

RESEARCH ARTICLE**Addressees of Aggression: A significant Revise of Manjula Padmanabhan's
*Lights Out***

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Abstract:

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* is a undeniable investigation of aggression, spectatorship, and community lack of interest. Based on a real-life confrontation, the play exposes the distressing lack of sympathy of municipal elites toward acts of viciousness occurring in their immediate atmosphere. This article decisively examines *Lights Out* through the lens of brutality and spectatorship, analyzing how the characters' inactive responses to a horrendous event mirror broader social attitudes toward aggression, power, and gender dynamics. The article focuses about Padmanabhan's dramatic techniques, character portrayals, and the moral dilemmas posed by witnessing violence without intervention. The paper aims to explore the playwright's projection of violence in her selected plays. In Padmanabhan's plays, the different types of violence the characters come across in the selected plays are anticipated. And the dramatists projects the clear consciousness on gender inequality and a overriding application for realizing the emotions of human in the world where both men and women barely finds themselves to be free, sovereign and resistant thought out the play. It interrogates how the play forces both its characters and its audience to confront their responsibility in systemic violence by positioning them as spectators rather than agent so change. Again the article explores the play's explanation engendered violence, power hierarchies, and the unfriendliness of the confidential class from community realities. By situating *Lights Out* within contemporary discussions on violence and by illustration parallels with real-world instances of eyewitness lack of interest, this study under scores the enduring relevance of Padmanabhan's work. The analysis in due course highlights the play's role as a critical socio-political text that challenges audiences to imitate on their decent responsibilities as witnesses to violent behavior in both invented story and reality.

Keywords: investigation, brutality, witness, lack of interest, Dynamics, supremacy, chain of command

RESEARCH ARTICLE**Introduction**

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* (1986) stands as a powerful evaluation of societal apathy and the normalization of violence in urban Indian society. Based on a real-life incident, the play unravels the disturbing lack of sympathy of middle-class individuals as they eyewitness a brutal act of sexual violence occurring just outside their window. The play *Lights Out* is based on a real-life incident which took place in a Mumbai suburb in 1982. Padmanabhan portrays a world in which women are dispossessed of their identity, their own voice, their freedom, their rights; she has to entreat men to hear her concerns, this further leads to gender unfairness in every specialty of life. *Lights Out* opens at a point where a critical decision has to be taken. Leela and Bhaskar, a higher middle-class marital couple, have been subjected to weird and wonderful sounds of sexual irritation of a woman from their neighboring building very often. Leela is terrified and traumatized because of these sounds. Set within the restrained walls of a public housing, *Lights Out* juxtaposes the comfort of conjugal spaces with the appalling realities of the outdoor world. The play's unassuming setting and sharp dialogues put the accent on the moral paralysis of its characters, making it a seminal work in present-day Indian drama. Padmanabhan's exploration of violence, power, and spectatorship remains deeply relevant, especially in light of ongoing global conversations around gendered violence and social conscientiousness.

The play *Lights Out* (1986) by Manjula Padmanabhan focuses on the indifference and intolerance of people to crimes like gang rape. Respected citizens of middle-class families choose to stay away from heinous crimes against women such as gang rape as they do not want to be involved in a police case. The play opens and we see Leela is deeply disturbed and shocked by the scene of violence that takes place every night in the contradictory construction where women are gang-raped. Her husband is unconcerned about the incident as it does not concern them unswervingly. He does not want to involve himself in the matter. But, Leela insists on calling the police as she is afraid of the incident. At the core of *Lights Out* lies the concept of spectatorship—how principal they are by appropriate complicity in the continuation of harm. The play forces both its characters and its audience to meet head-on the principled dilemmas of witnessing aggression. The characters, attentive in their own submissiveness, embody the broader social tendency to disengage from uncomfortable realities. Through this lens, Padmanabhan explores the thin border line between bystander and accomplice, perplexed whether functioning makes one as in the wrong as the person accountable for. The connotation of this study lies in *Lights Out's* undaunted representation of human lack of sympathy and moral indistinctness. By situating the play within the broader discourse on societal violence and bystander apathy, the article sheds light on the dynamics of power and dispensation that shape human beings' responses to conflict. The play serves as a representation of society's cooperative failure to deal with violence, especially when it occurs in immediacy yet remains detached from one's immediate reality. This article aims to significantly examine how *Lights Out* navigates the theme of brutality through its characters and narrative construction. It investigates the emotional and

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social magnitude of spectatorship, the gendered implications of the violence depicted, and the conduct in which the audience is caught up in the act of examination. By winning with the play's socio-political suggestion, the study seeks to underscore the enduring relevance of Padmanabhan's work as a observations on the ethics of witnessing and the errands of both individuals and society in the face of brutality.

Manjula Padmanabhan's Thematic Concerns and Dramatic Style:

Manjula Padmanabhan's literary and exaggerated works are known for their sharp assessment of social issues, predominantly themes of violence, power, distancing, and the complexities of the human situation. Her writings often explore dystopian realities, gender dynamics, and the ethical dilemmas individuals face in oppressive or morally ambiguous position. In her celebrated play *Harvest* (1997), she critiques the commoditization of the human body in a ultramodern world conquered by economic inequality. likewise, in *Lights Out*, she turns her focus toward city lethargy and the worrying normalization of fighting, revealing how community freedom fosters objectivity from cruelty. Throughout her works, Padmanabhan questions the moral errands of individuals when confronted with prejudice, making her an indispensable voice in fashionable Indian drama.

Dramatic Style and Narrative Techniques in *Lights Out*:

In *Lights Out*, Padmanabhan employs a discreet yet impactful dramatic style to amplify the audience's meeting with the play's themes. The entire play unfolds within the limits of an residence, symbolizing the separation of the characters from the exterior world. This limited setting serves as a stark contrast to the horrendous violence happening just exterior, emphasize the emotional and physical barriers that prevent individuals from intervening in acts of brutality. The enclosed space also reinforces the idea that the characters are not just actually but also morally attentive, unable to smash free from their obedience. Dialogue plays a critical role in transmission the characters' indifference and nakedness. Rather than engaging in direct action, the characters engage in protracted debate, debates, and rationalizations about whether or not to arbitrate. Their conversations, often punctuated by dithering and avoidance, reflect the real-life propensity of bystanders to avoid accountability. The absence of direct playing violence is another famous account choice—while the audience never sees the attack itself, they hear it through the characters' reactions and disjointed images. This technique intensifies the uneasiness, making the violence more haunting by forcing the audience to visualize it based on their own perceptions. Padmanabhan structures the play in a way that mirrors the stages of moral detachment. The characters progress from initial discomfort to justifications then to passive getting, and finally to complete detachment presented in the play. This path reflects how individuals often desensitize themselves to repeated exposure to violence, theme that remains relevant in contemporary discussions about media consumption and societal apathy. The voyeuristic element in *Lights Out*— where characters become spectators rather than actors—creates an disturbing dynamic, implicating not just them but also the listeners in the decent dilemma of watching violence unfold without taking action. Through her dramatic style and narrative techniques, Manjula Padmanabhan masterfully constructs a emotional and social critique

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that forces audiences to confront their own role as passive witnesses to prejudice. *Lights Out* is not just play about violence; it is an examination of society's complicity in allowing violence persist, making it a powerful and thought-provoking melodramatic experience.

The Politics of Violence in *Lights Out*:

Violence is at the heart of Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out*, not only as a corporeal act but also as a psychological and societal occurrence. The play is based on a real-life incident in which a group of people witnessed a brutal act of sexual violence from the safety of their homes but chose not to arbitrate. Through its unsettling depiction of passive spectatorship, the play forces audiences to reflect on their own role in perpetuating violence by lasting indifferent. *Lights Out* presents violence not merely as an peripheral event but as a deeply embedded social and psychological issue, exposing the mechanisms through which power, control, and fear operate in society.

The play explores multiple dimensions of violence—physical, emotional, and systemic— each revealing different facets of power and involvement. The central act of violence in the play— a woman being beaten by a group of men—is never directly shown on stage but is heard and described through the characters' reactions. This backstage description heightens its disgust, forcing the viewers to assemble the scene in their minds. The invisibility of the act parallels the way humanity often chooses to disregard or silence fatalities of cruelty rather than confronting the veracity. Beyond the corporal act, the play delves into the emotional violence inflicted upon both the fatality and the witnesses. The typescript familiarity fear, responsibility, and moral quarrel, yet they eventually trim down their functioning. Leela, the only temperament who expresses deep pain, faces gas-lighting and notice by her companion and associates, illustrating how moving responses to violence are often censored or invalidated. The play critiques the larger communal structures that standardize and effect brutality. The male characters, particularly Mohan and his friend, validate their effective by signifying that such incidents are common and that intervention could be unsafe. Their influence reflect the systemic failures of law enforcement and public answerability, prominence how institutions situation persons to accept fighting as an predictable part of life rather than incredible to be challenged.

Violence in *Lights Out* is also a means of asserting power and manage, both in the straight act of beating and in the characters' responses to it. The play exposes the ways in which patriarchal structures facilitate cruelty against women. While the female fatality is actually desecrated outside, the women inside the house—particularly Leela—are emotionally and intellectually subdued by their male counterparts. Mohan's flip attitude toward his wife's concerns reflects the broader collective inclination to silence women and challenge their charity in matters of justice and decency. Interestingly, the play suggests that in action can also be a form of power. By choosing not to intervene, the spectators maintain their own security and control over their immediate surroundings. However, this delusion of control is deeply disturbing, as it eventually upholds the very structures

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of aggression they maintain to dread.

Spectatorship of aggression:

One of the most ought-provoking aspects of *Lights Out* is its explanation on spectatorship—how violence is extreme, processed, and unseen. The characters in the play are not direct perpetrators, yet their passive observation makes them complicit. The characters engage in drawn out debates about whether they should arbitrate, revealing their moral perplexity. Their justifications—fear, nakedness, and a principle that someone else should take accountability—emulate real-world instances of eyewitness laziness. The play also implicates the meeting, making them active participants in the principled quandary. Just as the typescript watch and argue the beating lacking acting, the audience is placed in a parallel point—observing an act of violence open out on step devoid of the power to change its outcome. This intentional mirroring forces viewers to inquiry their own responses to real-life violence and their connivance in a culture of passive spectatorship. By framing violence as both an external event and an internalized societal condition, *Lights Out* challenges audiences to tackle the painful realities of power, sex, and moral job. The play's investigation of violence not only reveals the feebleness of human ethics but also exposes the universal failures that allow such viciousness to continue. Through its disturbing depiction of inactive spectatorship, *Lights Out* becomes a authoritative critique of urban lack of sympathy and a call to action against the normalization of violence in society.

Audience as Spectators:

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* is not just a play about fighting and laziness; it is an disquieting observations on the role of spectator ship, implicating the addressees in the very act of tameness it critiques. The play purposely positions the listeners as soundless witnesses to the telling measures, mirroring the typescript who observes sadism without taking action. By doing so, Padmanabhan services the audience to deal with their own moral farm duties, raising bumpy questions about participation and principled disentanglement. The interview in *Lights Out* is placed in a voyeuristic arrangement, much like the typescript who watch the assault from their apartment house. The structure of the play makes it impossible to ignore this corresponding—just as the characters discuss the violence without paramount, the audience watches the typescript engage in this moral predicament without being able to change its lessons. The absence of direct on-stage violence intensifies this familiarity, making It an act of thoughts rather than manifestation. This absence heightens the psychosomatic embarrassment, as the audience must assemble the horror in their minds, much like the characters do. The morals of witnessing, a vital theme in *Lights Out*, extends beyond the play's pressing narrative to broader communal questions. What is the accountability of a bystander when confronted with violence—whether on point, in the media, or in real life? Padmanabhan challenges the audience to observe their own responses to wrong. Do they, like Mohan and Surinder, diminish inaction with self-preserving logic? Do they, like Naina, detach themselves wholly? Or do they, like Leela, experience pain but linger powerless within social constraints? By sparkly these emotional responses in her characters, Padmanabhan craft an disquieting mirror for the

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interview, making them brazen out their own tendencies toward tameness. The audience's engagement with *Lights Out* does not end with the play itself; it extends into real-world considerations of violence and social responsibility. Padmanabhan does not offer easy resolutions—there is no moment of liberation or moral clarity in the play. Instead, she leaves the audience in a state of embarrassment, forcing them to question how often they have been silent witnesses in their own lives. The play's stark portrayal of bystander apathy serves as a call to self-wakefulness, undeniable the audience to reassess their own role in systems of violence. Are they merely listeners, or do they have a moral task to Act? In blurring the lines between literature and realism, *Lights Out* transforms the stage into a space of principled quarrel, challenging manifestation long after the final scene fades into gloom.

The Role of Social annotations in *Lights Out*:

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* serves as a influential critique of societal structures that allow violence, standardize apathy, and buttress systems of power and disaffection. At its core, the play is not just about a remarkable act of violence but about the combined stoppage of society to respond to violence with urgency and dependability. Through its portrayal of middle-class lack of sympathy, patriarchal supremacy, and the ethical quandary of spectatorship, *Lights Out* exposes the inherent issues of authority, organize, and moral release that persevere in culture. The play critiques collective structures by illustrating how fighting operates within day by day seats, not as an irregularity but as a universal issue. The characters in *Lights Out* are not toothless in the conformist sense; they have the means to interfere, yet they choose not to, shimmering a troubling reality where freedom often breeds operating. This in force is defensible through various rationalizations—fear, objectivity, and acquiescence to the status quo—all of which underscore how persons become complicit in behind cycles of cruelty. By setting the play in an urban, middle-class family circle, Padmanabhan underscores how apathy is not limited to institutions of power but is extremely entrenched in household and social interactions.

Lights Out also resonates extremely with current issues of bloodshed, discrimination, and complete tyranny. The real-life occasion that stirred the play mirrors limitless instances of gender-based fighting, eyewitness lethargy, and institutional stoppage that continue to make headlines wide-reaching. Whether in luggage of public assaults where no one intervenes, the silence immediate household fighting, or the better total discount for marginalized communities, the play's themes stay behind alarmingly germane. The unwillingness of the font to act as mirrors in broader common tendencies to reserve oneself from not easy realities—whether through media expenditure, desensitization, or escaping of direct participation is being reflected. The normalization of aggression in the play echoes the way current societies often devour disaster as display, treat in great-world anguish as an intangible issue rather than a call to deed. Even today, *Lights Out* relies an vital and disturbing explanation on the human situation. As societies go on to fight with violence—whether in the form of gendered violence, supporting viciousness, or structural inequalities—the

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play military audiences to deal with their own role within these dynamics. The anxiety it evokes is not destined to give easy answers but to confront obedience, urging persons to think again the ethics of witnessing and the good accountability that comes with it. By property up a echo to society's failures, *Lights Out* ensures that its critique remains relevant, convincing audiences to question whether they, too, are merely spectators in a world where violence persists in unadorned sight.

Conclusion

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* presents a bleak and worrying examination of aggression, authority, and spectatorship, revealing the deep-seated lethargy that allows slaughter to persist unhindered. Through its typescript, the play critiques the normalization of violence and the moral dilemmas faced by those who eyewitness it yet select not to act. The relationship between power and passivity highlights how societal structures emphasize a culture of peace, where horror, objectivity, and self-defense take preference over moral accountability. By positioning both the characters and the audience as spectators, *Lights Out* challenges the decent limitations of witnessing violence, making the audience complicit in the very coldness it critiques. Beyond its immediate story, the play serves as weighty remarks on the human situation, revealing how folks downsize operating in the face of suffering. It forces audiences to confront difficult questions: When does hush become participation? How do public hierarchies say responses to fighting? And to what degree are individual's guilty for troublemaking cycles of tyranny? In the play *Lights Out*, Manjula Padamnabhan not only exposes mounting laziness amongst the so called educated community but also requirements to make addressees tell between its sin penalty. The play makes the booklover identify with the unknown principle of sensitizing them towards this nonchalance. In the world of increasing equipment when distances slowly but surely contract and up to date means of announcement have thinning the distances amongst the people, one thing is discouraging that people are wandering away from one an additional at the level of human race. By refusing to present promise or catharsis, Padmanabhan ensures that these questions stay behind, making *Lights Out* a profoundly challenging work that resonates beyond the period. Even decades after its symbols, the play remainder outstandingly relevant in modern-day speech. In a globe wherever acts of brutality—whether gendered, supporting, or universal—prolong to unfurl in full view, the themes of *Lights Out* continue to dare audiences to reassess their own roles as reflexive observers. Whether in the situation of media spending, public boredom, or the passerby outcome, the play compels expression on the ways in which responsibility manifests in everyday life. As societies maintain to great effort with issues of fighting and answerability, *Lights Out* stands as a vital text, influence folks to move away from spectatorship and on the way to consequential rendezvous with fair dealing and ethical dependability.

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