



Contextualizing Male and Female Torment and Trauma in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*

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Article History Received: 12 July 2023 Revised: 10 September 2023 Accepted: 15 Oct 2023	Abstract. The purpose of this study is to examine the Male and Female elements in Mahesh Dattani's plays. The research examines how gender roles, expectations, and male, female character empowerment is portrayed in a particular aspect of Indian society. By exploring the struggles, choices, and agency of the characters, this study seeks to shed light on the play's contribution to male and female elements. " <i>Dance Like a Man</i> " by Mahesh Dattani examines the complex relationships between gender roles, cultural expectations, agency, and identity against the backdrop of Indian culture. The rise of male pain and suffering has spread throughout the world. This study is focused on the issues of women and men, which are deteriorating determination through the dramatic characters of Mahesh Dattani. While dramatic characters are not tangible life characters. But absolutely a mirror of authentic characters. One is frequently inspired in day-to-day life by reading a book, it begins to apply the same principles to our daily lives. This research shows that this is the main reason for the great majority of disastrous decisions in families. The play both female and male components are critically analyzed in this research, along with how the decisions made by the female and male characters affected their own lives and interpersonal relationships. By utilizing a thorough reading of the text, this study seeks to illuminate the nuanced layers of gender features that are depicted in " <i>Dance Like a Man</i> ". Keywords: pain, disastrous, desire, identity, female, male
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1 Research context

My Research is based on the selected play of Mahesh Dattani with outstanding reference to present society about male and female pain and suffering in the selected play in *Dance Like a Man*.

The Research explores the conflicts of desire and dreams of the female and male characters.

Especially, gender roles for them to display and conquer the social expectations and aims of problems that influence their lives.

2 Introduction

Indian dramatist Mahesh Dattani is well recognized for his understanding and insightful depiction of men's and women's lives. His plays frequently address both female and male-related issues including gender inequality, empowerment, and the

difficulties of juggling a family and a job. He is a well-known dramatist from India who has written a lot about the experiences of women and men in Indian culture. His work *Dance Like a Man* is praised for its potent analysis of pain and for providing insights into both men's and women's suffering.

Mahesh Dattani examines the painful issue and designs a universe of optimism where mistakes can be made right and rebirth. But none of this would be possible without the willingness of another male to assist the two women in burying their tragic pasts and reviving their present.

The topics of gender, performance, and patriarchy are examined in Mahesh Dattani's play *Dance Like a Man*. In order to impress his family and society, Jairaj—a guy who must adhere to traditional gender roles—is the subject of the play. Ratna, Jairaj's wife, actively rejects traditional gender roles and supports Jairaj in being genuine to himself.

This study investigates how women are portrayed and feminist themes in Mahesh Dattani's plays. This paper is primarily concerned with the play *Dance Like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani. A theoretical framework called psycho-feminist explores the points where psychology.

"*Dance Like a Man*" is a fascinating discussion about familial relationships and personal goals against the background of dancing, tradition, and social pressure. By analyzing the play's feminist elements and revealing the female characters' difficulties and victories as they navigate their identities within a patriarchal framework, this study intends to shed light on the play's feminist themes.

3 Related Work

Borkar S.A (2022) asserts in a paper titled Scrutiny of Mahesh Dattani's 'Dance' in "*Dance Like a Man*" from Judith Butler's Perspective. This paper analyzes one character leave from this voyage as the victor, while the other emerges as the loser.

Deka, Diganta (2022) explores the Newly 'constructed masculinity' in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*. The critic observes that the current study aims to examine how the play's depiction of a family unit with generational gaps affects conversations about masculinity, patriarchal hegemony, and gender creation.

Abhijeet Nanasaheb Pawar (2022) in her article titled 'The Social Construction of Gender in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance like a Man*.' The critical lens of a man's identity defines his sexuality and area of jobs. His gender position as a construct of society is strained by doing women's work. Man's preference for female activities like dance may thus be criticized by society. Through his play "Dance like a Man," Mahesh Dattani addressed the issue of the social construction of gender that had removed and exploited the male protagonist from his art of Bharatnatyam dancing.

Arup Kumar Bag (2021) observes in his study 'Performance and Identity': Exploring the Idea of 'Gender Performativity' through a Comparative Study of Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* and Rituparno Ghosh's *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*. The researcher's lens on the Characters' Problems with Understanding Their Real Identity and Attachment to the War of Sexual Limitations. This essay compares and contrasts the two texts: the way they strive to depict the concept of Performativity through their perception of the self leaves a theoretical vacuum in our knowledge and research.

Mukherjee, Shauli (2021) states in his paper titled The Representation of Patriarchal Hegemony in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*, In the words of the critic, this study depicts the struggle of a man who aspires to be a skilled dancer in a society that considers dance to be exclusively the domain of women.

Amlan Roy Pramanik explores beautifully in his article titled "*Dance like a Man* beyond the Discourse of Gender": Relocating the tragedy of Jairaj in the circumscribed world of politics and power. He attempts to examine Dattani's seminal work *Dance Like a Man* moving beyond gender-oriented approaches and aiming at a detailed critical study of Jairaj, leading to his tragedy, as a subject and victim of multiple types of different social apparatus in addition to his own incompetence in a world of fundamentalism.

Chhavi, R. Bhushan (2020) describes and explores in their research article titled Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*: A Depiction of the Trials and Tribulations of an Androgynous Personality. A man who exhibits transgender qualities, not a woman, is the victim of patriarchal conventions.

Jaitra Bharati (2019) in the article "Analysis" Performing Identity: Gendered Bodies in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*, criticizes the social normalization of gender roles and the gender order. Her work makes an effort to analyze how gender roles are repeated in patriarchal institutions like dance, family, and kinship in order to deconstruct the performative nature of gender by pointing out the shortcomings of such repetition makes everyone embarrassed.

Pinaki Ranjan Das (2014) presents his observations in his paper (Un)-Doing Gender: Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* in Perspective. The critic observes the distinction of complication Indian Society in *Dance Like a Man*. It portrays the father and son's controversy in the select play of Mahesh Dattani.

Sen, A. (2012) attempts to explore the article Looking Back, Looking Forward: Examining Pre-Colonial Identities in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*. Mahesh Dattani's art makes a great deal of pre-colonial art styles and its applicability to postcolonial India.

4 Significant of the Research

This study article tries to give a better comprehension of how the play depicts Male and female suffering and agony. This research aims to add to the continuing conversation about delicate subjects in literature and society by analysing narrative strategies, character development, and societal impacts. This paper aims to successfully analyse the female's and male anguish that is depicted in the chosen plays. This study analyses thematic concerns and critical investigation within the context of the plays is essential. The main reason for conducting this research is that in contemporary times, making a decision in the family is deteriorating day by day, people are living an isolated life.

5 Research problems

The purpose of the current study is to provide answers to the following research questions.

How is the psychological suffering of men and women in Indian society explored in the plays?

What are the many types of female and male suffering that are shown in the plays?

What connections exist between the characters' experiences of female and male torture and their identities?

How much impact does the play's portrayal of female and Male anguish have on modern Indian society?

6 The hypothesis of the Research

The investigation has contributed to the following hypotheses:

To significant influence on Mahesh Dattani's torment characters. In his play, Mahesh Dattani reflects on his current existence. Mahesh Dattani's plays and characters tackle current topics context of characters' struggle for desire and passion, the marginalization of female and Male characters, gender discrimination, and conflict between the old and young generations.

7 Objective of the study

To understand the terrible situation the protagonists in Mahesh Dattani's chosen plays are in.

To talk about the protagonists' emotional pain and misery in a chosen plays by Mahesh Dattani.

To analyze Mahesh Dattani's plays in light of how he exposes the difficulties of female and male characters in various social, political, and family-related contexts.

To evaluate how patriarchal characters behave in present Indian society and how some dramatic works portray it.

To analyze the character's current attitudes and behaviors in the chosen plays.

The ultimate objective is to create empathy, awareness, and understanding.

8 Methodology

The research methodology with the help of various printed and electronic primary and secondary sources of Mahesh Dattani and his works. The research technique used for the current study is descriptive, explanatory, analytical, and critical methods. The information is examined and critically analyzed to illustrate female determination in a few of Dattani's works. Mahesh Dattani's selected plays have been examined in the context of torment and suffering. To identify how they represent women and men explore themes. This paper to interpret the plays and identify how they challenge traditional patriarchal representations of men and women. To gather helpful information, many databases including JSTOR, Project Muse, ProQuest, Shodhganga, etc., have been consulted. Similarly, secondary sources have been collected from many different kinds of libraries.

9 Discussion

Mahesh Dattani is considered to be one of the greatest modern playwrights in India. His description has significant various characteristics in his works. His work is the most powerful and enriched in the current Indian-English Dramatic World. His works include some significant components like struggles, Male and female relationships, and crucifixion.

In the words of Kuthari Chaudhuri, "*Dance Like a Man* is a play that deals with one of Dattani's pet concerns – gender –through one of his principal passions, dance." (Chaudhuri, Asha Kumari, 2005). Through a recurring theme of highly unique yet peculiar to Indian culture "classical dance," he has illustrated the intricacies, problems, and complexity of an Indian house. He chose to focus on classical dance as the main topic as a result of studying Bharatanatyam in his early 20s.

The 1989 play *Dance Like a Man* dramatizes "dance" with all of its implicit implications, including dance as a career, a passion, a quest for identity, ambition, revolt, manipulation, an object of the male eye, and finally, dance as a powerful decider of gender identity. (Konar, Ankur, 2018). Gender systems were developed as a result of the social roles that men and women play in relation to one another in that culture. (Warnecke, T., 2013). The cultural performative value of "Dance" in the play has an impact on the lives of Jairaj, Ratna, and even Amritlal. In her 1990 book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues "Identity is performatively constituted by the

very "expression" that are said to be its results." Therefore, gender is social and sex is biological. (Butler, Judith, 1990 p.24,25).

Mahesh Dattani discusses the issue of truthful life situations as an important scope of Indian English Drama. His works touch upon the sentiments and the audience. *Dance like a man* is one of the main themes of the play in the method in which potential is flourished by those in positions of authority, especially in the context of gender. It includes the traditional dance structure such as Bharathanatium. Dattani is a great modern dramatist who has fortunately performed his plays in India. He observes an important attitude among specific remarkable playwrights and Indian dramatic writers like Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad, and Vijay Tendulkar who aim to gain and development of Indian Theatre. *Dance Like a Man* tries the traditional dance structure Bharathanatium.

Being a man in traditional Indian society follows rules, which are addressed in *Dance Like Man*. It is an illustration of India's recent society and ancient history. While the real drama is about a dancer, subjectivities are important in emotional social dancing.

Dattani attempts to destroy the standardized and shows his characters in the prevalent world. In the world, stereotypes are structured by the society. It also illustrates the attitude of those who are marginal and weak and oppression of social norms.

In Mahesh Dattani's play *Dance Like a Man*, Ratna is a deep and sad character. She is a brilliant dancer who must live a lie due to her gender. Ratna's suffering is caused by two things: the inability to completely express herself with dance, and the pressure to fit into a conventional feminine position that she does not identify with.

Ratna's passion for dancing is shown early in the play. She is able to entirely become herself in the art form and is said to be "possessed" by dancing. Ratna's fascination with dancing, however, is also her downfall. Dance, according to her father Amritlal Parekh, is "not for men." He is a typical Gujarati guy. He prevents Ratna from dancing, and when she ignores him, he even slaps her.

A young dancer named Jairaj, who is likewise madly in love with dance, is involved with Ratna, adding to her misery. In addition to having to live a lie due to his gender, Jairaj is a transgender guy. In one other's company, Jairaj and Ratna find consolation since they deeply comprehend one another's suffering. The two of them, however, are destined to break up from the beginning. Jairaj understands that he can never genuinely be Ratna's spouse since Ratna's father would never accept him. This is clear from his plays, as the quote that follows indicates, *Dance Like a Man*. Amritlal informs Jairaj, his son:

AMRITLAL. "I thought it was just a fancy of yours. I would have made a cricket pitch for you on our lawn if you were interested in cricket. Well, most boys are interested in cricket, my son is interested in Dance, I thought. I didn't realize this interest of yours would turn into an...obsession." (Dattani 414)

Amritlal responds to her daughter-in-law, saying:

AMRITLAL. "A woman in a man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a women's world is pathetic." (Dattani 427)

Ratna's suffering results in her demise. She kills herself after her father rejects her because of her love for Jairaj. Ratna's passing serves as a terrible reminder of the price some individuals have to pay for following their hearts. The character of Ratna's inner conflict

Ratna: "I'm a dancer's daughter. I don't just like a dance. I love to dance. But it's a habit now—living up to their expectations.

"I'm a dancer's daughter. I don't just like dance. I love dance. But it's a habit now—living up to their expectations. (Dattani)

Ratna's suffering is greatly affected by Amritlal Parekh, a complicated figure. He is an old-fashioned Gujarati man who thinks dancing is "not for men." Ratna is prohibited from dancing, and he even threatens to beat her if she disobeys him. The gender roles that are still prominent in many modern civilizations are reflected in Amritlal's opinions on dancing. He thinks that males shouldn't dance to show their feelings; rather, they should be tough and stern.

Amritlal Parekh was irritated by his son's lack of extravagant attire, long hair, and constant dancing practice. Although he dislikes his daughter-in-law joining a Devadasi to learn this style of art. He forced his son to obey and rejected his son's confidence in him.

Amritlal Parekh had clear control over Jairaj and Ratna in the Indian household that Dattani portrays. Being the leader of the family, Parekh announced himself to be in charge of making major decisions for the whole family. He is a reformer and a warrior for freedom, yet he is also cautious and conservative. He was helping India liberate itself from British rule. Ironically, he maintained strict rules and controls over the preferences of his own kid. He denies his son's desire to pursue his dream of becoming a Bharatnatyam dancer. "Do you know where a man's happiness lies? In being a Man".

Ratna is severely harmed by Amritlal's deeds. They ultimately result in her suicide since they make her deny her actual self. The pitfalls of conventional gender norms are highlighted through Amritlal's character. Rigid gender standards can cause people to suffer greatly when they are compelled to conform.

In *Dance Like a Man*, Lata is a significant major character. She is Ratna's daughter, and a superb dancer at that. In contrast to Ratna, Lata is more receptive to adhering to socially prescribed gender norms. She marries a man who is unsupportive of her dancing, and she finally puts up her profession to focus on raising a family.

Ratna's character is contrasted with that of Lata. She demonstrates how women may succeed in conventional positions, but she also highlights the compromises that these roles frequently require of women. The experience of Lata serves as a reminder that there is no one ideal way to be a woman. If women are authentic to who they are, they can succeed in any role they choose.

Lata is a daughter of Jairaj. She is an artistic girl. She is realistic and sensible. She loves Viswas and desires to marry him. Viswas is an ordinary person. He does not know about the art of dance. His father is an Industrialist. She also suffering for her life. Her immense talent skill strained by her parents. However, Lata and her parents conflict to keep the still structure alive. The form of connection between three generations. The discussion between Lata and Viswas makes it evident that "dance" plays a significant role in shaping both their family and personal identities:

VISWAS. Why? Aren't they anxious to know who their lovely Lata is marrying?

LATA. Actually, they could not care less who or what you are. As long as you let me dance.

VISWAS. Hmm. And what if I whisk you away to Dubai and sell you to a sheikh?

LATA. Well, at least I'll be dancing in his harem! No, seriously, they are not worried. (Dattani 4)

Female relationship is the most significant due to economic development, Westernization culture, and people's lives. D.H. Lawrence observes that the eminent relationship between people will be a link between men and women. The connection between man with man, woman with woman parent and child will always be subordinate. (D.H.Lawrence 130).

The subject of gender discrimination which scope to discuss the characters. In the words of Butler, gender is performative and the intention that gender is narrativity

describes how such a gender activity shows the growth of identity of gender. Butler Comments on her essays Performative Acts and Performative Acts and Gender Constitution. Her argues that

“Gender reality is performative which means,
quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that
it is performed” (Butler)

She completely describes the gender concepts like woman and man. Her message proves to be acts and identity.

At the very end of the play, Jairaj, the main character, and his wife move into a "posh flat" to live a quiet life for the few years they have left. There's little indication that Lata would stick to her pledge to her parents, even if they wanted her to and adored her for dancing. Putting the drawbacks aside, Dattani closes the play with a picture of a perfectly content young Ratna and Jairaj smiling and getting ready to dance. Seeing his deceased wife approach him gradually, the deceased Jairaj utters these words.

We dance Perfectly. In unison. Not missing a step or a beat. We talk and laugh at all the mistakes we made in our previous dances.... We are only himan. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God.
(Dattani 2006)

Bharati lens that in this context “dance “illustrates societal norms that should be performed. In the sense of “artistic performance and conventional norms.” (Bharathi)

Dance Like a Man tackles the struggle between society and art. It also emphasizes the conflict that is present between the artists themselves. In Amritlal Parekh's residence, limited Jairaj and Ratna are practicing dancing moves. He is a reformer and a freedom fighter, but he suppresses his son's freedom.

10 Conclusion

In the end, Mahesh Dattani gives a message in *Dance Like a Man* exploring the pain and suffering of the protagonists Jairaj and Ratna who overcome oppression and are about to find fulfilment and independence. The play also addresses gender equality the major theme in *Dance Like a Man*.

The gender roles that are still common in many communities today are sharply criticized by Ratna's persona. She serves as a reminder that gender is a social construct and that everyone has the right to express themselves in whichever way, they see fit. The tale of Ratna serves as a warning on the perils of lying. When people are compelled to hide their actual selves, it can cause them immense hardship.

A powerful drama called *Dance Like a Man* examines gender, identity, and the suffering of living a lie. The terrible example of Ratna's persona serves as a tragic reminder of the cost that some individuals suffer when they live their truth. Her experience serves as a warning about the risks associated with conventional gender norms. When people feel obligated to hide their actual selves, it can bring them immense difficulties.

Discussing dance's place in society, this work also poses significant issues. Is it possible that everyone may appreciate it as a form of art? Although it doesn't offer simple solutions to these issues, *Dance Like a Man* does serve as an inspiration for a much-needed discussion about the significance of dancing in our lives.

Mahesh Dattani's *'Dance Like a Man'* could delve into how struggles, aspirations, and agency of women and men in Indian society. This would involve analyzing how the play's challenge or support existing gender stereotypes and expectations. as well as the journeys of the characters, relationships, and the social limits that they face.

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