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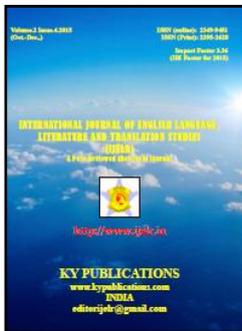
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RELATIONSHIP DILEMMA IN MAHESH DATTANI'S *DANCE LIKE A MAN*

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ABSTRACT

Mahesh Dattani is the most powerful dramatist in the present Indian English dramatic world. He has enriched and embellished tradition of Indian Drama with his experiments and innovations. He takes up serious problems existing in urban India. His plays contain some important elements like human pathos, passions, conflict and appeal to human sentiment, which can immediately touch and stir common audience.

In *Dance Like A Man*,Jairaj and Ratna seemed to be living with Jairaj's father named Amritlal who has full control over the family and always wanted his son to be under his own control and never wanted his son to be a dancer which was the ambition of Jairaj. Jairaj follows his heart's desire and becomes a dancer but has enraged his father in this process. Amritlal upholds the traditional values, whereas his son Jairaj, seeks to overthrow it through his course of action. In the play *Dance Like a Man*, Dattani examines interpersonal human relationship within the range of familial territory.

Keywords: Mahesh Dattani, Family, Relationship, traditional values

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INTRODUCTION

Mahesh Dattani is the most powerful dramatist in the present Indian English dramatic world.He has enriched and embellished tradition of Indian Drama with his experiments and innovations. With the arrival of Mahesh Dattani on the literary scene, the scenario begins to change. His plays are originally written in English.He has authored a good number of dramas diverse in themes, techniques and devices. Moreover, his plays have been produced on the stage very successfully.

Dattani's plays are dramatic reflections on the anxiety and restraints of the commoners. He dramatizes common man's efforts to have space and respect in society. He writes about the society and surroundings in which he lives. In this way, his dramatic art is the faithful and authentic expression of his first hand experience and knowledge of socio-cultural environment in which he breathes and lives.

His presentation of problems from real life situations is significant contribution to Indian English Drama. Among modern Indian playwrights, he stands forth with singular distinctness, striking artistic perception, and immense dramatic guts. He is the most serious contemporary dramatist in Indian drama in English. He takes up serious problems existing in urban India. His plays contain some important elements like human pathos, passions, conflict and appeal to human sentiment, which can immediately touch and stir common audience.

His Plays

The Stage Plays

- Where There's a Will – 1988
- *Dance Like a Man* – 1989
- Tara – 1990
- Bravely Fought the Queen – 1991
- Final Solutions - 1992-93
- On a Muggy Night in Mumbai – 1998
- Thirty Days in September – 2001

The Radio Plays

- Do the Needful – 1997
- Seven Steps Around the Fire – 1998
- The Swami and Winston – 2000
- A Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child – 2000
- Clearing the Rubble – 2000
- Uma and the Fairy Queen – 2003

The Screen Plays

- Mango Souffl... - 2002
- Morning Raga – 2004
- Ek Alag Mausam - 2005

Dance Like A Man

In *Dance Like A Man*, Jairaj and Ratna seemed to be living with Jairaj's father named Amritlal who has full control over the family and always wanted his son to be under his own control and never wanted his son to be a dancer which was the ambition of Jairaj. Jairaj follows his heart's desire and becomes a dancer but has enraged his father in this process. Amritlal upholds the traditional values, whereas his son Jairaj, seeks to overthrow it through his course of action.

Throughout the play, the old man and his son appears to be living in the different worlds without any interaction. Amritlal is an autocratic father who does not try to understand the emotions, the aspirations and the problems of his own son. He does not like his son's passion towards dance. The father pursues the traditional values, whereas the son tracks the modern outlook.

Jairaj's daughter Lata is an aspiring and promising young dancer. She is a great talented girl who is greatly affected by the thwarted ambitions and frustrations of her parent's youth and expectations they place upon her. Through Lata, her parents struggle to keep the art form alive. The play forms a link between three generations.

RELATIONSHIP DILEMMA IN *DANCE LIKE A MAN*

Now-a-days this theme becomes more important due to rapid industrialization, and the westernization of attitudes and lives of the people. D. H. Lawrence points out that the great relationship for humanity will always be the relationship between man and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child will always subsidiary. (D.H. Lawrence 130).

Family is not only an important constituent of Indian society but the nerve centre of Indian life. Mahesh Dattani examines the relationship among the members of the family with accuracy and

authenticity. Family relationship can be defined as the way in which a person is related to somebody else in the family. How they behave towards each other, how they affect each other, or how they are similar to each other, all this falls within the ambit of a family relationship.

The play *Dance Like a Man*, a stage play in two acts, is one of the most wonderful dramatic creations of Mahesh Dattani. The stage performance of the play has earned a critical acclaim in India and abroad. In this play, Dattani explores pathos of human predicament in the subtlest way. It embodies a brilliant study of human relationships as well as human weaknesses. The play depicts the clash between issues such as marriage, career and the place of a woman in patriarchal social set up. It deals with the lives of the people who feel exhausted and frustrated on account of the hostile surroundings and unfavorable circumstances. The story is unfolded in time past and time present.

The play encapsulates their present tension and past struggle as well as their present efforts and past discontentment. They reflect upon their past struggle, success and failures as the dancers. This unveils seeming harmony between the two and puts forth a marriage discord and domestic conflict that forms the substance of the play. The opening scene of the play provides important information about all the people of the play and their social and family background.

Amritlal does not like his daughter-in-law Ratna learning the art of dance with the association of devdasi. He fears of his family reputation being spoiled. He also thinks that they have nothing to do with their art. But Jairaj has high regard and respects for them and their art. Amritlal has no heart for art. He speaks about art very contemptuously. He forbids Jairaj mixing with other dancers. The clash between the father and son symbolizes the clash between tradition and modernity.

Amritlal was a loving father as he makes arrangements for his son's dance but he cannot adjust himself with the ideas that his son wants to adopt dancing as a profession. Family name and social recognition are the chief concerns for Amritlal Parekh, but for his son Jairaj, they are the obstacle in carving his self identity. He yields but does not kill his own desire. He craves for self identity and self esteem.

In the society everyone wants the male to earn that much so that the house would run properly but Amritlal knew that dance would not help Jairaj to earn enough money and that would make him unworthy in the eyes of his wife Ratna. For Amritlal, dance was good as far as it remains a hobby but it was not proper to be taken as a profession.

Jairaj and his wife Ratna leaves the house as a protest against the traditional notions and restrictions imposed upon them by Amritlal. Jairaj makes himself free from the clutches of his autocratic father. He does not want to stay even a minute further and resolves to never set foot in the house again. They go away throwing old restrictions to the wind. His determination and tenacity to adhere to what he wishes to do compel him to leave the house.

Jairaj have realized that the house of their autocratic father is better than the world that exists outside. After two days, he returns back to his father's house. He never makes a compromise with the state of affairs knuckling under the power of his father who exploits the situation to curtail Jairaj's individual freedom. However he continues to hate his father's guts till the end of the story. After his father's death, he removes the gardening to show his hatred for his father. Thus the relation between the son and father shows a crucial one as it focuses on the question of inherited values and assumptions. It becomes a microcosm of the debate between the generations.

Jairaj suffers in two ways. Firstly, patriarchal power suppresses his desires and dreams. Secondly, social prejudice also causes turmoil and suffering in the life of Jairaj. So, his self is divided and pride is wounded. He is anguished and depressed. Critically speaking, the play is a tragedy of human soul. Jairaj's soul falls to pieces. He is constantly shown at war. The shift in past shows his clash with his father and in present, he is struggling to adjust with his wife. He expresses his grievances against his father and wife.

Ratna loses her faith in Jairaj and she is no longer proud of her husband after Jairaj's return to his ancestral abode. Her passion for dance makes her to go to an extent of betraying her husband when she assures her father in law of trying her level best to help him grow up. At that time it is realized that Ratna is a

ambitious lady. Dance is her dream and soul. She marries Jairaj only for the reason that he will allow her to dance. Behind, all her moves in the drama, dance became the main factor. Her character has a negative shade. She follows her heart overpowered by mind and tries to be famous using dance as a medium.

Throughout the play Jairaj appears as one who suffers on account of choosing his own path. His portrayal is so noble that he never blames Ratna for the death of their son Shankar that was the result of her carelessness. Opposite to general understanding or expectation here Amritlal tries to control Jairaj's passion for traditional dance and for that takes her help. This play witnesses the psychological manipulation of a man by his wife and father.

Amritlal also tries to control the movement and manners of Ratna. In this way, the clash between the tradition and the modernity is heightened through the conflict between Amritlal and Ratna. Amritlal knows that Ratna is going to visit a devdasi instead of going to temple.

Amritlal: You know very well where, because that's where you go every Monday! (Ratna does not respond.) It was fortunate for me that it was Patel who saw you going there. I can trust him to keep his mouth shut. He called me, out of concern for our family name.

Ratna: I haven't done anything to spoil the family name. (DLM: 419)

Further,

Ratna: Yes. My husband knows where I go and have his permission.

Amritlal: Your husband happens to be my son. And you are both under my care. It is my permission that you should ask for (DLM: 420)

The play shows how patriarchal social set up deprives the other members of the families from being celebrity as a dancer. Ratna couldn't be a famous dancer under the patriarchal powers exercised by her father-in-law. Dattani seems to assert that individual talent can never flourish under the domination of patriarchal family system. Ratna thwarts in her dream of being celebrity. After the death of Amritlal Parekh, her daughter Lata has become an excellent star of *bharatnatyam*.

CONCLUSION

Dattani wants to depict the society that a father should not remain as a barrier in the path of their son's ambition and moreover the parents must not force their aims and desires on their children. If a man or woman fails to identify himself or herself with the spouse, marriage becomes hellish. There must be strong bond of relationship between the husband and wife. They must overcome all sorts of problems in their life. In the play *Dance Like a Man*, Dattani examines interpersonal human relationship within the range of familial territory.

The theme of clash between tradition and modernity has already been assessed by a number of authors, but Dattani has provided a variety and vividness to this theme. *Dance Like a Man* has been hailed as wonderful and engrossing play. The play displays its deep concern for family harmony and approach for a social reformation, which makes it a unique piece of art. The play ends with a compromising tone. They survive by making compromise with their revolutionary and rebellious spirit.

Dance Like a Man has been hailed as wonderful and engrossing play. The play displays its deep concern for family harmony and approach for a social reformation, which makes it a unique piece of art. The play ends with a compromising tone. They survive by making compromise with their revolutionary and rebellious spirit. 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." (DLM: 447)

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