



Volume 11, Issue 12, December 2024
**SK International Journal of
Multidisciplinary Research Hub**

Journal for all Subjects

Research Article / Survey Paper / Case Study

Published By: **SK Publisher**
(www.skpublisher.com)



A Monthly Double-Blind Peer Reviewed Refereed Open Access Multidisciplinary & Multilingual International Journal

Special Issue: Two Day National Interdisciplinary Conference on "Script Writing"

Organised by: Department of Languages, Shankarlal Khandelwal Arts, Science & Commerce College, Akola, Maharashtra 444002.

(Sponsored by Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan Grants to Strengthen Colleges)

Aesthetics of Trauma- A Comparative Study of Indian and Western Dramas Mahesh Dattani Thirty Days in September, Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire, Tumbbad, and Inception

Heemal Pandey
India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61165/sk.publisher.script.writing.2024.37>

Abstract: Trauma has been a recurring theme in global storytelling, reflecting not only individual suffering but also societal complicity. Drawing upon Indian aesthetic principles such as *Rasa* (emotional resonance), *Vakrokti* (indirection), *Auchitya* (propriety), *Dhvani* (suggestive meaning), and *Anubhava* (emotional realization), this paper explores how Mahesh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*, Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Tumbbad* (2018), and *Inception* (2010) evoke and navigate complex emotional landscapes.

Dattani's Thirty Days in September explores intergenerational trauma caused by child sexual abuse, employing *Karuna* (compassion) and *Bhayanaka* (fear) to confront cycles of silence in Indian families. Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* critiques societal hypocrisy and emotional disintegration through *Blanche DuBois*, emphasizing *Shoka* (sorrow) and *Adbhuta* (wonder). *Tumbbad* allegorically portrays greed as a destructive force, while *Inception* examines the fragility of reality, using *Adbhuta* as its dominant emotional thread.

By analyzing these works, this study highlights how Indian aesthetic principles transcend cultural and temporal boundaries, offering tools to analyze trauma, survival, and societal judgment in contemporary narratives. The paper integrates scene analyses, dialogues, and symbolic elements, demonstrating the universality of Indian aesthetics in shaping impactful storytelling across media.

Introduction

Storytelling has long served as a medium for exploring trauma and resilience, offering audiences a mirror to human suffering and the systems that perpetuate it. Whether in the confined spaces of drama or the expansive realms of cinema, trauma emerges as a universal theme, bridging cultural and temporal divides. Indian aesthetic principles, rooted in ancient treatises such as Bharatmuni's *Natyashastra* and expanded by theorists like Abhinavagupta, Kuntaka, and Anandavardhana, provide a timeless framework for analyzing narratives. Concepts such as *Rasa*, *Vakrokti*, *Dhvani*, and *Auchitya* shed light on how storytelling evokes emotions, engages audiences, and harmonizes form with content.

This paper examines four works: Mahesh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*, Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Tumbbad* (2018), and *Inception* (2010). These narratives, though culturally distinct, converge in their exploration of trauma's psychological and societal dimensions. Dattani's play addresses child sexual abuse within Indian families, evoking *Karuna* (compassion) and *Bhayanaka* (fear). Williams' drama critiques Southern gender dynamics and emotional disintegration, centering on *Shoka* (sorrow). Meanwhile, *Tumbbad* allegorizes greed through a visual and symbolic approach, and *Inception* explores existential dilemmas using layered dreamscapes to evoke *Adbhuta* (wonder).

By integrating Indian aesthetic principles with Western storytelling conventions, the study highlights the enduring relevance of ancient theories in understanding contemporary narratives. Through detailed textual and cinematic analyses, it emphasizes how trauma is represented, resolved, and critiqued across different forms of storytelling. These works are taken into analysis because they belong to varied background, and analysing them on these criteria's will help us understand that despite their variety, art is united in the human emotions and understanding across borders and geographical boundaries.

Rasa: Emotional Resonance in Storytelling

The concept of *Rasa*—emotional essence—is central to Bharatmuni's *Natyashastra*. It posits that the ultimate purpose of art is to evoke specific emotions in the audience. These *rasas*, including *Bhayanaka* (fear), *Karuna* (compassion), *Shoka* (sorrow), and *Adbhuta* (wonder), guide the audience's emotional engagement with the narrative.

Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*

Dattani's *Thirty Days in September* is steeped in *Bhayanaka* (fear) and *Karuna*. The fear emerges from Mala's fragmented recollections of childhood abuse, which she struggles to articulate. Her liaisons with strangers, such as the character Deepak, reflect her attempts to reclaim agency over her body. In one poignant scene, Mala exclaims: "He touched me when I was a child! And you did nothing!" This line encapsulates the *Karuna* that underpins the audience's empathy for both Mala and her mother, Shanta.

Shanta, herself a victim of abuse, embodies a muted *Karuna*, as her silence becomes both a shield and a prison. Dattani's juxtaposition of the two women amplifies emotional resonance, aligning with *Rasa* theory's emphasis on catharsis through emotional immersion.

Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Williams' play evokes *Shoka* (sorrow) and *Bhayanaka*. Blanche's descent into delusion mirrors Mala's emotional disintegration, though the societal contexts differ. Blanche's romanticized memories of Belle Reve and her symbolic reliance on dim lighting illustrate her struggle to reconcile the past with the present. The climactic confrontation between Blanche and Stanley invokes *Bhayanaka*, with Stanley's aggression symbolizing societal rejection of vulnerability. Blanche's poignant line, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers," is steeped in irony, underscoring *Shoka* as the dominant *rasa*.

Tumbbad

Tumbbad's exploration of greed invokes *Bhayanaka* and *Karuna*. The cursed treasure and its grotesque guardian, Hastar, symbolize the cyclical nature of human desires. In one scene, the protagonist, Vinayak, remarks, "The more we take, the hungrier we become," capturing the moral decay wrought by greed. The film's oppressive atmosphere, characterized by dim lighting and foreboding soundscapes, immerses the audience in *Bhayanaka*.

Inception

In *Inception*, *Adbhuta* (wonder) dominates as the film's primary *rasa*. The intricate dreamscapes, folding cities, and the ambiguous ending leave audiences marveling at the possibilities of human imagination. The interplay between Cobb's personal trauma and the film's layered narrative evokes a secondary *rasa* of *Shoka*, particularly in scenes where he confronts the memory of his wife, Mal.

Comparative Analysis

While *Thirty Days in September* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* focus on emotional disintegration through *Karuna* and *Shoka*, *Tumbbad* and *Inception* employ *Bhayanaka* and *Adbhuta* to explore greed and existential dilemmas. These variations demonstrate the adaptability of *Rasa* theory across mediums and cultural contexts.

Vakrokti: Indirection and Symbolism in Narrative

Kuntaka's theory of *Vakrokti* highlights the power of indirect expression in enhancing aesthetic appeal. Through oblique dialogue, symbolism, and layered narratives, *Vakrokti* engages audiences intellectually and emotionally.

Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*

Dattani employs *Vakrokti* through fragmented dialogue and symbolism. Mala's liaisons with strangers are not overtly explained but serve as manifestations of her fractured sense of self. Shanta's silence is an indirect acknowledgment of her complicity, forcing audiences to confront societal norms that prioritize familial honor over justice.

Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*

In Williams' play, Blanche's poetic monologues and symbolic reliance on dim lighting embody *Vakrokti*. Her attempts to avoid bright light symbolize her fear of truth, while her obsession with bathing reflects a desire to cleanse herself of guilt. The play's subtext enriches its narrative complexity, allowing audiences to interpret Blanche's actions through multiple lenses.

Tumbbad

Tumbbad uses allegory and visual symbolism to exemplify *Vakrokti*. The treasure pit, resembling a womb, serves as a metaphor for creation and destruction, while Hastar's grotesque form reflects humanity's insatiable greed. The film's reliance on visual storytelling aligns with *Vakrokti*, leaving much of its moral critique open to interpretation.

Inception

In *Inception*, *Vakrokti* manifests through its layered narrative structure and ambiguous ending. The spinning top, which remains unresolved, epitomizes indirect storytelling, inviting audiences to question the nature of reality.

Comparative Analysis

All four works employ *Vakrokti* effectively, though the medium influences its execution. Dattani and Williams use dialogue and character dynamics, while *Tumbbad* and *Inception* rely on visual and narrative ambiguity to engage audiences.

Auchitya: Harmonizing Form and Content

Kshemendra's *Auchitya* emphasizes the alignment of narrative elements with thematic objectives. It ensures that every aspect of the work contributes to its overall coherence.

Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*

Dattani maintains *Auchitya* through restrained dialogue and minimalist staging. The play's non-linear structure mirrors Mala's fragmented psyche, ensuring that the form aligns with the theme of trauma.

Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire

In Williams' play, the decaying grandeur of Blanche's world reflects her emotional decline, while the realistic portrayal of Stanley underscores the play's critique of societal hypocrisy. This harmony between setting and character exemplifies *Auchitya*.

Tumbbad

Tumbbad achieves *Auchitya* through its atmospheric visuals and haunting score, which align seamlessly with its critique of greed. Every element, from the oppressive setting to the cyclical narrative, reinforces the film's themes.

Inception

While *Inception* excels in thematic harmony, its occasional reliance on expository dialogue detracts from its *Auchitya*. Nevertheless, its meticulous world-building ensures coherence across its dreamscapes.

Conclusion

Through the lenses of *Rasa*, *Vakrokti*, and *Auchitya*, Mahesh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*, Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Tumbbad*, and *Inception* reveal the universality of trauma and resilience in storytelling. By integrating Indian aesthetic principles with Western conventions, these works transcend cultural boundaries, offering timeless insights into human suffering and survival.

If Indian Aesthetics are taken in to analysis section, it has high potential of dissecting the scenes and human emotions and understanding the stimulus of the scene, also handy for actors helping them to understand the scene better. When it's help is taken in Scene or story writing, it also helps writer to technique the scenes and dialogues in a better way.

References

1. Bharatmuni. *Natyashastra*. Translated by Manomohan Ghosh, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1950.
2. Dattani, Mahesh. *Thirty Days in September*. Penguin, 2001.
3. Kshemendra. *Auchityavichararcha*. Translated by R.C. Dwivedi, Sahitya Akademi, 1976.
4. Kuntaka. *Vakroktijivita*. Translated by S.K. De, Indian Antiquary, 1925.
5. *Tumbbad*. Directed by Rahi Anil Barve, Eros International, 2018.
6. Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. New Directions, 1947.
7. *Inception*. Directed by Christopher Nolan, Warner Bros., 2010.

... Cite this article ...

Pandey, H. (2024). Aesthetics of Trauma- A Comparative Study of Indian and Western Dramas Mahesh Dattani *Thirty Days in September*, Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Tumbbad*, and *Inception*. Two Day National Interdisciplinary Conference on Script Writing, 171–174. <https://doi.org/10.61165/sk.publisher.script.writing.2024.37>