

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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“यत्र बीजसमुत्पत्तिनानार्थरससम्भवा ।।
प्रारम्भेण समायुक्ता तन्मुखं परिकीर्तितम् ।“

“That part of a play, in which the creation of the seed as
the source of many objects and *Rasa* takes place, is called
in relation to its body the Opening.”

- *Dasharupakam*

1.1 Introduction

The domain of theatre is a vibrant platform for scholars and artists to investigate the intricacies of *Rasa* with all its complexities intertwined with emotions and experiences. Mahesh Dattani, through his theatrical oeuvre has captured the inner landscapes, the psychological substrata of the characters in the socio-cultural, socio-psychological contexts deciphering their consequent emotional responses and experiential behaviors. This research project embarks on an analysis that delves into the fundamental principles of *Rasa*, considering its psychological underpinnings, the representations of emotions and the connections with the experiential realms within Dattani's stage plays. In order to apprehend these dimensions it is imperative to begin the investigation by delving into the minutes observation of the performance of these plays, closed reading of the texts, scrutinizing the inner world of the characters, their belief systems, aspirations, anxieties, conflicts, emotional states and explore the premise that characters are the conduits of *Rasa*. The psychological framework of *Rasa* furnishes valuable insights into the intricate character evolution, elicitation of emotions, amalgamation of aesthetic constituents and the experiential rendezvous for the performer as well as the observer. The research project probes whether Dattani adeptly harnesses the concept of *Rasa* within his theatrical compositions, or whether *Rasa* unfolds as an unpremeditated phenomenon thereby sculpting the audience's engagement with the plot and characters molding their interpretations, experiences and emotional responses to the theatrical presentation. Dattani's stage plays are characterized by profound impact of emotions in the characters (performers/actors), serving as catalysts to their actions, choices, conflicts and decisions. Drawing upon the theories of emotions, experience, and psychological features of *Rasa*

and the theoretical framework of *Dasharupakam*, an exhaustive analysis of the character's emotional expressions, intricate dimensions of emotive encounters, the types of plots, categories of *Nayaka* and *Nayika* and the consequent types of plays has been undertaken. Moreover, how the fostering of a profound emotional connect between the audience and the dramatic tapestry on the proscenium is another cornerstone of this research.

The theatrical realm functions as a vibrant platform for artists to portray and investigate *Rasa* and the complexities of human experiences and emotions. Mahesh Dattani, a renowned Indian playwright, has established a distinct position in the field through his plays that elicit a profound resonance among viewers and provide insightful observations into the complexities of the human mind. The research analyzed the fundamental principles of *Rasa* and its psychological perspective, the representation of emotions, and the relation with experience in Dattani's theatrical works and explored the psychological foundations of characters, their subsequent emotional responses and experiential reactions.

To comprehend the Psychology of *Rasa* in Dattani's stage plays, it is crucial to initiate the examination by delving into the intricate workings of the characters' inner selves probing the grounds that characters are charioteer of *Rasa*. The field of psychology provides a wide range of tools and methodologies for investigating individuals' cognitive processes, intentions, and behaviors. Through a meticulous examination of the characters' psychological composition, encompassing their belief systems, aspirations, and anxieties, an intricate tapestry of human experiences that forms the foundation of Dattani's narratives can be discerned. Framework of Psychology of *Rasa* offers valuable insights into the complexities of character development and shed light on their actions and interactions. The concept of *Rasa* holds significant importance in Indian aesthetics, and serves as a crucial component within Dattani's theatrical repertoire. *Rasa* encompasses the elicitation of emotions, the fusion of aesthetic elements, and the consequent emotional encounter for both actors and spectators.

The theatrical experience is a complex phenomenon that encompasses the perspectives of both actors and the audience. The understanding of the interplay of psychological components of *Rasa*, emotions and psychological analysis provides a framework through which one can examine the subjective experiences and perceptual

processes of both of these groups. For actors, the process entails immersing themselves in the psychological depths of their characters, embodying their thoughts and emotions, and skillfully navigating the intricate nuances of their roles. The transformative journey of actors within stage plays can be analyzed using psychological frameworks. However, the experience of the audience is influenced by their emotional reactions, cognitive involvement, and aesthetic admiration. Gaining insight into the psychological aspects of the audience's experience facilitates the exploration of the underlying mechanisms that contribute to their emotional engagement, intellectual stimulation, and interpretation of the themes and messages conveyed in the play. The research project attempts to encompass the comprehensive examination of psychological elements by examining the foundations of character analysis, the influence of *Rasa*, the depiction of emotions, and the experiential aspects present in Dattani's plays.

1.2 Nature and Definition of *Rasa*

Rasa theory holds a significant place in the realm of Indian poetics, attracting extensive scholarly research and literature spanning over twenty centuries, from Bharata Muni in the 2nd century BC to Professor Sheldon Pollock in the 21st century AD. The concept of *Rasa*, while not entirely unexcitable, is undeniably inextricable due to its emergence in the *Rig Veda* and its intricate connection to the hermeneutics of principles within Indian aesthetics. The tradition of writing commentaries on *Rasa*, which can be traced back to Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa, has given rise to hermeneutic and creative interpretations and reinterpretations of this concept. Professor Sheldon Pollock is the most recent scholar to contribute to this tradition. Bharata Muni has delineated eight primary *Rasa*, *Shringara*, *Hasya*, *Karuna*, *Raudra*, *Veera*, *Adbhuta*, *Bibhatsa*, and *Bhayanaka*. The amalgamation of plot, character, and *Rasa* is confirmed by Sanskrit Poetics, which also establishes the categorization of drama into 10 main categories and 18 subcategories. *Dasharupakam*, a treatise from the 10th century, provides a notable exposition on various categories such as plot, characters, *Rasa*, and ten distinct types of plays. *Dasharupakam* provides a more comprehensive analysis of four distinct categories of *Nayaka* and three distinct categories of *Nayika*, along with their respective interpretations based on the concept of *Rasa*.

1.3 Nature and Definition of Emotion

The concept of Emotions, since its origin/s has undergone immense change revolving around subjectivity, universality, science, philosophy, psychology with theoretical, and empirical contributions from these domains. Emotions possess a distinct universality (Ekman, 2012; Darwin, 2017), independent of social, cultural, or political affiliations, and are a synthesis of physiological arousal, psychological evaluation, and subjective encounters. Emotions manifest as experiential phenomena within the various levels of human psychology, including conscious, subconscious, and even unconscious frameworks. Various interpretations have been ascribed to emotions within the realm of Western thought and philosophy. According to Locke, emotions can be described as internal sensations that arise from the contemplation of concepts related to morality and ethics. Hume's perspective posited that emotions can be classified as 'secondary' or 'reflective' impressions, which are derived from the initial impressions of pleasure and pain. Hume classified external sensations as primary impressions, while emotions were categorized as secondary impressions. In his work titled *The Trouble with Emotions in Psychology*, James raised an objection to the conventional understanding of emotions, contending that they are excessively perceived as inherently individualistic entities. Sigmund Freud posited that emotions possess the capacity to be suppressed, thereby attributing significance to the concept of the 'unconscious.' Freud posited that emotions have the potential to exist in the unconscious realm, while feelings are inherently conscious in nature. Additionally, he posits that emotions can be understood as deliberate mental states. Freud postulated that emotions serve as the underlying motivations for human actions. These deliberations on emotions direct the thought process towards Indian idea on emotions. This scholarly undertaking aims to examine the concept of Emotions within the gamut of Western and Indian thought along with *Rasa*.

1.4 Nature and Definition of Experience

An experience refers to a series of events or incidents that an individual perceives through their sensory faculties, cognitive processes, and affective responses. The experience can encompass both physical and mental aspects, encompassing a range of positive and negative occurrences. An individual's perception, behavior, and beliefs can be influenced by their experiences, which can be affected by various factors, including their personality, culture, and environment. Individuals may possess distinct experiences

that can be reflected upon and contemplated in order to gain a deeper understanding of oneself and the surrounding environment.

1.5 History of Indian Drama

The dramatic art in India has seen a steady evolution over the course of several centuries, influenced by a wide range of socio-cultural, religious, and political factors, resulting in a rich and diversified cultural and historical background. This research project explored the complex historical trajectory of Indian drama, with a particular focus on its origins in ancient Sanskrit plays and its subsequent development across many areas and time periods, and also conducting a comprehensive examination of the fundamental characteristics, thematic diversities, and performance techniques employed in Indian theatre. By doing so, it seeks to illuminate the dynamic essence of Indian drama and its noteworthy impact on the creative and cultural milieu of India.

The concept of 'Indian Drama' eludes a distinct, definitive characterization due to its encompassment of a diverse array of cultural components that are inherent to India. These components include, but are not limited to, myths, folklore, historical events, and the collective values and beliefs of the nation. The development of Modern Indian English Drama has yielded a form that challenges classification, presenting a deep exploration of present-day existence encompassing its complex subtleties and direct complexities. The birth of Indian theatre can be attributed to the Vedic era, wherein theatrical performances were characterized by the incorporation of religious motifs, intense manifestations of religion, beliefs, and their implications on everyday existence. It is widely acknowledged that Indian drama, akin to English Morality and Miracle plays, exhibits a primarily religious nature. The origin of Indian theatre is commonly ascribed to a theatrical presentation that transpired within the celestial realm, where the deities, under the leadership of Indra, beseeched Brahma to conceive an artistic creation that would elicit aesthetic pleasure and sensory delight in terms of visual and auditory perception. The '*Indradhwaja Mahotsava*' is widely believed to have been celebrated as a way to honour the auspicious event of the establishment of the *Natyaveda*, recognized as the fifth *Veda*. The *Natyashastra*, a comprehensive literary composition composed by Bharata Muni, provides a detailed depiction of this extraordinary occurrence, complete with the incorporation of dance and music. During the mid-300s BC, the historical record of Indian theatre indicates that the practice of theatrical performance and composition in the

Sanskrit language had advanced and flourished considerably, eventually assuming the form of epic poetry. Every theatrical performance was organized and designed according to one of the nine *Rasa*. Theatrical presentations of Sanskrit tragedies were mostly conducted in the provinces of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat until the 15th century. The patronage of King Mitrak of Gujarat's Vallabhi played a crucial role in providing substantial support to Indian theatre and arts.

The dramatic tradition in India has been profoundly influenced by the literary contributions of notable figures, Mahakavi Kalidasa, Bhasa, Shudhraka, and Harsha for their adeptness in deriving inspiration from historical events, folk legends, epics, and battles, and incorporating artistic sublimity into their literary creations. The plays exhibit a notable depiction of a wide range of emotions, experiences, psychology, culture, customs, and beliefs. The enduring prevalence of Sanskrit plays in the development of performative and stage art within the Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra, and Gujarat endured until the 15th century. Nevertheless, the ensuing influx of foreign invaders led to a sustained and protracted deterioration in the prosperity of performative art and culture. In the 17th century, Drama had a resurgence through the platform of People's Theatre, *Loknatya* leading to the emergence of *Yatrakirtaniya* and *Paala Gaan* in Karnataka, *Maach* in Madhya Pradesh, *Bhavai* in Gujarat, *Nautanki* in North India, *Raas* in Rajasthan, *Tamasha* in Maharashtra *Bhandya Thar* in Kashmir . The historical lineage of Dance Drama - *Loknatya* may be traced to the ancient literature the *Natyashastra* (200 BC), wherein Bharata Muni provides a concise reference of the notions of *Nrut* and *Nrutya*. Dhananjaya expanded upon and contextualized these concepts within his *Dasharupakam*, where *Nrutya* is based on *Bhava* and *Nrut* is based on *Laya* and *Taal*. Prominent examples of *Nrutya* include theatrical adaptations of *Ramayana*, *Krishnalila*, *Devi Bhagwata*, *Prithviraj Raso* by Chand Bardai, and *Padmavat* by Malik Muhammad Jayasi. In contrast, *Raas* and *Garba* are based on the performative concepts of *Nrut*. The diffusion of the Indian independence movement across different regions of the country can be ascribed to the impact of the *Loknatya*.

The theatre landscape in India experienced a significant modernist shift during the era of British colonial rule, marked by the establishment of contemporary proscenium theatres in major cities of Calcutta and Bombay. The establishment of Hindi *Rangmanch* dates back to the year 1831, when Prasaankumar Thakur ceremoniously laid its

foundation stone. The play *Seeta Swayamwar* was authored by the Marathi playwright Vishnudas Bhave in 1843, under the request of the Sangli King.

The year 1850 witnessed the beginning of contemporary theatrical pursuits in Bengal, Karnataka, and Kerala, thus making a significant contribution to the extensive heritage of Indian play. After 1858, there was a proliferation of theatrical performances in Gujarati and Urdu in various metropolitan areas of Mumbai and Gujarat, with particular emphasis on Ahmedabad, Surat, Baroda, and Vadnagar. The Parsis formed an independent theatre ensemble and integrated a substantial lexicon derived from Hindustani, Urdu, Persian, and Sanskrit into their theatrical presentations. In 1880, Annasaheb Balwant Pandurang Kirloskar introduced a Marathi adaptation of the play *Abhignanshakuntal*. *The Persecuted* (1831) authored by Krishna Mohan Banerji, and *Is This Called Civilization* (1871) are widely recognised as the first contributions to the corpus of Indian English Drama. The western area of India experienced a notable impact from Portuguese influence, which resulted in the influx of theatrical troupes from western nations with the intention of staging English plays. The Dramatic Performances Act of 1876 was introduced by the Britishers as a state apparatus to restrict theatrical and street performances that might propagate anti-colonial sentiments and foster support for the Indian freedom movement in colonised India. The evolution of Indian English theatre was significantly shaped by dramatic performances characterized by their lyrical excellence, wide range of themes, symbolic elements, and moral substance in *Vasavadutta* by Sri Aurobindo, *Chitra* by Rabindranath Tagore, and *Window* by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, primarily created to be consumed as literature, rather than being meant for theatrical performance.

In the post-independence period Manjeri Isvaran, Nissim Ezekiel, Lakhan Dev, Gurcharan Das, G.V. Dasani, Pratap Sharma, Asif Currimbhoy, Gieve Patel, and Pritish Nandy significantly contributed to the advancement of Indian English drama. The succeeding phase of contemporary Indian theatre classified theatrical productions into two distinct areas, Professional Theatre and Non-Professional Theatre. Cooperative theatre organizations were instrumental in the establishment of non-professional theatre ensembles, which derived inspiration from Western theatrical productions. Later, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, and Mahesh Dattani employed their theatrical works as a means to voice the unvoiced issues of oppression, marginalization, caste and

class. These literary works critically examined profoundly entrenched sociopolitical realities insiling a transformative change, facilitating the representation of novel themes addressing gender, identity, child abuse, and precarity circumscribed in critical frameworks of post-colonialism, Marxism, feminism, modernism, realism etc. portraying the complexities of Indian society using the stage as a medium. These works depart from traditional character representations primarily focused on royalty or nobility, in accordance with the Aristotelian norms or Indian *Natyashastra* principles. Contemporary Indian drama has witnessed growth in tandem with advancements in technology, relevant stage properties, lighting, and scenery and other accessories effectively marked the departure from traditional theatrical conventions of using dialogue, placards to indicate scene changes on a flat stage. Contemporary times witnessed. Manjula Padmanabhan garnered global acclaim for her pioneering theatrical work *Harvest*. Mahesh Dattani is commonly recognized as a legitimate successor to Girish Karnad and is acknowledged for his pivotal role in driving the progressive development of English play.

1.6 Mahesh Dattani as Modern Indian English Playwright

Mahesh Dattani (August 7 1958) a versatile playwright and dramatist engaged in several professional endeavors like business, acting, writing, directing, play-writing, and dramaturgy, belongs to Bengaluru, the 'Pensioner's Paradise'. During one of his interviews, he elucidates that his preference arises from his deep-seated passion for the theatrical arts, as evidenced by the exceptional quality and extensive repertoire he has generated over a period exceeding 35 years. Dattani's prominent role and significant contribution to Indian English theatre are characterized by his advancement of the art form, through the examination of modern concerns pertaining to gender and religion, sexuality, caste, class. The significance of his theatre plays, screenplays, and radio plays is apparent in their connection to the present urban landscape of India. In parallel, Dattani demonstrates a steadfast commitment to the timeless universal themes of global theatre, encompassing individual and ethical decision-making, as well as interpersonal connections. Mahesh Dattani, was honored with the distinguished Sahitya Akademi Award in 1998 for his play *Final Solutions* (1993), which delves into the subject matter of communal riots. His writing prowess has garnered praise from Stephen Bruckner, a critic from The New York Times. The Playpen company, established by Dattani in 1984, garnered acclaim through its debut play entitled *Where There's a Will*. Mahesh Dattani

has authored a range of noteworthy literary works, such as *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Final Solutions*, *Dance Like a Man*, *On a Muggy Night In Mumbai*, *Thirty Days in September*, *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?*, and *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, the primary texts for the research project. These plays have received substantial recognition and praise from critics. With his remarkable artistic vision and adept skills, he has initiated transformative advancements in urban theatre. Alyque Padamsee, a prominent personality in the domain of theatre and holder of the prestigious Padma Shri Award, describes Dattani as:

"A writer who provides 60 million English-speaking Indians an identity." (Chandran, 2019)

As a result of his Gujarati lineage, the traits of business and entrepreneurship are prominent in his professional pursuits influencing his decision to pursue a Master's degree in Marketing and Advertising Management, as well as his extensive experience in the business through his tenure at his family's enterprise, Hansa Enterprises. Notably, he collaborated closely with his sister, Hansa, for a significant duration of ten years. His business acumen played a significant role in the successful promotion of his plays inside the Indian context. The author's literary contributions have extended to the academic sphere, since his works have been included as prescribed texts in several universities in India. However, it is important to note that the author's intention was never to create written texts for reading purposes, but rather to create plays that are meant to be performed.

1.6.1 From Mahesh Dattani to a Playwright Mahesh Dattani

As expressed in the Gujarati language, the phrase "*Putrana Lakshan Parna Mathi*" is commonly uttered. The youngest member of the Dattani family showed an early inclination in narratives during his formative years. During his childhood, he would attentively listen to narratives from *Chandamama*, *the Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata*, as narrated by his elder sister Padma. This exposure to traditional Indian tales has greatly influenced his development as a storyteller, as he acknowledges the vast diversity of India as a rich source of multifaceted themes. During the British Period, Town Halls gained popularity as a kind of entertainment. At the tender age of nine, the user had the opportunity to see his first theatrical performance in the Town Hall of Bengaluru. The

play was *Kumar Ni Agashi*, a well-known Gujarati production by Madhu Ray. A child of nine years of age possessed the ability to comprehend just the theatrical performances transpiring on the stage, and harbored aspirations of becoming an actor. During his formative years in school, he performed the role of an angelic character representing Jesus in a school production. Although the character had less language, this opportunity provided the individual with their initial exposure to the theatrical stage. The strong desire of parents to provide their child with an education in an English medium school resulted in the child's exposure primarily to Western playwrights, leaving him unaware of Indian playwrights during his formative years. Throughout his several interviews, the individual places significant emphasis on and engages in discussions regarding the impact of Western culture on Indians with a colonial mindset. He has faced exclusion from the category of Western scholars due to his identification as an Indian Playwright. This categorization stems from his observation of audience members vocally expressing their reactions during a Hindi Play at the *Priuthvi* Theatre, which served as inspiration for his creation of Modern Indian English Plays characterized by his distinctive style. Dattani asserts that establishing a relativity factor necessitates the alignment of the culture of the audience with that of the play. In an interview, he aptly expresses his affinity for engaging with the concepts of Space and Time in his theatrical works. His utilization of multilevel and complex stages serves as a means to manipulate spatial elements, drawing inspiration from the *Aharya* tradition in Indian Dramaturgy. Upon witnessing a performance of *Hamlet* in Kannada, Dattani discerned the significance of language, as it resonated more profoundly with the audience and elicited a greater degree of enjoyment in compared to the English rendition. During the interview, the individual expressed a strong inclination towards composing content in *Mumbaiya* Hindi.

The individual provided assistance to their father in the family business and also worked as a copywriter for a duration of six months. However, their passion for drama consistently attracted their attention, leading them to develop Playpen in the mid-1980s in Bengaluru. Additionally, he participated in theatre workshops and has the belief that undergoing theatre training is essential for individuals aspiring to be involved in the field of theatre. The inaugural theatrical production of the individual in question was initially crafted for the esteemed Deccan Herald Theatre Festival, bearing the title *Where there is a Will*. The general populace expressed their appreciation and acceptance of their weariness towards the contrived accents employed in English theatrical productions.

Consequently, the individual in question achieved his initial triumph, a feat for which he had made significant sacrifices.

Credit should be attributed to Dattani for his role in the establishment of Indian English language. Notably, playwrights such as Tendulkar, Karnad, and Mahesh Elkunchwar, who are regarded as pioneers of a bygone era, exhibit significant disparities in their thematic and linguistic approaches to playwriting. It is this divergence that has propelled Dattani's distinct contributions thus far. According to his statement, the Indian Government is encountering difficulties in providing him with sufficient opportunities for exposure. The individual's father had served as a patron for his theatrical productions for an extended period of time. He possesses extensive knowledge and expertise in the art form of *Bharatnatyam* dance. *Bharatanatyam* is a classical Indian dance form that integrates elements of dance, theatre, and music, suggesting a comprehensive comprehension of the *Rasa* philosophy. After engaging in six years of *Bharatnatyam*, he developed a strong sense of discipline that distinguished him from his peers. According to the individual in question, *Rasa* can be understood as a collective phenomenon and a transformative process akin to alchemy. The act of perceiving stimuli through the five senses is known to result in the experience of *Rasa*. The plot and characters serve as the driving forces behind *Rasa*, and are integral to the overarching objective of a theatrical production. The individual conceptualized the DLM initiative in Mumbai, receiving commendation from Alyque, who subsequently consented to direct the production of *Tara*. The individual in question perceives theatre as an art form that necessitates collaboration, wherein the active participation of all concerned parties is crucial. The author attributes the diversity of India as the primary factor influencing the wide range of plays he has produced. He exhibits a strong preoccupation with the concepts of communalism and oppression and expresses a desire to engage with these subjects in his art.

According to Stephen Bruckner, a writer for The New York Times, Mahesh Dattani is recognised as a skillful and articulate playwright. Dattani holds the distinction of being considered the inaugural Indian English dramatist and has been honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award. Dattani's literary works reflect prevalent concerns of the contemporary era, encompassing themes such as gender, religious matters, sexuality, and related subjects. This is evident in his stage plays, screenplays, and radio plays, which

hold significant relevance for the urban landscape of modern India. Importantly, Dattani manages to address these contemporary issues while remaining rooted in the timeless and universal preoccupations of world drama, which revolve around personal and moral choices in the context of human relationships. Dattani's theatrical works, film scripts, and radio dramas effectively demonstrate his aptitude for portraying societal realities and their corresponding topics. Dattani's organization was established in the year 1984, with its inaugural and significant output being *Where There's a Will*. Mahesh Dattani is a prolific author who has received considerable acclaim for his literary contributions, encompassing a diverse range of works such as *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Final Solutions*, *Dance Like a Man*, *Where There is a Will*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Thirty Days in September*, *Where did I Leave My Purdah?*, and *Seven Steps around the Fire*, among others. Through his innovative artistic vision and exceptional talents, he has brought about a transformative revolution in the realm of urban theatre within India. Dattani's artistic practise aligns with the objective of revitalizing human empathy.

1.7 Plays of Mahesh Dattani

This research examines the stage plays of an Indian English playwright Mahesh Dattani in the context of Sanskrit Dramaturgy as it is the oldest theory of Indian Drama. His composition includes stage play, screenplay and radio play. He has used his craft to project social reality and issues in his Stage, Radio and Screen Plays. He founded his playgroup in 1984 and wrote his first play *Where There's a Will*. Since then he has written many plays such as *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Final Solutions*, *Dance Like a Man*, *On a Muggy Night In Mumbai*, *Thirty Days in September*, *Where did I Leave My Purdah?*, and *Seven Steps around the Fire*. Dattani's following stage plays are incorporated as a scope of this research.

1.7.1 *Where There's a Will* (1988)

Where There's a Will explores social issues within the Gujarati familial structure in India. The play follows the passing of Hasmukh Mehta, who becomes a spectral entity, and the intergenerational bond between the family members. The play also highlights the interpersonal conflict between Hasmukh and his son, Ajit, who are labeled as lacking worth due to childhood deprivation. The female characters, such as Sonal and Priti, also play a significant role in the narrative. The play uses magic realism to portray the

protagonist's patriarchal authority, even beyond mortality. The play concludes with Kiran, Hasmukh's paramour, as the executor of the will, addressing the concept of willpower. The play highlights the effects of a shared system of male dominance and oppressive patriarchy on all individuals, emphasizing the need to eradicate historical baggage. The play's relevance to the joint-family system in India highlights the pervasive influence of patriarchal control on Hasmukh, ultimately leading to collective unity and the benefits outlined in Hasmukh's Will.

1.7.2 *Dance Like a Man* (1989)

Dance Like a Man, consisting of two acts, explores the clash between traditional values and contemporary ideals through the experiences of three generations. The central focus is on a couple, Jairaj and Ratna, who aspire to pursue professional careers in the art of dance. Jairaj's father, Amritlal, enforces a lifestyle that encourages him to use dance as a means of personal expression. His wife, Ratna, is actively involved in traditional dance forms and provides him with an increased sense of autonomy. Ratna's self-centered nature and self-centeredness drive her into a romantic partnership with Jairaj, despite her rational faculties. Ratna's influence on Jairaj's portrayal and abilities as a performer is significant, as she intentionally molds her daughter's life as a practitioner of traditional dance. Lata, the daughter, is ensnared in the vortex generated by Ratna's ambition and strategic manipulation. The play raises issues about masculinity, as traditional dance is often reserved for women, excluding males from participating. Jairaj's passion for traditional dance is evident, but it serves as a source of personal gratification rather than a source of income. Amritlal's attempts to redirect Jairaj's focus from traditional dance led to a conflict between the two ideologies. Ratna's ambition and commitment to her mission have a detrimental impact on their well-being, preventing them from experiencing inner tranquility. Lata's interest in dance is sustained by the absence of malice, excessive ambition, or misguided desire. It raises fundamental questions and highlights the exceptional talents of the actors, questioning whether global society has truly achieved progress or if dance forms are still regarded solely as a pristine manifestation of art.

1.7.3 *Tara* (1990)

Tara: A Play in Two Acts is a theatrical production that tells the story of two characters, Tara and Chandan. The play explores the concept of gender identity, focusing

on the male and feminine aspects of the self. The central theme revolves around the emotional disconnection experienced by Chandan and Tara, who are Siamese twins with distinct genders. The play is narrated by Chandan, who represents the masculine aspect, while Tara represents the 'other' aspect. The central theme revolves around the amalgamation and disjunction of male and female organisms, and the playwright's intention is to narrate the story of Tara and his formative years through his literary works. The characters' parents, Mr. Patel and Bharati, are concerned about their offspring's success and misfortune in Bombay. The play also features Roopa, Dr. Thakur, and Bharati, who provide significant support and assistance. Through Dan's introspection, a comprehensive understanding of the characters, their experiences, and the individuals responsible for his previous experiences is achieved. At the conclusion of the theatrical performance, Dan tear apart the written drafts of his play, suggesting his primary objective is to reenact his personal history and the resurrection of the characters Chandan and Tara.

1.7.4 *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991)

Bravely Fought the Queen is a three-act drama that explores the societal duplicity and marginalization of individuals deviating from conventional sexual norms, particularly women and men. The play highlights intrafamilial conflicts within households, exploitation of women by men, and themes of homosexuality and emotional distress. The Trivedi brothers' affluent lifestyle, with the husband's addiction to prostitution, negatively impacts their marital relationships. The female characters experience unhappiness and discontent, leading to various activities to alleviate their frustration. Dolly, a submissive character, undergoes a transformation, displaying assertiveness and strength. The play effectively portrays the intricate dynamics of the urban Indian family, encompassing emotional, financial, and erotic dimensions.

1.7.5 *Final Solutions* (1993)

Final Solutions is a play that explores communal riots and human vulnerabilities, focusing on class and community issues and conflicts arising from traditional and contemporary lifestyles and values. The play aims to illuminate stereotypes and tropes that shape shared perceptions of one community towards another, portraying different facets of the communal mindset within Hindu and Muslim communities. The play shifts

from the historical partition era to the present-day context of communal violence, focusing on religious intolerance. The narrative unfolds as two Muslim boys, Babban and Javed, find solace within their residence following a distressing encounter with a Hindu crowd. The play elicits a profound emotional response from its audience, exposing the challenging aspects of existence and posing difficulties for the Indian director. It raises questions about secularism and pseudo-secularism, prompting critical analysis of oneself in the context of prevailing societal attitudes. *Final Solutions* explores memory, time, and space, with the chorus serving as a psycho-physical embodiment of the characters and visual depictions of conflicts. Theatre within the context of '*Asmita*' serves as a means of introspection, understanding, and discussion surrounding present-day sociopolitical matters, employing the medium of the play to elicit a lasting influence on its viewers.

1.7.6 *Seven Steps around the Fire* (1998)

Seven Steps Around the Fire, directed by Mahesh Dattani, protests the social exclusion faced by the *Hijra* community. The play, based on Uma Rao's research paper "Class and Gender-Related Violence," reveals the truth surrounding Kamala's murder. The play introduces various characters, including Constable Munswamy, Anarkali, Champa, Salim, and Subbu Sharma. It portrays the societal predicament faced by eunuchs, who are often excluded from weddings and births due to natural constraints. The play also explores power dynamics and societal expectations placed on eunuchs, who are often deprived of recognition and esteem. The protagonist, Subbu Sharma, is clandestinely wed to Kamala, a high-ranking government official. Kamala is subjected to a fatal act of immolation, and Anarkali is apprehended and charged with her alleged homicide. The play also explores the reluctance among men to recognize and accept their vulnerability, as seen in Uma, the spouse of Suresh Rao.

1.7.7 *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998)

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai explores the themes of homosexuality in Mumbai's urban setting. Kamlesh, a wealthy fashion designer, seeks help from his acquaintances after his romantic partner, Prakash, ends their relationship and pursues a heterosexual orientation. After a period of seclusion, Kamlesh seeks help from his companion, Sharad, who identifies as homosexual. However, their efforts are ineffective, and Kamlesh confides in his companions. The LGBTQIA+ community in Mumbai is characterized by

open communication and open discussions about personal challenges. The play also introduces Kiran, Kamlesh's sister and the sole heterosexual character, who reveals her intention to marry Ed. The play highlights the complex relationship between individuals identifying as homosexuals and lesbians in Indian culture, with Kiran's naivety and her brother's understanding of his situation.

1.7.8 *Thirty Days in September* (2001)

This play explores the impact of childhood sexual abuse on an individual's well-being and development, focusing on themes of love and betrayal. The play aims to break the taboo surrounding child sexual abuse and provide a hopeful vision for addressing injustices and restoring faith. The play follows Mala, a victim of abuse, and her mother, who suffers from emotional distress and mental strain. Mahesh Dattani presents a third male individual, Deepak, who aims to help the two women through physical violence and transformation. The play challenges societal norms by deviating from the practice of whispering 'incest' and highlighting the paradoxical nature of children's suffering. It emphasizes the dangers of engaging in perilous games and the importance of acknowledging and addressing threats to safeguard innocent lives.

1.7.9 *The Big Fat City* (2012)

The Big Fat City is the first black comedy production in India and features three storylines that revolve around individuals from diverse backgrounds. Murli and Niharika face social isolation due to financial difficulties, while Sailesh is determined to employ Murli to combat misappropriation. Lalita, a television actress, struggles with alcohol dependency and her young son, Rahul. Puneet, the spouse of Anu and a tenant, suspects his wife's sexual involvement due to the lifeless body in Anu's bed. The play combines elements of gory drama, such as envy, adultery, violence, murder, greed, mafia, and corruption, intensifying the sombre atmosphere experienced by individuals from lower social classes and castes. The play aims to assimilate the practice of same caste and *gotra* marriage into socially accepted norms of recognition. The play calls for the complete elimination of the '*Khap* Penal Pattern' through legal and individual means, highlighting the destructive impact of Mumbai on individuals and their interpersonal connections.

1.7.10 *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?* (2012)

Nazia is an octogenarian protagonist who reminisces about historical theatre of *Where Did I Leave My Prudah?*. Despite her eccentricity, hypocrisy, and selfish nature, Nazia harbors aspirations for an ideal life and uses the dance metaphor to express her pursuit. Her complex personal background, including being displaced from Lahore to India and being killed by Pakistani Muslim passengers, evokes a sense of yearning and nostalgia. Nazia's determination and passion for life help her overcome her initial lethargy and participate in a drama company. The use of the cobweb symbolizes her resilience and belief in personal growth. Nazia's passion, despite her physical limitations, guides her through challenges and encourages her to dance away.

1.7.11 Conclusion

Therefore, all ten stage plays authored by Mahesh Dattani encompass a diverse range of themes, all of which are centred around the everyday experiences of individuals. All contemporary challenges are being effectively addressed in the context of the 21st century. The plays serve as a psychological examination of the specific character archetype. The plays themselves address pressing and contentious topics. The examination of psychological aspects of characters in different plays yields diverse *Rasa*, emotions, and experiences, which are extensively discussed in the fourth chapter.

1.8 Background of the Study

Indian dramaturgy encompasses a theoretical framework known as *Rasa*, which is deeply rooted in the realm of emotions and experiential elements portrayed through the characters and plot. The presence of intense emotions in a work of art is an inherent characteristic that is appreciated for its ability to evoke emotions in its audience, leading to a transcendent experience that is separate from ordinary experiences, practical concerns, and even pragmatic teachings, ultimately pointing towards spiritual redemption. The concept of *Rasa*, deeply embedded in the realm of aesthetic experience and contemplation, plays a significant role in analyzing the emotional and experiential impact of literature on its recipients, whether they be listeners, readers, or members of the audience. Literature assumes a significant role not only in comprehending these emotions, but also in the dissemination and recognition of related life experiences.

1.9 Rationale of the Study

The relevance of *Rasa* theory, which represents the legacy of Indian Poetics, drama, and theatre, has been a subject of ongoing and persistent debate. Based on the premise that the principles of *Rasa* theory are becoming obsolete, their relevance to contemporary life and literature is being questioned and debated. Despite the extensive research and substantial body of knowledge that has been generated regarding the understanding of *Rasa* theory in various contexts and its application in the critical analysis of literary texts, there has been limited efforts to explore alternative perspectives beyond using *Rasa* theory solely as an analytical tool for text analysis. There have been critical endeavours to readopt Aristotelian *Poetics* to the modern dramatic structure and critical framework but there is paucity of efforts by the West to readopt and assimilate the principles of *Rasa* theory in the modern drama as it does not appear as lucrative as *Yoga*. This study attempts to establish a connection between the intricacies of Modern Indian Theatre and the Classical *Rasa* theory with the objective to explore significant point/s of contact between the two which might lend support to the view that there is universal human mind responding to similar situations in similar ways, irrespective of region and time (Patankar, 1980). The association between *Rasa* and the fields of psychology, emotions, and experience are examined in the context of Mahesh Dattani's plays in this research.

However, a comparative study of the Western and the ancient Indian critical traditions is worth attempting. It will show that there are significant points of contact between the two, and this might lend support to the view that there is a universal human mind which responds to similar situations in similar ways, irrespective of age and country. The comparison might also make an interaction between the two traditions possible. Modern Indian thinkers would profit a great deal if this were to take place. A bridge would thereby be built, not only between India and the West but also, between ancient India and modern India

1.10 Research Hypothesis

1. There have been rare attempts to critically examine stage plays of Mahesh Dattani within the framework of *Rasa* studies, more so, using *Dasharupakam* as a theoretical framework.

2. Little work has been done engaging emotions, experience and Psychology of *Rasa* with the objective of bridging the Indian and the Western thought in this context.
3. The questions relating to dynamics of plot, characters (*Nayak* and *Nayika*) within the *Rasa* framework have not yet been addressed in the stage plays of Mahesh Dattani.
4. There prevails a myth that *Rasa* and emotions are equivalent or synonymous which needs to be critically addressed on the basis of the concepts of *Bhava*, *Vibhava*, *Vyabhicharibhava*, *Sthayibhava* further engaging with the question of untranslatability of terms in question.
5. Very few studies have been conducted exploring Emotions and experience as constituents of *Rasa* in Indian Aesthetic theory.
6. There have been few attempts to bring in the western and Indian thought on Emotions and Experience as perceived in the genre of Dramatic performances under one umbrella.
7. There has been a significant rarity in applying *Rasa* theory to the complexities of modern life.
8. There prevails an assumption that there might not be any possibility of the presence of any *Rasa* in the stage plays of Mahesh Dattani.
9. There prevails an unresolved debate that problematises the notion of existence of *Rasa* in actor/performer, character and audience.

1.11 Research Questions

1. How *has Rasa theory* evolved over the centuries?
2. How do the constituents of *Rasa* - *Vibhava*, *Anubhava*, *Vyabhicharibhava*, *Sthayibhava* and *Sadharnikarana*, etc. engage with psychology?
3. Is *Rasa* a key to character and plot?
4. Does there exist any correlation between emotions, experience and *Rasa*?

5. Where does *Rasa* reside? - the playwright, the actor, or the audience.
6. Is *Rasa* a charioteer of aesthetic delight in the plays of Mahesh Dattani?
7. Is the character a charioteer of *Rasa*, emotions and experience?
8. Does *Rasa* relish through the incidents of daily life?
9. How is *Rasa* fundamental in determining type of play? (As propounded in *Dasharupakam*)
10. How do the stage plays of Mahesh Dattani engage with the psychology of *Rasa*, emotions and experience?
11. How can the theories of *Rasa* be referred to in the larger contemporary discourse of modern plays of Mahesh Dattani?

1.12 Research Objectives

Following research questions are being addressed in the present research study:

1. To study how *Rasa* theory has evolved over the centuries.
2. To find how the constituents of *Rasa* – *Vibhava*, *Anubhava*, *Vyabhicharibhava*, *Sthayibhava* and *Sadharanikarana* are engaged with psychology.
3. To critically study whether *Rasa* is a key to character and plot.
4. To find whether a character is a charioteer of *Rasa*, emotions and experience in the plays of Mahesh Dattani.
5. To determine whether *Rasa* resides in the playwright, the actor/performer, character or the audience.
6. To determine a relationship among *Rasa* (its psychological components), emotions and experience.
7. To examine whether *Rasa* relish occurs in the incidents of daily life.

8. To analyze how *Rasa* is fundamental in determining types of plays (As propounded in *Dasharupakam*).
9. To understand how the stage plays of Mahesh Dattani are engaged with the psychology of *Rasa*, emotions and experience.
10. To examine how the theories of *Rasa* can be referred to in the larger contemporary discourse of modern plays of Mahesh Dattani.

The proposed research aims at reinterpreting the selected plays of Indian English playwright - Mahesh Dattani through the lenses of Sanskrit dramaturgy.

1.13 Research Methodology

This study constitutes a qualitative, exploratory, and comparative research endeavour that examines the *Rasa* theory and Indian/Sanskrit dramaturgy within the context of Dattani's plays. The research adapted comparative methodology in comparing Indian and Western theories of emotions, experience and psychology to not only seek a common ground of interpretation but also to explore whether there is any possibility of commonalities and parallel theoretical precepts that may serve as the framework to analyse the selected plays of Mahesh Dattani. The primary focus of this research is closed reading, content analysis, and textual analysis, employing an interdisciplinary and evaluative approach. Specifically, it examines the plays of Mahesh Dattani in relation to the *Rasa* theory of Sanskrit dramaturgy- *Dasharupakam*. The broad theoretical framework employed is based on the theory of *Rasa*, emotions and experience.

The narrow critical framework used is of the *Natyashastra*, *Dasharupakam*, Theory of Performativity and Affect Theory. The theoretical concepts of *Rasa* as expounded in the *Natyashastra* and *Dasharupakam* have significantly laid the foundation of the analysis.. The theory of plot as elucidated by Dhananjaya in his work *Dasharupakam* has contributed to the comprehension of the significance and inherent connection between plot and the concept of *Rasa*. *Dasharupakam*, authored by Dhananjaya in the 10th century, contributed significantly to the comprehension of the interplay among plot, character, and *Rasa* within the realm of the genre in question. Both Indian and Western theories of emotions and experience have contributed to the analysis of Mahesh Dattani's plays. The term 'Psychology of *Rasa*' is grounded on the exploring

of psychological components within the framework of *Rasa* theory drawing clear lines that the research does not intend to take up the psychological analysis of the characters or the themes using the relevant theories. The systematic analysis and interpretation of text, in this case the stage performances of the plays, the audiovisual content (Mahesh Dattani's interviews) are undertaken to unfold themes, meanings, perspectives, contexts and other patterns.

1.14 Theoretical Framework

The examination of the theoretical foundations of *Rasa* in the stage productions of Mahesh Dattani can be approached from multiple scholarly perspectives. The stage plays authored by Mahesh Dattani, specifically *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Final Solutions*, *Dance Like a Man*, *On a Muggy Night In Mumbai*, *Thirty Days in September*, *Where did I Leave My Purdah?*, *Seven Steps around the Fire*, *Where there's a Will*, and *The Big Fat City*, are subjected to analyse within the theoretical framework of *Rasa*, emotions, and experiences, drawing upon the critical theories presented in the 10th century text, *Dasharupakam*. A comprehensive critical reading of the western and Indian theories on performance, emotions and experience has been undertaken, as a result, Schechner's Theory of Performativity and Affect Theory of Tomkins have been used as the theoretical framework. The research methodology is eclectic as theories from various disciplines- Indian and Western Aesthetics, Performativity, Affect Theory form the foundation of the have been drawn to the researcher has drawn theoretical framework, narratives encompass more than just a sequential arrangement of events and the psychological growth of characters. They also involve the incorporation of *Rasa* theory and its significance in contemporary society.

1.15 Scope of Further Research

This study provides an opportunity to investigate the various ways in which the *Rasa* theory has been received and interpreted over a span of time, specifically in regards to evolving social and cultural circumstances. An examination of Mahesh Dattani's plays using the frameworks of *Rasa*, emotions, and experience would provide a deeper and more comprehensive comprehension of *Rasa* in contemporary Indian English plays. This analysis would shed light on the intricate and ever-evolving connection among *Rasa*, emotions, and experience. The research attempts to bridge the western and Indian

thoughts on the selected components of the research opening new vistas of polysystemic interpretations encouraging to consider the interplay between different factors and systems in order to gain a nuanced understanding of the subject under investigation.

1.16 Scheme of Characterization

The following tentative chapters will be part of my research work:

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Review of Relevant Literature

Chapter 3 Theorizing *Dasharupakam*, Emotions and Experience

Chapter 4 Analyzing Plays of Mahesh Dattani through the Lenses of Psychology of *Rasa*, Emotions and Experience

Chapter 5 Findings and Conclusion

Chapter 1 Introduction

The initial section of this chapter provides an overview of *Rasa* Theory and introduces the concepts of emotions and experience. The following part of this chapter explores the factual and historical aspects of Indian Drama, Indian English Drama, Modern Indian English Drama, and Mahesh Dattani as a prominent modern Indian English playwright. It also provides a concise overview of the stage plays and their respective themes. The subsequent section of the chapter focuses on the literature review, research objectives, research questions, relevance and scope of the study, its limitations, and the overall structure of the thesis in the form of chapter organization. Additionally, it emphasizes the central ideas that will be further developed in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 Review of Relevant Literature

In the chapter, an attempt has been made to study all concepts related to main subject and showcase the scope for the present research. This chapter examines and explains the research done in the field of *Rasa* theory, emotions, experience, theatre, Indian aesthetics, and plays of Dattani in detail. A sincere attempt has been made to peruse and comprehend the numerous journal articles, thesis, available on print and

digital media pertaining to the central idea to gain an in-depth understanding about the same.

Chapter 3 Theorizing *Dasharupakam*, Emotions and Experience

The introductory section of this chapter delves into *Dasharupakam*, which serves as the foundation for the concepts of *Rasa*, plot, and character. The theory has been presented and expounded upon in the chapter. The subsequent section of the aforementioned chapter explores theories of emotions and experiences, examining both the Indian and Western perspectives and their correlation with the concept of *Rasa*.

Chapter 4 Analyzing Plays of Mahesh Dattani through the lenses of Psychology of *Rasa*, Emotions and Experience

This chapter deals with Psychology of *Rasa* and characters through the Stage Plays of Mahesh Dattani. It provides a detailed account of how Classical *Rasa* theory is closely associated with the recent idea of Psychology. How various terminologies associated with *Rasa* are correlated with Psychology. Plays of Mahesh Dattani have been a base to study Psychology of *Rasa* theory in depth, Emotions and Experience. The chapter also elaborates more on plot, types of the plays in the context of *Dasharupakam* and stage plays of Dattani.

Chapter 5 Findings and Conclusion

The concluding chapter serves as a comprehensive synthesis of the fundamental concepts that have been examined throughout the preceding chapters. This analysis aims to underscore the significance of *Rasa* in contemporary Indian theatre by examining the stage plays of Mahesh Dattani. The final chapter of this study offers suggestions and recommendations for playwrights and researchers working within the same field.

1.17 Limitation of the Study

This thesis solely focuses on the analysis of Mahesh Dattani's stage plays and their performance, specifically through the framework of the psychology of *Rasa*, emotions, and experience, specifically given in the *Natyashashtra*, *Dasrupakam*, for analysis of emotions the framework of Affect Theory, and Theory of Performativity to relate performance with experience of *Rasa*. However, other theatrical elements present in these

plays have not been extensively explored. The research conducted in this study is confined to the theatrical performances of Mahesh Dattani's ten stage plays, with no emphasis on gender, identity, precarity, social, political, and regional issues.

1.18 Conclusion

This study examines the relevance and applicability of the theory of *Rasa* in contemporary Indian plays. It investigates how the concept of *Rasa* and its interpretations have evolved alongside the development of theories on emotions and experiences. This study has examined the portrayal of *Rasa*, emotions, and experience in the modern Indian theatrical works of Mahesh Dattani, and the potential role of *Rasa* in the processes of healing and rejuvenation. The thesis has also examined the distinction between *Rasa* and emotions and has additionally presented the Indian theory of emotions, establishing a correlation among experiences, emotions, and *Rasa*.

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