions'")

Religious extremists' belief that their own religion is superior while all other religions are inferior, breeds only fanaticism and intolerance. In *Final Solutions*, Aruna, the archetypal pious Hindu woman, represents fanaticism in female as well as Hindu society and Javed in male as well as Muslim society. Aruna treats Javed and Babban as untouchables, and Javed hurts sentiments of the Hindus once by disturbing 'rath yatra' and then again by pronouncing the comparison between the Hindus and the Muslims: "We do love our own blood unlike you who treat your own like shit which can't be touched" (FS 190). The never ending blames and counter-blames go on and irreparable harm is done to individuals who can never form meaningful relationship with people belonging to other communities. Hardika is one such individual.

The Muslims killed her father during communal violence; she lost respect in the eyes of her husband because she was accused of sharing 'food' in her Muslim friend Zarine's house; her son Ramnik remained guilt-ridden all his life; Smita, her grand-daughter had to sacrifice her love for Babban, a Muslim, because of communal difference between the Hindus and the Muslims. The disharmony created thus is harmful for individual as well as society as it suppresses individual choices, widens the gap between man and man and turns human beings into tyrannical devils. Jasbir Jain rightly remarks: "The over-religiosity of religion reduces the humanity of human beings." (Jain 191). Religious fanatics like Aruna and Javed do not do any good to their community or to themselves; rather they do an irreparable damage to inter-community relationships and only destroy themselves in destroying others. "Such fanaticism is not only self-limiting for each of these individuals but is also the primary cause for the barriers that are constructed between them and the larger world" (Jain). Hence, it can be said that factors like the sense of possessiveness, prejudice, pride, inequality and sense of superiority create disunity and distance both at familial and social levels and prevent people from forming meaningful relationships.

The way Dattani devises the end of each of his plays signifies that he is in search of poetic justice for his characters. His very first play *Where There's a Will* ends with a wish of Hasmukh Mehta's ghost that he had never interfered with the life of his family members. Finding himself out of place in the family, his ghost goes to hang himself upside down from the tamarind tree thus symbolising the end of patriarchy. Kiran's act of surprising Ajit with the cheery news of celebration of his birthday rather than revealing to him the truth about Preeti's secret of changing his father's medicine, and her befriending of Preeti are all steps towards improving human relationships. Again, the arrival of a baby provides a sort of completeness to Preeti's role as a daughter-in-law in the family. Sonal's willing acceptance of Kiran, her late husband's mistress, as a member of her family speaks volumes of her relationship heading towards completeness. Finally Ajit's plan to get the tamarind tree chopped off symbolises the end of the ghost of domineering patriarch Hasmukh Mehta.

Similarly the ending of the play *Dance Like a Man* shows Ratna befriending her lifelong rival Chander Kala; Lata's child speaks her first word that sounds like "jalebi" (DLM 447) and Jairaj admits that he and Ratna were only human beings who "lacked the brilliance" (DLM 447) and could not perform the dance of their life perfectly. Moreover, Jairaj and Ratna move to their flat to get rid of the last remnants of Amritlal Parekh's memory. Jairaj and Ratna are seen smiling and embracing each other. All these things give completeness to the play as well as the life of the dancing couple as the ghost of past fades away and the daughter Lata, the top dancer, lives happily with her husband and child. The title of *Final Solutions* itself implies that the playwright is in search of 'final solutions' to the problems which are afflicting the lives of people. He seems to be hopeful that these problems will be resolved and life will be happier. He sticks to a plural noun in 'solutions' to hint that there is possibility of correcting the wrongs done in the past to find 'solutions' to the present problems. The

play comes to an end with the defeat of the biased Aruna and the victory of secular forces like Babban and Smita. Babban holds the Hindu god in his hand. While Aruna breaks down as her god is being contaminated by the touch of a Muslim thus establishing the fact that it is man who humiliates others in the name of god while He “welcomes the warmth” (FS 224) of every hand that holds Him. Ramnik also discloses the long preserved secret to his mother Hardika that it was her husband and his father who burnt the shop of their Muslim neighbour during communal frenzy; and she at once casts her prejudice off against the Muslim community and wishes the two boys Babban and Javed to come back. Javed also redeems himself and is willing to shed his prejudices: He opens his arms towards Ramnik and says: "if you're willing to forget I'm willing to tolerate" (FS 225). Once the prejudices are shed and the barriers of communication between people removed, the meaningful relationships and mutual understanding materialise. The play ends with dispelling of darkness and upcoming of dawn. The darkness of night is symbolic of something bad and the light of morning denotes something good like knowledge that it brings with itself. The light dispels darkness which eventually paves the way for the better understanding among people. The whole action of the play takes place in darkness and ends with the advent of dawn.

Seen in a larger context, Dattani seems to be concerned with modern man's life which lacks completeness at several fronts and is very complex in itself. It is painful for him to see individual and society in the opposite camps, a wide gap between the thinking of the older generation and the younger generation, widening chasm betwixt husband and wife and above all the forced harmony in the name of social custom are painful sights to Dattani. He records 'the gaps', with every minor and minute detail, both at familial and social levels and hints 'some solutions'. It makes him popular among his audience. He draws our attention towards the evils in society through the portrayal of powerful characters with whom the audience can easily empathise. Though different at many fronts from his contemporaries and predecessors like Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar, his commitment to society remains very serious all through his dramatic career. He dramatises the reality of here-and-now which sensitises the audience about what is happening around us. The analysis of his plays bears witness to this fact. The issues raised in his plays do not pertain to the bygone era but are of contemporary relevance. Dattani shows the life of middle-class Indian people. But the characters that Dattani deals with are less fierce and vulgar than that of Tendulkar's. The characters of Marathi playwright like Sakharam [in *Sakharam Binder*], Kamala [in *Kamala*], and Leela Benare [in *Silence! The Court is in Session*] come from lower middle class while Dattani's characters like Hasmukh Mehta, Amritlal Parekh and Ratna belong to rich families. Dattani's whole purpose in this display of miserable life of his characters seems to be to make the audiences aware of the problems that hamper the growth of happy and harmonious relationship between human beings both at familial and social levels.

WORK CITED

- Dattani, Mahesh. *Preface, Collected Play*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000. All the subsequent references have been taken from the same edition; cited hereafter in the text with the corresponding page number(s) in parentheses and the titles of the plays have been abbreviated.
- Dattani, Mahesh. Interview with Anita Nair, "An Unveiling of a Playwright in Three Acts," *The Gentleman*. May 2001. 25 Nov. 2007 <<http://www.anitanair.net>>.
- Dattani, Mahesh. *Collected Plays*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000.
Jain, Jasbir. *New Concerns: Voices in Indian Writing*. ed. Sushma Arya and Shalini Sikka
New Delhi: Macmillan, 2006.
- Padamsee, Alyque. "A Note on the Play 'Final Solutions'" *Collected Plays*. (New Delhi: Penguin, 2000) 161.
- Rooks, Pamela and Mahesh Dattani. *Dance Like a Man*, Screenplay prod. by National Film Development Co. of India with Rooks AV, Mumbai, 2004
Viets, Alexandra. "A Stark Look at Modern India," *International Herald Tribune*. 27 July 1994, 10 Aug. 2007 <<http://www.iht.com/articles/1994/07/27>>.

AUTHOR

Dr. Umed Singh
Associate Professor and Chairperson
Department. of English
Chaudhary Devi Lal University
Sirsa-125055,Haryana, India