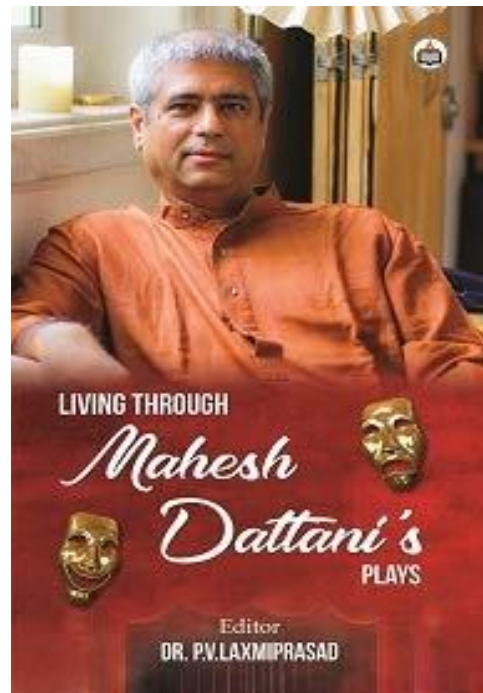


***Living Through Mahesh Dattani's Plays* Edited by P. V. Laxmiprasad, New Delhi: Authors Press, India, 2018, ISBN: 978-93-88008-19-8, Price- 995.**

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Dr. P. V. Laxmiprasad has carved a niche for himself as a critic and creative writer through his significant publications. As a committed and industrious researcher, he is one “who cannot rest from travel.” With about 70 research papers, 50 book reviews, 120 poems and a score of books and book chapters to his credit, Dr. Laxmiprasad has reached far and wide among the academics.

P.V. Laxmiprasad's edited volume entitled *Living Through Mahesh Dattani's Plays* is a fitting tribute to the dramatic genius of Mahesh Dattani. There are only a few writers who are equally popular among academicians and general readers, and Mahesh Dattani



is one such writer. Even as he is well-received by the academic community, he remains a popular playwright among the general public. He is known for his remarkable plot-construction and precise characterization. His genius rests in his unique way of depicting human passion and feelings on the stage and his artistic ability to present precisely the predicaments of his men and women.

The book *Living Through Mahesh Dattani's Plays* is a volume of scholarly essays on the dramatic works of Mahesh Dattani. It is a noteworthy contribution both to the body of writings on Dattani and Indian English Literature in general. It contains sixteen critical essays on the varied aspects of the dramatic works of Mahesh Dattani. The book contains representative voices from different states across India. The book offers comprehensive and insightful views on Mahesh Dattani and his plays. It also provokes scope for further readings and researches on the dramatist. The articles shed light on the varied and multiple dimensions of Mahesh Dattani

as a writer and establish his versatility. The articles range in focus from gender issues to filial conflicts, from identity crisis to cultural conflicts, from womanhood to familial issues, etc.

“Fragmented Lives and Fractured Identities: Reading Dattani’s *Bravely Fought Queen*” by Dr. C.A. Assif is an attempt to study Dattani from a psychological point of views. Assif highlights how Dattani touches upon many sensitive and untouched issues in the play. He rightly records, “It has often been said that modern Indian English Drama has come of age with Mahesh Dattani. As a playwright based in Bangalore, Dattani has dared to open up the hitherto untouched areas of literary thoughts.” There is an examination of gender issues in the plays of Mahesh Dattani by Mr. Basavaraj Naikar in his essay entitled “Gender Discrimination in *Tara*.” The article captures and brings to light how Dattani’s *Tara* is a voice of protest against the deep-rooted patriarchy in the Indian society and its subtle and powerful role in personal and social lives of people. Sr. Candy D’Cunha also takes up the issue of gender in her “Women and Decision Making in Mahesh Dattani’s *Final Solutions*. She observes, “His (Dattani’s) ability to handle the delicate issues of the society show his zeal and enthusiasm to bring a change in the society.” Mrs. Anantha Lakshmi Hemalatha deals with issue of gender conflict with reference to Dattani’s *Dance Like a Man*. She affirms, “Mahesh Dattani’s *Dance Like a Man* is about dancers but not about dance. The play poses a powerful uestion as to what makes a man or a woman.”

There is a range of articles on cultural and religious themes discussed in the plays of Dattani. “Culture as Mask. A Study of Mahesh Dattani’s *Dance Like a Man*” traces the subtle connection between gender and culture and reveals how the notion of gender is instilled by the cultural institutions. Dr. Suganthi examines the religious tension portrayed by Dattani in his *Final Solutions*. She praises Dattani’s frank and bold treatment of the theme of religious conflict: “It (*Final Solutions*) deals with communalism, religious fanaticism, and Hindu-Muslim riot mostly engendered by the self-centered politicians.” Dr. Karthika Devi’s article also focuses on the religious unrest dealt with in *Final Solutions* and she approaches the play from a post-colonial point of view and discusses the issue in the light of colonialism.

Dattani’s craftsmanship as a dramatist is also discussed by some of the critics in the book. “Confluence of Art, Craft, and Theme: A Reflection Mahesh Dattani’s *Select Plays*” by Dr. Palakurthy Dinalkar, is an overview of Dattani as an accomplished artist. The article establishes how “Dattani is a master of ‘decolonizing the theatre’ and creating ‘emphatic staginess’.” Prof. Anita Arul examines Dattani’s speciality as a storyteller in her “Sarcasm and Humour in

Mahesh Dattani's *Where There is a Will*. Mrs. S. Malathy endeavours to explain how Dattani exploits "memory" as a device in *Final Solutions*. Dr. Srilatha discusses the dramatic devices in Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions*.

The book also contains articles that approach Dattani and his plays from other points of view. Dr. D. Gnanasekaran's "Disability Studies in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*" is a well-researched article that brings out a new dimension of the playwright. He opines, "Dattani's play *Tara*, thus, offers a platform for us to look at this aspect of disability studies – one-legged twins and their physical mobility impaired and their psyche dented." Dr. Nagamani reviews Dattani's *Seven Steps around the Fire* and shows how the play champions the cause of the transgender people as "neglected minority."

On the whole, *Living Through Mahesh Dattani's Plays* is a welcome addition to the corpus of critical writing in Indian English Literature. The diverse essays together build a holistic critical picture of the "universe" constructed by Mahesh Dattani in his theatrical world. The papers bring out and establish the versatility of Dattani as an Indian English author. The book is of immense help to researchers as it provides useful insights into the works of Dattani. The contributors deserve our appreciation for their original and scholarly articles and the editor deserves our admiration for the assemblage of diverse essays on Dattani in a single volume in a meaningful way.