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Dance as a Tool in Mahesh Dattani's "*Dance like a Man*"

Dance Like a Man, is a two act play written by Mahesh Dattani .The title of the play *Dance Like a Man* clearly justifies the theme, revealing how postcolonial society dumping humanity and their aspects on gender identity. The analyzation on the play gives clear view on post-colonial society. Dattani was brilliant enough with handling characters in his play. In the play *Dance Like a Man* Dattani partially differentiate the major and minor characters and brilliantly weaves the thematic connection between them. The emotional co-ordination of major and minor characters through the theme of post-colonial India gives the play breath. The theme of the play sublimate the post-colonial backdrops. Critical analysis of the play responds to the post-colonial thematic structure, which Dattani projects through his characters on themes like gender crisis, suppression, oppression, communalism etc

Indian writing in English is a branch of English literature which is written by people in India or by Indian Citizens. Indian writing in English flourish in Post-colonial India. This

is the impact of British rule where people are made to learn English for military, political affairs and for trade. Writers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Markandaya, Sheikh Deen Mohammad (the first Indian English novelist). Indian writers like R.K. Narayan, Khushwant Singh, Kamala Surayya, Thakazhi Sivasankaran pillai etc uses simple English which will humorously and emotionally project the pain and life of their post-colonial story protagonist.

Mahesh Dattani is one among those Indian writing authors who uses his plays as a weapon to project frustration and hatred towards some of the unaccepted policies of post-colonial society. He was born on 7th August 1985, at Bangalore to a Gujarati family. He was inspired greatly by Gujarati playwright Madhu Rye's *Kumarni Agashi*. In 1986 Dattani wrote his full length play, *Where There is a Will*. He is a Sahitya academy winner, who founded the theater group called "Playpen" in 1984.

The major themes of Mahesh Dattani's plays are Oppression, Communalism, gender crisis, gay relation etc, His significant works like *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Mango Soufflé*, *Dance Like a Man* speaks on sexuality. *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *Mango Soufflé* openly speaks on gay relation. Where *Dance Like a Man* speaks on oppression by sublimated society. *Dance Like a Man* is the real life story of Mahesh Dattani's, in which the characters life is created based on Dattani's real life guru of upper caste who takes classical art as their carrier during 50's.

The play opens with third row family line of Amritlal family who is a freedom fighter and a rich man who controls his jobless Bharathanatya dancer son and daughter in law Jaij and Ratna. He is a strict father who concerns the ideas of society. Though he got National freedom but failed to provide the real freedom to his son. He hates the guru of his son with long hair teaching the classical art with the feminine attitude, so he prohibits his son from learning classical dance on fear that learning classical dance will lead his son Jaij to

become effeminate and it will vanish his manliness. His hatred towards the guru shows the portrait of post independent society and its views on Bharathanatiam as the art of whore. He even argues with his son Jairaj. According to Amritlal a man should earn money and has to be the head of the family and should possess great manliness. The society in which Amritlal lives consider dancing as the work of prostitutes. He even forbids Ratna his daughter in law to visit the old Devadasi who teaches her dance. On other hand Amritlal is unbearable on the sounds of the bells which creates while practicing and consider the old devadasi home as a Brothel center where the art of prostitution were being taught

Amritlal at a point seeks the help of Ratna with a deal that if she helps him to get out Jairaj from his passion, he will allow Ratna to continue her carrier and this deal will help him to turn his son into a complete man possess "Manliness". He consider his son as a kid who will argues and fight to attain their wish happen. Ratna is very much pleased with the deal thrown by Amritlal. This deal will, for sure helps Ratna to humiliate and dominate Jairaj and she can shine and she can be a star in her field without any rival. She even married Jairaj for her own benefit. Women in post-Independence had not attained the full freedom to think and act so if she marry a man in her line she may receive the support, but the marriage of Jairaj and Ratna is a failure project. Ratna shows no sentiment towards her husband and sometimes on her children too. She gave high dose opium to her son Shanker so that she can go and perform the dance which resulted in the death of her son. She even looks her daughter as a medium to fulfill her dream and also to earn money and fame.

Ratna even humiliates Jairaj and questions his manliness. She is a selfish, self-adoring woman who made Jairaj as her prey to fulfill her desire. She gave Jairaj a meaningless life. She even destroys her own happiness. It is hard to satisfy a woman like Ratna. She not only designs her life but also forcefully designed others life too. She even knows that Jairaj is a Loving capable 'Man' but denies to accept in order to mutilate the life of Jairaj, fearing he

will become the rival to her in her field. She discourages Jairaj the more that he becomes the biggest coward who can't stand on his own. From all the oppression Jairaj is on single track to continue his passion. He needs a real freedom from his father. But in the third generation Latha was independent her main goal is to become a popular figure in dance field. She has not compared anyone with her, all she loves is her dance, her parents, and Vishwas. She treats her father the same way she treats her mother. She is away from over ambition. She openly declared to Vishwas that her parents are keen on her career and not on her marriage and it is also cleared that she hates tears, sorrow, miseries she looks life in positive way she wants to enjoy her life. She even reveals that she will not be like her parents when she becomes a parent.

Mahesh Dattani weaves the pattern of major and minor characters in a brilliant way. The major characters underlie the minor characters. There will be no strong emotional backdrops in the play without minor characters. Both major and minor characters show the same sympathy and frustration towards the post-colonial theme oppression. The minor characters of the play like the Old Devadasi and The Gurus were highly humiliated by the major character Amritlal. But major characters like Ratna and Jairaj were highly admired by those minor characters because of their passion. The magic of Dattani's play laid on his beautiful presentation of his characters and their realistic dialogues.

Treatment of post-colonialism were highly found in Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*. Post-colonial themes like political affairs, bounded culture, cultural hegemony, gender roles, materialism were treated in his play *Dance Like a Man*.

There is quite ups and downs in the characters of *Dance Like a Man*. The male characters were projected different views and female equally projects their thirst for achievement. Amritlal is a controllable as well as loving father but fail to present is a orthodox rich, freedom fighter lived for society and its idea failed to produce freedom to his family where else jairaj who is a fainted classical dancer becomes buffoon by his own wife.

Vishwas is a young modern society man who will encourage his lover Latha for her success in her passion.

In the female characters the Old Devadasi had enough for her carrier as a bharathanatiam preacher faced many criticism and at last holds her title “Prostitute”. Ratna wife of Jairaj to attain her wish of becoming famous classical icon married Jairaj who totally ruined his life for her benefit. Latha on other hand is independent, sportive self-motivating women moving her life without comparison.

Dance like a Man provides certain question on whether the world is still in psychological growth. The close study of the play reveals that not only women falls as victims of gender discrimination but also man, not only lower-class suffered but also higher. Through the character of Ratna, Mahesh Dattani presents how frustrations turns into agony, anger, and ambitious. We can read fear, anxiety, sexuality, ambition, aim, and pain in the characters of Mahesh dattani’s dance a man. Ratna was once controlled by Amritlal which later turns into complete freedom and suppression on male gender. Both Ratna and Amritlal crushed the soul of Jairaj. Dattani draws the gender variations through the three generation play Dance like a Man. This play gives new definition to feminism, sexuality and gender role which emotionally touched the readers and from bottom of the heart they show their pity towards Jairaj. Dance like a man is the “Art of emotions, a new form of discrimination, the question on sexuality, Socio cultural conflicts etc which is neither attached to class nor to gender but is a pure form of art.

For short *Dance Like a Man* is a same wave travels to the same directions with different length and frequency. The play gives the essence of post-colonial India with the taste of classism in it. Dattani showed marginal and social issues through his characters in this play.

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