

# A DELINEATION OF SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES : A STUDY IN MAHESH DATTANI'S *DANCE LIKE A MAN*

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## ABSTRACT

Drama is a literary work. It is to be enacted on the stage. Indian Drama is based on the folk tradition, religious, rituals, and cultural elements. Mahesh Dattani was born in Bangalore in 7 August 1958. He has given a new approach to the Indian theatre. Always he has taken the invisible issues from society, to portray the reality of life through in his drama. Gender issues, Generation gap, Domination, Social issues, and Traditional values are some of the favourite subject with him. *Dance Like A Man* is a stage play in two acts. In play, Jairaj and Ratna began to be living with Amritlal. He was a father of Jairaj. He has controlled over the family. He disliked his son to be a dancer. It was the ambition of Jairaj. Jairaj pursues his heart desire becomes a good dancer. But Amritlal does not allow and he always supports to traditional values. Withal the play, Amritlal and Jairaj appears to be living in the different worlds. The play deals between three generations. In this play, Dattani examines human relationships and weakness framed by the age-old battle between tradition and youthful rebellion. Gender issues have been focused by Dattani in this play through the mirror of psychological ones, but the highlight is more on the family relationships.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender Issues, Generation Gap, Social Issues, and Domination.

Mahesh Dattani was born in Bangalore on August 7, 1958. He is a playwright, screenplay writer, dancer, actor, and teacher. His best plays include *Where There's A Will*, *Dance Like A Man*, *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Final Solutions*, *Night Queen*, *Do The Needful*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Seven Circles Round the Fire*, *The Swami and Winston*, and *Thirty Days in September*. Dattani's plays have received lot of comments from the media and audience. International Herald Tribune wrote that Dattani is 'one of India's best and most serious contemporary playwrights in English.

In Chowdiah Memorial Hall, *Dance Like A Man* was first performed, Bangalore on September 22, 1989. The first performance was directed by Mahesh Dattani. This play was performed at the NCPA Experimental Theatre, Mumbai. His *Dance Like A Man* has struck gold on stage directed by Lilette Dubey, has been running to

packed houses around the world for over eight years now, and the film, directed by Pamela Rooks, won the Best Feature Film Award in English at the National Film Festival.

The psychological conflict related with three generations is delivered within the dramatic structure. This play starts with a socio-cultural dimensions, psycho-cultural and psycho-psychological specified. This play includes a perfect study of human relationships as well as psychological affect. It shows with the lives of the people who feel completed and frustrated on account of surroundings and unfavorable situations. This play is expanded in time of past and present. According to Freud's Psychoanalytic theory, personality develops through a serious of stages, each characterized by a certain internal psychological conflict.

The psychoanalysis of the characters in *Dance Like A Man* is about the character of Jairaj affected by the problem of gender discrimination and patriarchal society. The opening scene of the play gives full information about social conditions and family background. Amritlal does not allow his daughter-in-law to dance. Because she learns the art of dance from devdasi. He fears of his family name will be spoiled. He also thinks that art is nothing. But Jairaj always respects dancers and their art. Amritlal dislikes Jairaj mixing with other dancers.

Amritlal makes some arrangements for Jairaj's dance performance. He is a kind of slave image. It is a reference, he is representing image from society. He wishes to make his son's happy but he has no courage to practice the art by family name and traditional values, and conventions of society. These are the chief concerns of Amritlal. Here Amritlal's character is compared to the character of Baroka from Wole Soyinka's *The Lion And The Jewel*. In both plays *Dance Like A Man* and *The Lion And The Jewel*, modernity is totally defeated. The two main characters Amritlal and Baroka are very careful in keeping their tradition. They cleverly plan and plot against their wishes. They preserve the nature, culture, and their name in society.

Jairaj finds for self-identity and self-esteem. The ethics of everyone wants the male should be earn. So Amritlal knew that dance would not help to earn money, not help to future. According to Amritlal, dance was good as well as hobby, but it was not a profession for male. Bharatnatyam originated from India in the state of Terminad. Dance, particularly Bharatnatyam is a beautiful art and spiritual art. But Indian society does not accept of a man being a dancer. Because a man must act like a man.

Jairaj and Ratna leave the house and after two days come back again. The plays *Dance Like A Man* finds the life of Jiaraj and how he loses his career, his dream, and his passion by concept of gender. According to Madhavi Verma,

Family is the center of his plays. He lays emphasis on family. He relates modern Indian families to contemporary realities and re-creates the character in their situations. (35)

The play proves that the psychological handling of a man by his wife and father. Jairaj suffers in two ways. Firstly, psychologically suppresses his desires and dreams. Secondly, social conditions also reasons for suffering in the life of Jairaj. So he is depressed totally.

JAIRAJ. You promised you would allow me to continue with my hobbies.

AMRITLAL. That was when you were a boy and dance was just a hobby. Grow up Jairaj

JAIRAJ. I don't want to grow up! You can't stop me from doing what I want.

AMRITLAL. As long as you are under my care. (26)

In a present, he is struggling to adjust with his wife. He replies his activities against his father and wife. Dance is Ratna's dream and soul. Only for this reason she marries Jairaj, because he will allow her to dance.

AMRITLAL. You can do a lot...

RATNA. I married him because he is a dancer...

AMRITLAL. Or did you marry him because he would let you dance?

RATNA. That too

AMRITLAL. More of that than the first.

RATNA. Well...yes (31)

Throughout the drama, dance became the main reason. Amritlal tries to control Jairaj's dance by Ratna's help. She ensures her father-in-law of trying to help him grow up.

AMRITLAL. Do you know where a man's happiness lies?

RATNA. No.

AMRITLAL. In being a man. Help me make him an adult. Help me to help him grow up.

RATNA. How?

AMRITLAL. Help me and I'll never prevent you from dancing. (32)

Here the character of Ratna is an ambitious lady. She has a negative side. She tries to be famous using dance as a tool. Bipin R. Parmar comments on the characters of Dattani as below:

His characters are fully rounded men and women, and guys with a past behind them. His characters are looked in the urban cosmopolitan setting of modern middle class India. His characters struggle for same kind of freedom and happiness under the weight of

tradition cultural construction of gender and repressed desire.

Ratna deserves Jairaj not as a dancer, and who does arrangements for his wife's dance programmes. Jairaj's son-in-law (Viswas) also faces the same problem by Lata (Jairaj's daughter). Viswas gives importance to his profession like takes care of his father's business, a mithai shop. This concept shows the male gender should be employed.

If Jairaj learns dance, he will appear a happy man in the end. He gives a message at the end, Man is imperfect. The play ends with following memorable words "We were only human. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God". (74) Jairaj and Ratna have succeeded as dancer, failed as human beings and as wife and husband. The study of Socio-Psychological perception helps the readers to better understanding of Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like A Man* centers on an individual's plight, shows past and present life of Jairaj. The title becomes clear in the light of the above. This kind of life is dancing like a man and God.

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