

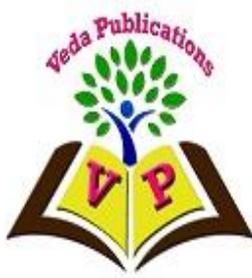


THEATRICAL MECHANISM AND INNOVATION: A STUDY OF MAHESH DATTANI'S *EK ALAG MAUSAM*

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ABSTRACT

The current analysis is an effort to explore the theatrical devices and innovations of Dattani in his screen play, *Ek Alag Mausam*. This play has brought a thematic modernization in the Indian Drama. His technique of examining the human aspiration against social anticipations, transmit a touch of popularity. The play revolves around the circumstances of the HIV Positives and their positions in India. He has frequently constrained ideas in his plays with the threads of images and symbols and different techniques to make the audience to understand the incidents on the stage. Skillfully and artistically, Dattani dramatizes the emotional crisis resulting from the lack of understanding about the dreaded disease. The play is a call to the society to treat the HIV positive patients with love and care instead of hatred and prejudices. The goal of this paper is that if the HIV patients should be taken as normal citizens of the society with equal rights and opportunities, then they can also lead a happy and successful life.

Keywords: *Thematic Modernization, HIV, Innovation, Flashback Technique, Pause.*

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Dattani is a leading professional Indian playwright and for him theatre is an art. His plays were based on real life experiences. He has skillfully used the dramatic techniques to present the human sufferings before the audience. As a dramatist, he wants to assimilate the art of drama with live human experiences. He considers theatre as an authoritative medium to emphasize the untold realities of the marginalized people in the society. To make the art of drama, a great success, it is essential to change the established patterns, in the society. Dattani believes that,

Theatre survives only when we see our aspirations, our struggles, our hope and values reflected in it and when we don't see ourselves in the theatre, we'll see stop believing in theatre... Theatre is a reflection of what you observe, to do anything more would be to become didactic and then it ceases to be theatre (Prasad, 262)

The perfection of dramatic art depends on the selection of dramatic situations and the procedure of presentation. The text of drama gets its life, when the dramatist uses the appropriate tools of performances in the theatre. In a drama, script plays the major role, but the success of drama depends on the creativity of the artist. The organization of words in the script, the contextual suggestions, tone, direction, gestures and postures of actors and the ultimate effect of the action on audience are the five stages, which Dattani has experienced in his dramatic world.

Dattani reflects his favour for the liberalism of language to write effective plays in Indian English drama. He has given direct prose expression without the ambiguity of poetic expressions. The interference of telephone, incomplete expressions and the broken sentences create a special sense of reality and they also serve as a filler in dramatic art. Dattani has used the world of theatre as a powerful tool to cover the bitterness of truth and highlights the necessity of social changes. According to Dattani, theatre is an art and his plays are refreshing treat for his readers, because he has portrayed the innovative use of theatrical space and other elements.

The play *Ek Alag Mausam* was staged in India on 4 February, 2005. It was directed by K.P Sasi and it was backed up and presented by Action aid India. It is a thematic innovation. The screen play revolves around the circumstances of the HIV positives and their positions in India. They are branded as untouchables in the society. Dattani has maintained an extraordinary ability in making a masterly balance of form and content in *Ek Alag Mausam*. His technique of examining the human aspiration against social anticipations transmits a touch of popularity. Julian Hilton admits that the text of a drama gets its life in theatre only through the appropriate tools of performances. He says that:

In the theatre any plot or action exists only in the moment of performance and has no stable meaning or identity outside of the performance process... there is no single or necessary definition of what plot or action is even in the case of a play with an authoritative source 'text' for every performance redefines, however marginally the nature of performed. The purpose of performing this because the one of generating an intensified experience for all who participate in it rather than the representation of some pre-existing action or state of feeling according to some immanent ideal in its poetic textual source (qtd. in Agarwal 7).

The social issues have been amplified with sensitivity in human adversity and therefore each and every interpretation is effective enough to convey the meanings beyond the verbal approach. Parmar confesses that,

Dattani succeeds in negotiating the various global issues so successfully beyond the cultural context and geographical territories. With his innovative art and thematic novelty, he has heralded a new era in the field of English drama ... His theatrical canvas is colored with socio psychological realism (134).

Ek Alag Mausam has brought a thematic modernization in Indian drama. Dattani is ingenious



and audacious in presenting the human experiences on the stage. It deals with the misery and hardships of HIV positives in the society. Dattani has made an extraordinary use of flash back technique. Most of the actions in this play are displayed through the flash back mechanism. The protagonist, Aparna is very emotional and a prudent lady. Her heart brims with kindness and benevolence. While, Aparna and Paro are driving in a car, towards the school, Aparna's memory travels into the past and she imagines George driving a truck.

Throughout the play, the entire past events arises from the state of constant change in Aparna's consciousness. All of a sudden, a truck rushes at a high speed. However Aparna has tried to escape from the accident. But one after another, the terror of past events comes into her sight. Her memories of George are very fresh and strong. Again, the truck tries to overtake the car. Repeatedly, Aparna switches herself from the present to the past. Aparna visualizes the nurse, Rosalynd Copper who made a phone call to Aparna and asked her to come to the hospital. She informed her husband that both of them should go to the hospital. But her husband refused to accompany her. She confesses, "It's something about our baby. I am scared Suresh. I want you with me" (CP II 476). Aparna is really hurt by her husband. Dattani has clearly examined the condition of Aparna through the settings.

Exterior. Outside a clinic or hospital

Aparna gets out of her car and walks slowly to the clinic. She hesitates for a while outside and then picks up the courage to go in.

Cut to.

Interior. Office of the doctor.

Dr. Sanyal, her gynecologist is seated at the desk. Rosalynd cooper, a volunteer nurse, is seated opposite to her (CP II 477).

Pause provides conveniences for the characters to answer in the difficult situations. When the doctor asked Aparna to abort the child she was shocked. Then there is a complete silence.

Pause.

Cooper looks at Dr. Sanyal

Cooper: Aparna...I would strongly advise you to...give up your baby (CP II 478)

Humor and satire are also important factors in the play. Manoj is one of the HIV positives in Jeevan Jyoti. He just shares his experiences with others at the home. One day he had gone to a dentist to operate on his gum to save his teeth. When he disclosed the doctor about his disease, the doctor refused to attend to Manoj, even as a patient. The next day he went to another dentist, but he did not tell anything about his disease. The dentist did the surgery to Manoj. After a long time, Manoj sent a letter to the doctor to inform him that he is a HIV patient.

Jeevan Jyoti is a major element in this play. Aparna is motivated by the words of Dr. Machado, "Keep fighting. Seize the moment" (CP II 487). Dr. Machado encourages many HIV patients, to lead a courageous life. Because each of them has his or her own dreams. They want to overcome death and lead a happy life. George is the person, one who is filled with positive thoughts. The sign at Jeevan Jyoti is "Leave your prejudices outside" (CP II 500), a powerful one.

One of the most enjoyable scenes in this play is, when all the children in Jeevan Jyoti and George visit Aparna's home, to get her back to Jeevan Jyoti. It provides a lot of amusement to the play. They consider the home as their real home. The pitiable scene is, when George is rejected even by his parents and by the villagers. His villagers ask him to get out of the village. But his parents try to mollify the crowd, but their attempts end in failure.

Villager1 (*Picking up a stone*): I said stay away from us. (To the rest of the crowd). We all heard what Sukhiya had to say! He swore on his mother it is the truth. (CP II 536).

Dattani is an acclaimed writer for investing images and symbols in his plays. He has frequently constrained ideas in his plays with the threads of images and symbols. The 'Wooden soldier' is a valuable symbol. The soldiers are fighting against their enemies without any fear. Dattani has



considered HIV virus as an enemy to human beings. George always advises the children in Jeevan Jyoti, to fight against death without fear. After listening to the words of George, Suraj wants to become a soldier. When George asks about soldiers and their work, suddenly Suraj replies,

Suraj: (*holding the toy soldier up*). Attention! The soldier will kill all enemies of the country.

George: Live like a soldier, die like a soldier. (*CP II 506*).

The image of sun provides a meaningful message in this play. Here, the sun is considered as God's ball. George used to tell stories to the children. He says that,

...When he kicks the ball, it is sunrise. The ball goes high in the air. That is noon in the air. That is noon. When it lands in the goal, it is sun set. God always scores a goal. (*CP II 556*).

It is a belief that God is playing football with the sun. And the sun always scores the ball. Sometimes, God's goal keeper will be very clever like Suraj. So, the main point is that everyone should keep their goal carefully to lead a happy life. Because, God is often trying to kick the ball. So, to escape from the ball, one's positive thoughts will help to have a secure place in the world.

The play, *Ek Alag Mausam*, is apart from using theatrical caution and force, an effective presentation of with the pain of HIV positives in a different way. The play ends with the positive comment of Dr. Machado and he confesses that miracles would happen to cure this disease thoroughly. Aparna and George finally decide to lead a happy life. The play ends in the following manner,

Exterior. On a Hill

Aparna and George are in each other's arms. Paro is blowing bubbles. We follow Bubbles. We follow the bubbles till they all break except for a few strong ones (*CP II 557*)

Dattani has used many symbols, images and different techniques to make the audience and the

readers understand the incidents on the stage. Stage directions are the striking features in his plays. He has enriched the Indian English drama with his experiments and innovations. As a craftsman and a creative artist, Dattani aims to be true to his art and abstain from appeasing his audience at home. He is a contemporary Indian dramatist who has the capability to take the world in his stride with a defined and appreciable Indian dignity. Dattani's plays signify that it is not just for reading, rather to be staged for an audience, to enable them get a better understanding about the society.

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