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RELECTION OF SOCIAL REALISM IN MAHESH DATTANI'S PLAYS: A STUDY

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Abstract:

Social realism is one of the aspects of literature. Social realism in literature projects the realities of society. The concept of social realism is emerged in the Victorian period and It is best known for targeting the follies of the people. Modern society has changed because of technical advancements but some social problems are still there. Social problems greatly affect individuals in the society. All social problems are man-made and literature helps people to solve these problems. Various writers portray harsh realities of modern society and the fiscal problems were transformed into moral ones. Mahesh Dattani writes his plays from a social perspective. Dattani incorporates various themes in the plays including gender discrimination, homosexuality, greed, futility in family relationships and so on. The present research papers study social realism in the plays of Mahesh Dattani. The paper aims to critically examine considerable societal changes and explore deeper insights into the thematic concerns of the plays of Mahesh Dattani.

Keywords: *Social Realism, Gender Discrimination, Homosexuality, Gender Stereotyping, Religious Conflict, etc.*

Mahesh Dattani is a well-known Playwright from Bangalore. He is a successful theatre director and writer. His plays catch wide acclamation from the world. His plays such as Final Solutions, Dance Like a Man, Bravely Fought the Queen, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, Tara, Thirty Days in September 2007 and The Big Fat City are based on realistic social problems. He is awarded one of the most prestigious awards, the Sahitya Akademi Award. Mahesh Dattani's bold style of portraying male and female characters in his plays is unique. His themes address issues in the society which are deeply rooted in the society. His fearless move towards voicing unspoken issues and stereotypes in society makes his dramas unique and appealing.

Social Realism in Mahesh Dattani's Plays:

Mahesh Dattani's Where There is a Will is a satirical play on contemporary modern society. Dattani throws light on various social issues like subjugation of women, domestic violence, extra-marital



affairs, corruption, and conflict between generations. Mahesh Dattani is a keen observer of the society. He succeeds in bringing into light the basic human nature and social ailments. The play focuses on two conflicting groups which oppose each other for money. In this play, the protagonist is rich businessman Hasmukh Mehta, who dies in the first scene but remains on the stage as a ghost. Hasmukh Mehta is a dominant husband who ruled on household when he was alive and wants to rule after death as well. The play revolves around Hasmukh Mehta's wife, son, daughter, daughter-in-law, and mistress. Everyone around him is attached to him but nobody loves him. They want his money. His mistress's entry and the conflict between family members provide comic relief to the play and it also projects the harsh realities of the human world.

In *Dance Like a Man*, Mahesh Dattani shows gender stereotypes which are deep-rooted in Indian society. The play revolves around a dancer couple. Jairaj and Ratna both are Bharat Natyam dancers. Amritlal is Jairaj's father and spokesperson in the society who does not like dance. He thinks that Bharatnatyam is a dance assigned to female dancers and if Jairaj continues to practice Bharatnatyam he will lose his identity as a male. Jairaj becomes a victim of a male-dominated society. In Indian society, gender stereotyping is a common thing because specific roles are distributed among men and women. This play focuses on the plight of men in society who try to break the conventional roles assigned to them. In Indian society, men cannot reveal their emotions and weep because it is believed that being sensitive is a basic nature of women and men need to be hard from the inside and outside. At the end of the play, his self-discovery brings a revelation that art is not gender specific and he must continue his practice of Bharatnatyam.

Mahesh Dattani's play *Bravely Fought the Queen* shows the identity crisis and gender inequality in society. Mahesh Dattani shows that Indian women's identity is dependent upon their husbands and there are many women who are not aware of their subordinate status in the family and society. Women cannot maintain their status and identity individually. Dolly is shown as a rich woman in the play. She is the employer's wife but finds herself being a puppet in her husband's hand. She is living in twin luxurious houses but always feels uncomfortable in her own home. Her husband Nitin throws her out of the house just for a small reason and Dolly suffers the humiliation to save the prestige of her parents. Another character Alka is shown as a strong character. The title of the play represents female character, Alka. At the end of the play, Alka enthusiastically dances in the rain. The raindrops symbolize her tears and her dance symbolizes her liberation from the loveless relationship. She dances beautifully without thinking about societal taboos. This gives her inner pleasure and feeling of freedom.

Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions* is a play depicting religious conflict in the Indian society. In this play character of Ramnik is the ideal one. He gives shelter to Muslim boys Javed and Bobby in his house and saves them from attackers. He tried to understand the background of these boys which transform them into terrorists. Bobby explains his quest for employment how it was hard for him to survive. Javed explains his bitter experiences in the childhood, how he was brutally tortured by the Hindu family. He further claims that the treatment received by the Hindu family forces him to be a terrorist. He decided to take revenge. The play critically intervenes socio-political scenario in the post-independence period. The communal disharmony is the main theme of the play. Mahesh Dattani explains the perspectives of both Muslim and Hindu communities through the characters such as Ramnik, Smita, Hardika, Javed and Bobby. Hardika, Ramnik's wife protests against her husband from declining the entry of the Muslim boys into her home. She remembers the events of how her family members were murdered by the Muslim community people. Ramnik is shown as a secular Hindu man who protects Javed and Bobby from attackers and provides shelter at his own home. He even doesn't listen to his own wife. The play gives a message that we can end communal disharmony if we accept secular visions. We should take the first step towards unity and maintain peace in the country.



Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara* is a play of two acts. It is a women-centric play. *Tara* is a story of Siamese twins who are conjoined by hips and have had three legs since their childhood. Tara and Chandan are attached to each other mentally, physically, and spiritually and they have a strong feeling of love and affection for each other. Both Tara and Chandan were separated from each other after a critical surgery. Tara's body supplied most of the blood and she deserves two legs but her mother and grandmother decide to give legs to Chandan. Tara must accept artificial leg as the extra leg is given to her brother, Chandan. Their choice of Chandan over Tara is the influence of a male-dominated society. In Indian society, boys are given preference over girls and the same thing has happened with Tara. Tara is very much attached to her twin brother Chandan. Despite their separation after the surgery, both find themselves spiritually united. Tara got love from Chandan but she fails to get the same love and affection from her mother. Tara is always taken for granted by her mother and she gives all her attention to her son Chandan. Tara's mother is sensitive but patriarchal dominance restricts her from going closer to Tara.

To conclude, social realism deals with a realistic depiction of society and its functions and flaws through literature. A society is a social system which is composed of social elements such as different roles of men and women, groups, social cues, norms, traditions etc. The social and cultural values form the basic structure of the society. These factors are relatively stable but can change with time and circumstances. The social structure and hierarchy create problems and injustice in society. Mahesh Dattani as a modern playwright focuses on various ailments in society. His plays raise questions about societal rules and laws. Dattani highlights issues in society and the end, he suggests solutions for those problems. Dattani expresses his humanistic concerns through all his plays. His plays are a fine attempt to fight against odds and evils in society.

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