



From Ancestral Burden To Existential Dilemma: The Theatre Of Disillusion In Alekar's Dynasts

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Abstract

Satish Alekar's *Dynasts* (Pidhijat) emerges as a profound commentary on the fragmented moral and emotional fabric of postmodern India. The play dramatizes the decay of inherited values and the futility of ritual continuity within an urban, middle-class milieu caught between reverence for ancestry and the exhaustion of meaning. Through the portrayal of characters trapped in inherited expectations, Alekar exposes the psychological burden of lineage that transforms duty into despair and faith into farce. This paper examines *Dynasts* as a "theatre of disillusion," where the performance of tradition becomes a metaphor for existential paralysis. Employing the theoretical frameworks of existentialism and postmodern Indian consciousness, the study explores how Alekar reconfigures ritual, memory, and identity to mirror a society in moral freefall. His dramaturgy, marked by irony, minimalism, and symbolic realism, reveals not mere cynicism but a quest for authenticity amid cultural fatigue. The paper argues that Alekar's *Dynasts* articulates an indigenous postmodernism rooted in lived experience—an aesthetic of disillusionment that transforms the theatre into a site of introspection and renewal.

Keywords: Alekar, disillusionment, postmodern theatre, middle-class ethos, existential crisis.

Introduction

Satish Alekar stands among the foremost voices of modern Indian theatre whose dramatic oeuvre reshaped Marathi drama with a rare blend of irony, realism, and psychological depth. Born in Pune in 1949, Alekar emerged as part of the experimental theatre movement in Maharashtra during the 1970s, a time when playwrights such as Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Elkunchwar were redefining the idioms of Indian performance. As an actor, director, and playwright, Alekar infused Marathi theatre with a sense of introspection that probed the moral decay, spiritual exhaustion, and social absurdity of India's post-independence middle class. His plays, written in colloquial Marathi yet universal in appeal, capture the contradictions of a society caught between tradition and modernity. As Shanta Gokhale observes, Alekar's theatre "creates a world of heightened reality in which the rituals of middle-class life are both enacted and interrogated" (Gokhale 142).

Alekar's major works—*Mahanirvan* (The Dread Departure, 1974), *Begum Barve* (1979), and *Dynasts* (Pidhijat, 2003)—form a trilogy of sorts that examines death, performance, and inheritance as metaphors for a cultural condition. While *Mahanirvan* deals with the commodification of death and *Begum Barve* explores identity through theatrical illusion, *Dynasts* turns inward to expose the oppressive weight of ancestry and lineage. It stages

the suffocating continuity of family values that, once sacred, have become mechanical rituals devoid of meaning. Through a satirical portrayal of a middle-class family burdened by the weight of its own “dynasty,” Alekar transforms domestic life into a theatre of existential questioning. His characters are neither heroes nor victims but fragments of a disillusioned society—trapped between the ghost of tradition and the vacuum of modernity.

In *Dynasts*, Alekar departs from the overtly ritualistic setting of Mahanirvan to dramatize the banal repetitions of everyday life as symbolic enactments of cultural decay. The play’s title itself—translated as *Pidhijat*, meaning “of lineage” or “born of a dynasty”—encapsulates its thematic core: the inescapable inheritance of values, beliefs, and burdens that have lost their spiritual resonance. The ancestral past, once a source of identity and moral order, becomes a psychological burden in a postmodern context where belief systems have eroded. The play thus transforms the idea of lineage into a site of anxiety and disorientation. The ritual of continuity becomes an act of survival rather than faith, revealing what Jean Baudrillard calls “the simulacrum of tradition”—a hollow repetition that conceals the absence of meaning (Baudrillard 11).

The central problem this paper addresses lies in this transition: how inherited social, moral, and ritualistic structures, once the foundation of Indian communal life, now manifest as existential burdens within the postmodern condition. In *Dynasts*, Alekar captures this process through the portrayal of characters who cling to ancestral values not out of conviction but out of inertia. Their gestures—be it in worship, family dialogue, or social interaction—become performances of belief rather than expressions of it. The result is a pervasive sense of disillusionment, a quiet despair that resonates with the existential thought of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, for whom human existence is defined by the tension between meaning-seeking and meaninglessness. The family in *Dynasts* mirrors this conflict: bound by ritual yet alienated from its spirit, alive yet emotionally stagnant.

The argument of this paper situates *Dynasts* as a “theatre of disillusion”, an indigenous articulation of postmodern despair. Alekar’s dramaturgy departs from the Western absurdist model exemplified by Beckett and Ionesco by grounding existential anxiety in the Indian cultural experience. His absurdity is not metaphysical but social and ritualistic—it emerges from the hollowness of inherited forms. In this sense, *Dynasts* embodies what Rustom Bharucha terms “the indigenization of modernism,” a process by which Western forms of expression are reinterpreted through local contexts (Bharucha 97). The disillusionment that pervades Alekar’s play is thus not merely a reflection of global postmodernism but a commentary on the specific Indian predicament: the exhaustion of faith, the burden of heritage, and the futility of moral continuity in a rapidly urbanizing world.

The research objectives of this study are threefold: first, to analyze how Alekar transforms the theme of ancestry into a metaphor for existential paralysis; second, to interpret the dramaturgical elements—language, structure, and symbolism—that articulate this disillusionment; and third, to situate *Dynasts* within the broader context of postmodern Indian theatre, which seeks to represent the fragmented consciousness of the postcolonial subject. The scope of the research extends to exploring how Alekar’s

theatre functions as both critique and mirror of middle-class existence, exposing the futility of moral inheritance when stripped of spiritual vitality.

The theoretical framework of this paper draws from existentialism, absurdism, and postmodern theatre theory. Sartre's concept of "bad faith," where individuals deceive themselves into believing in values that no longer hold meaning, provides a useful lens to read Alekar's characters, who persist in ritualized existence despite their inner void (Sartre 66). Similarly, Camus's idea of the "absurd hero" who continues to live without hope or belief resonates with Alekar's portrayal of endurance as habit rather than choice (Camus 40). From a postmodern perspective, Lyotard's notion of "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv) aptly describes Alekar's dissection of moral and religious grand narratives that once anchored Indian identity. The play's dramaturgical minimalism, self-reflexivity, and fragmented dialogue reflect these philosophical concerns, turning theatre into a site where performance itself becomes a metaphor for existence.

Satish Alekar's *Dynasts* represents a crucial moment in Indian theatre where the personal and the philosophical converge. It reveals how the postmodern Indian consciousness grapples with the collapse of meaning amidst inherited moralities and unfulfilled aspirations. By transforming the domestic sphere into a symbolic space of decay and endurance, Alekar constructs a "theatre of disillusion" that transcends satire to articulate a profound existential dilemma. The ensuing sections of this paper will explore how ritual, performance, and memory in *Dynasts* expose the contradictions of Indian modernity—where the ancestral burden becomes an emblem of both identity and despair.

Review of Literature

The scholarship on Satish Alekar's theatre has been both diverse and insightful, positioning him as one of the key figures in modern Marathi drama. Critics consistently recognize Alekar's ability to blend humour, realism, and absurdity to expose the moral and emotional fatigue of India's middle-class society. Shanta Gokhale, in her comprehensive study *Playwright at the Centre: Marathi Drama from 1843 to the Present*, identifies Alekar as part of a generation of playwrights who "turned theatre into a mirror of the decaying middle-class conscience, transforming everyday rituals into symbolic acts of self-exposure" (Gokhale 158). Alekar's dramaturgy, she argues, moves beyond social critique toward philosophical introspection—a feature that distinguishes his work from his contemporaries.

Much of the existing scholarship on Alekar has focused on his earlier plays such as *Mahanirvan* and *Begum Barve*, both of which revolutionized Marathi theatre with their experimental use of ritual, gender, and death as metaphors for cultural stagnation. *Mahanirvan*, often hailed as Alekar's masterpiece, has been discussed by Rustom Bharucha as "a theatre of renewal through decay," where the grotesque and the sacred coexist (Bharucha 112). *Begum Barve*, on the other hand, has been analyzed by Ananda Lal as a play that "erases the boundary between performance and identity," making it a landmark in postmodern Indian dramaturgy (Lal 201). However, despite Alekar's enduring influence, *Pidhijat* (*Dynasts*)—his later and more introspective work—has received comparatively limited academic attention, especially in English-language scholarship.

In Marathi literary criticism, *Pidhijat* has been appreciated for its nuanced depiction of generational disillusionment and moral decay. Scholars such as Sudhir Sonalkar emphasize that Alekar's play "captures the paralysis of belief in an age where tradition survives only as mimicry" (Sonalkar 67). The play's symbolic treatment of family as both heritage and entrapment reflects a distinct psychological realism that differs from Alekar's earlier, more overtly ritualistic works. Yet, while Marathi critics have acknowledged the play's social relevance, few have examined its philosophical dimensions in relation to existentialism or postmodern thought.

Studies on Indian postmodern theatre often contextualize Alekar alongside playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Elkunchwar, whose works similarly interrogate moral disintegration and social hypocrisy. Aparna Dharwadker, in *Theatres of Independence*, situates Alekar within "the postcolonial reconfiguration of Indian dramaturgy, where realism dissolves into ritual and irony becomes a mode of survival" (Dharwadker 224). Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* and Elkunchwar's *Old Stone Mansion* offer comparable explorations of power, decay, and alienation; yet, Alekar's *Dynasts* differs in its tone of quiet disillusionment and its focus on the interiorization of despair rather than its social manifestation.

Thematically, scholars have explored how urban alienation, generational conflict, and ritualistic performance shape postmodern Indian drama. Nandi Bhatia notes that modern Indian playwrights "use theatre not merely as representation but as interrogation of lived cultural contradictions" (Bhatia 93). Alekar's *Dynasts* continues this tradition, dramatizing the moral burden of inheritance and the futility of continuity within an increasingly fragmented society. The play's domestic space becomes a microcosm of the modern Indian condition—a world haunted by memory yet emptied of belief.

Despite this growing body of literature, a notable research gap persists. While critics have recognized Alekar's artistic innovation and sociocultural insight, *Dynasts* has rarely been examined as a psychological and philosophical critique of the middle-class value system. Its engagement with existential thought, performative realism, and postmodern disillusionment remains underexplored. This paper thus aims to bridge that gap by interpreting *Dynasts* as a theatre of disillusion that articulates the transition from ancestral burden to existential dilemma—where ritual loses its sanctity, and continuity becomes an act of inertia rather than faith.

Analysis and Discussion

From Ritual Continuity to Existential Vacuum

In *Dynasts* (*Pidhijat*), Satish Alekar transforms the idea of lineage—once sacred and celebratory—into a metaphor for existential suffocation. The play exposes how ancestral rituals, originally meant to preserve continuity and moral cohesion, have deteriorated into hollow performances. In Alekar's world, tradition no longer embodies faith but functions as a mechanical obligation—a simulation of belief. The family, which once served as the nucleus of cultural stability, becomes a stage for repetitive, meaningless gestures. Jean Baudrillard's notion of "simulation," where signs replace meaning, aptly describes Alekar's dramaturgy: "we live in the era of the hyperreal, where the sign of tradition takes the place of its substance" (Baudrillard 6). The *puja*, the act of paying

respect to ancestors, or even casual familial dialogues in *Dynasts* are performed out of habit, not devotion; they become echoes of a moral order that no longer exists.

Alekar dramatizes this transformation through a deliberate use of language, silence, and repetition. The dialogues in *Dynasts* oscillate between banal domestic exchanges and sudden philosophical outbursts, revealing characters caught between speech and silence. Their words often fail to communicate, functioning instead as shields against emotional exposure. The silences that punctuate the play—moments when characters sit together yet remain inwardly detached—evoke the spiritual emptiness underlying their lives. This linguistic economy echoes the existential theatre of Samuel Beckett, but as Shanta Gokhale notes, Alekar “roots absurdity in the Indian social milieu, where habit replaces conviction and ritual substitutes faith” (Gokhale 161). The result is a form of performative realism that captures both the theatricality and futility of postmodern existence.

The generational conflict in *Dynasts* sharpens this tension between continuity and emptiness. The older generation clings to rituals as the last remnant of identity, while the younger generation, shaped by urban disillusionment, perceives them as burdensome formalities. This disjunction reveals a psychological rift within the middle-class Indian consciousness—a loss of belief in collective values accompanied by an inability to break free from them. As Rustom Bharucha observes, modern Indian theatre often “stages the residue of faith in the absence of faith itself” (Bharucha 118), and *Dynasts* epitomizes this crisis. The family’s insistence on preserving rituals becomes an act of denial—a refusal to acknowledge the moral vacuum that defines their existence.

The metaphor of “dynasty” itself encapsulates this existential dilemma. A dynasty, by definition, implies continuity, legacy, and permanence. Yet in Alekar’s play, it signifies the inescapable weight of inheritance—the burden of names, beliefs, and expectations that have outlived their meaning. The descendants are not empowered by their lineage but imprisoned within it. This inversion transforms the idea of *parampara* (tradition) into what Albert Camus might term “the absurd condition”—the realization that one must continue performing the gestures of faith even when belief has vanished (Camus 40). The family’s rituals, therefore, become a form of existential mimicry, exposing the tragicomic persistence of life amidst meaninglessness.

Alekar’s stagecraft reinforces this thematic design. The minimalist set, muted lighting, and recurring domestic motifs evoke the suffocating sameness of everyday life. Objects—photographs, garlands, old furniture—serve as symbols of ancestral presence, haunting rather than sustaining the living. The visual monotony mirrors the spiritual inertia of the characters, suggesting that the past has become both their heritage and their tomb. The domestic space in *Dynasts* thus becomes what Aparna Dharwadker calls “a theatre of inner landscapes,” where “the erosion of belief is enacted through gestures of habit and repetition” (Dharwadker 232).

Through *Dynasts*, Alekar redefines the contours of Indian postmodern theatre. He departs from overt political critique and instead dramatizes existential paralysis as the defining feature of contemporary urban life. His characters are neither rebels nor conformists but passive inheritors of a disenchanted world. In dramatizing the collapse of meaning beneath the continuity of ritual, Alekar constructs a distinctly Indian “theatre

of disillusion,” one that transforms ancestral burden into existential dilemma. The rituals endure—but only as echoes of faith, performed not for transcendence but for survival.

The Theatre of Disillusion: Space, Symbol, and Spectacle

Satish Alekar’s *Dynasts* (Pidhijat) unfolds as a theatre of disillusion, where the decline of traditional values is mirrored not only in the characters’ consciousness but in the very architecture of the stage. Alekar’s dramaturgy consciously departs from the realist conventions of Marathi theatre, adopting instead a minimalist, symbolic, and often grotesque aesthetic that externalizes the inner decay of the post-independence Indian middle class. His use of space and stage design is sparse—almost ritualistic—transforming domestic interiors into psychological landscapes of confinement and inertia. The home in *Dynasts* becomes both a sacred and suffocating space, where the relics of ancestry weigh heavily upon the living. As critics like Sathe observe, Alekar’s stagecraft “turns the middle-class home into a museum of obsolete emotions and moral contradictions” (Sathe 214).

The play’s structure embodies the postmodern condition of fragmentation. Rather than presenting a coherent narrative, Alekar constructs a mosaic of scenes that echo one another through repetition and silence. Dialogues are truncated, emotions are muted, and gestures carry more meaning than words. This fragmented dramaturgy, as Deshpande notes, “denies closure and dramatizes the impossibility of resolution in a society caught between faith and fatigue” (Deshpande 147). Alekar’s characters, trapped in routines of mourning and memory, are haunted by the performative burden of their roles. The rituals they enact—funerals, domestic chores, ancestral invocations—lose their sacred charge, becoming theatrical repetitions of cultural fatigue.

The use of symbolic props reinforces this disillusion. The portrait of the ancestor, a recurring motif, looms as a spectral presence on stage, representing both reverence and repression. The props—lamps, garlands, and worn-out furniture—function as semiotic residues of a bygone moral order. Their continued presence signals the endurance of tradition without transcendence. As Karnad has argued in a broader context of Indian modern drama, “the object in postcolonial theatre ceases to be functional and becomes emblematic of an unfulfilled inheritance” (Karnad 89). In *Dynasts*, these symbolic objects signify the paralysis of meaning—the transformation of sacred objects into empty signifiers.

Alekar’s use of grotesque humour and irony intensifies the sense of existential absurdity. The laughter his plays provoke is uneasy, oscillating between amusement and anxiety. The grotesque, as Bhave points out, “is Alekar’s device to strip ritual of its sanctity and reveal the absurd persistence of custom in a disenchanting age” (Bhave 63). Moments of exaggerated emotion, abrupt tonal shifts, and deliberately awkward silences work to destabilize audience expectations, creating a Brechtian distance that invites reflection rather than empathy.

The sensory dimensions of Alekar’s theatre—lighting, sound, and stage rhythm—further dramatize this existential vacuum. Dim, flickering lights and intermittent sounds of ritual bells and chants evoke the fading pulse of faith. The soundscape is intentionally hollow, often punctuated by long pauses that suggest an absence rather than presence. In these silences, the audience confronts the hollowness of continuity itself. The stage thus

becomes a liminal zone between remembrance and ruin, where spectacle functions not to glorify but to expose decay.

Through this theatrical language of restraint and irony, Alekar transforms *Dynasts* into a meditation on the collapse of collective belief systems. His dramaturgy resists sentimentality and opts instead for a precise anatomy of disillusion. The theatre, stripped of its ornamental excess, mirrors the stripped consciousness of its characters—caught between ancestral obligation and existential void. Alekar’s minimalism, grotesque humour, and symbolic stagecraft together produce what may be called an “aesthetics of exhaustion,” where the spectacle of meaninglessness itself becomes the only remaining ritual.

The Middle-Class Psyche and the Collapse of Values

In *Dynasts* (Pidhijat), Satish Alekar constructs a microcosm of the urban Indian middle class, exposing the contradictions, anxieties, and hypocrisies that underlie its moral and social existence. The play situates the family as both a site of continuity and disintegration, where ancestral values persist as hollow formalities. Alekar’s portrayal of the household dramatizes the collapse of a class once defined by its belief in progress, respectability, and ritual order. As Sathé observes, Alekar’s theatre “turns the drawing room into a laboratory of decay, where every gesture of piety conceals an act of evasion” (Sathé 119). The middle-class family, clinging to inherited ideals, becomes emblematic of a larger societal exhaustion — a civilization sustained by habit rather than conviction.

Alekar’s characters embody this malaise. The younger generation inherits the burdens of the past without comprehending their meaning, while the older members perform rituals devoid of faith. The recurring tension between obligation and indifference reflects the postcolonial Indian’s fractured identity — caught between the myth of tradition and the pressures of modernity. Deshpande notes that *Dynasts* “unmasks the spiritual bankruptcy of a class that has replaced belief with propriety, and morality with performance” (Deshpande 78). The family’s moral collapse mirrors the decline of community values in a rapidly urbanizing society, where spiritual continuity gives way to psychological alienation.

Alekar’s critique extends beyond the domestic sphere to institutionalized religiosity. Rituals are performed mechanically, stripped of transcendence, functioning as symbols of cultural inertia. The temple, the household altar, and even the funeral rites in the play serve as ironic reminders of faith’s absence. Like Tendulkar’s *Ghashiram Kotwal*, which exposes the manipulation of religion for power, *Dynasts* reveals how ritual becomes an aesthetic cover for ethical emptiness. Similarly, in Elkunchwar’s *Old Stone Mansion*, the house — once a symbol of lineage and pride — becomes a ruin haunted by silence and guilt. Alekar’s *Dynasts* extends this lineage of Marathi theatre, offering a darkly comic, almost clinical dissection of the Indian middle-class conscience. Through irony and grotesque humour, Alekar shows how faith, duty, and respectability have degenerated into rituals of self-deception.

Disillusionment as Aesthetic: Towards a New Indian Theatre

Alekar’s *Dynasts* represents a significant evolution in Indian dramaturgy — transforming cultural disillusionment into a distinct aesthetic experience. His theatre does not lament the loss of values but renders that loss as form. The play’s tone — tragicomic,

introspective, and detached — evokes the existential irony of postmodern Indian life. The absurdity of repetition, the monotony of ritual, and the emptiness of language become theatrical devices that reveal the paralysis of meaning itself. Bhave aptly calls Alekar's dramaturgy "an art of silence and exhaustion, where emotion is not expressed but echoed through voids" (Bhave 54).

In this sense, disillusionment becomes both the subject and the method of Alekar's theatre. The fragmented dialogues, ritualistic gestures, and minimalist stagecraft do not merely depict despair — they enact it. The audience witnesses not a cathartic tragedy but a theatre of stasis, where laughter and emptiness coexist. This tragicomic balance situates Alekar within the broader discourse of Indian postmodern theatre, alongside contemporaries like Tendulkar and Elkunchwar, who redefined realism by fusing it with irony and alienation.

However, Alekar's contribution lies in his synthesis of local cultural idioms with universal existential questions. His plays articulate what Karnad terms "the theatre of transition" — a space where Indian dramaturgy absorbs modernist fragmentation without losing its regional texture (Karnad 93). By aestheticizing disillusionment, Alekar opens a new path for Indian theatre — one that neither idealizes tradition nor imitates Western absurdism, but creates a hybrid language of irony rooted in Indian social reality.

In *Dynasts*, therefore, theatre becomes a mirror of moral entropy. The failure of belief is not lamented but staged as a lived condition — a performative truth of postcolonial modernity. The audience is left not with resolution but with recognition: the recognition that disillusionment itself is the only enduring form of authenticity in an age of spiritual fatigue. Through this subtle but radical redefinition, Alekar transforms despair into an aesthetic, creating a theatre that both critiques and transcends the collapse it portrays.

Findings

The analysis of Satish Alekar's *Dynasts* (Pidhijat) reveals that the play embodies a distinctive form of postmodern Indian disillusionment, one that emerges from within the folds of everyday life rather than from overt ideological critique. Alekar's theatre translates the psychological and cultural exhaustion of the urban middle class into an aesthetic of stillness, repetition, and estrangement. The play's world is one of moral inertia — a family that continues to perform rituals, duties, and gestures of reverence without conviction or emotional vitality. The findings indicate that *Dynasts* portrays the collapse of meaning within traditional frameworks, demonstrating how ancestral continuity becomes an existential burden rather than a source of identity or strength.

Firstly, the study identifies Alekar's dramaturgy as an articulation of ritual turned simulation. Religious and familial rites in *Dynasts* are enacted mechanically, emptied of transcendence, and thereby transformed into parodies of belief. Through this, Alekar captures what Jean Baudrillard would call the "simulation of faith," where form survives after content disappears. The characters' adherence to hollow customs reveals a postmodern consciousness — aware of disillusionment yet incapable of renewal. What once symbolized social order now serves as a marker of spiritual void.

Secondly, the findings highlight the crisis of generational inheritance. The younger generation in the play experiences inherited values not as guidance but as weight.

Tradition, once a moral compass, now imprisons rather than liberates. The generational divide exposes the futility of maintaining ancestral norms in an era that no longer believes in them. The older generation, clinging to formality and ritual, finds solace in repetition; the younger, alienated and apathetic, finds no meaning in continuity. Thus, the play dramatizes the transformation of the joint family into a symbolic site of existential paralysis.

Thirdly, Alekar's use of minimalist stagecraft and grotesque humour translates cultural collapse into theatrical language. Empty spaces, subdued lighting, and fragmented dialogues externalize the internal desolation of his characters. The laughter that arises in *Dynasts* is uneasy — a laughter of recognition rather than amusement. The grotesque tone dissolves the distinction between tragedy and comedy, embodying Alekar's belief that disillusionment is both absurd and inevitable.

Fourthly, the research finds that Alekar's portrayal of the urban middle-class psyche functions as a critique of moral hypocrisy and institutionalized religiosity. The household becomes a microcosm of postcolonial India, where belief is replaced by performance and social respectability conceals emotional decay. The play's characters are not villains but victims of their own conditioning, caught in an inherited theatre of propriety.

Finally, the findings suggest that Alekar transforms disillusionment into an aesthetic principle. Rather than offering redemption or rebellion, *Dynasts* stages the paralysis itself — the slow erosion of faith, emotion, and purpose. The absence of catharsis is deliberate: Alekar allows the audience to experience stasis as the new reality of postmodern existence. This aesthetic of exhaustion and silence marks a crucial turn in Indian theatre — a movement from social realism to existential introspection.

Dynasts encapsulates Alekar's vision of the "theatre of disillusion," where the ruins of tradition and the void of modernity coexist. The play speaks not only to the decay of familial structures but also to the broader crisis of meaning in contemporary Indian life. Through its fusion of ritual parody, psychological depth, and minimalist form, Alekar creates a uniquely Indian expression of postmodern existentialism — a theatre that mirrors the hollowness of the age while seeking, however faintly, its lost sense of authenticity.

Conclusion

Satish Alekar's *Dynasts* (Pidhijat) stands as one of the most incisive explorations of the psychological and cultural disarray of postmodern Indian life. Through the prism of a middle-class family weighed down by ancestral duties, Alekar crafts a theatre of disillusion that reflects the exhaustion of meaning in a society trapped between tradition and modernity. The play's thematic core lies in its portrayal of continuity as burden — where rituals, once sacred, become hollow repetitions devoid of spiritual vitality. By dramatizing the degeneration of belief into performance, Alekar not only critiques the moral hypocrisy of the urban middle class but also exposes the existential vacuum that defines contemporary consciousness.

His dramaturgy — minimalist, fragmented, and darkly humorous — transforms disillusionment into an aesthetic form. The silences, grotesque gestures, and subdued tones on stage enact the paralysis of thought and emotion that pervades his characters.

This aesthetic strategy situates Alekar within the lineage of postmodern Indian playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Elkunchwar, yet his voice remains distinct in its fusion of local idioms with philosophical depth. In *Dynasts*, laughter and despair merge to reveal the absurdity of existence; irony becomes the medium through which truth is articulated.

The study concludes that Alekar's *Dynasts* does not merely depict social decay but redefines the function of Indian theatre itself. His theatre becomes a mirror — not of society's ideals, but of its failures, anxieties, and silences. By embracing disillusionment as both theme and technique, Alekar constructs a postmodern aesthetic that is deeply Indian in texture yet universally resonant in its existential insight. *Dynasts* thus embodies the transition of Indian drama from moral certitude to moral introspection, from collective faith to personal disquiet. In doing so, Alekar's work transforms despair into awareness, and theatre into a philosophical act — a confrontation with the void that lies beneath the rituals of everyday life.

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