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**Individual and Society in Mahesh Dattani's Play: 'Dance Like a Man'**

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**Abstract-** Mahesh Dattani's play '*Dance like a Man*' raises questions and concerns about gender stereotypes and patriarchal society. A man in a patriarchal society is always looked upon when he chooses profession by which he is not tagged as effeminate in nature. In this play Jairaj the protagonist of the play is all set to oppose and break the stereotypes of gender role. The play brings to light that it is not only the women in patriarchal society facing tyranny of such evil discrimination of gender role but also men which is rarely expressed. It is not often seen in a patriarchal society that a woman dominates a man but in this play we also see Ratna's dominating attitude towards Jairaj and same is seen with Lata's slightly dominating attitude towards her fiancé Vishwas.

The basic question that arises before audience in Dattani's play "Dance like a Man" is that, in a patriarchal society where dance as a profession is considered to be profession of women; can a man in a patriarchal society take dance as a profession? The focus of this research article is that the hurdles faced by a man when he chooses a profession that opposes the stereotypes associated with 'gender role'. The play reflects on the individuals' self and the significance of the society that can be considered as 'the other'. Dattani's play is successful in bringing upon the several social prejudices and exposing the gender biases even in educated and urban localities. It also exposes a hypocrite patriarchal society where making individual choices and breaking of gender stereotypes is not socially acceptable.

**Key words:** Gender bias, Gender Stereotypes, Hypocrisy, Patriarchal society.

**Introduction:** The play begins with Lata and Vishwas having a conversation about their marriage. Lata informs Vishwas about her grandfather's house and in the same house her parents Jairaj and Ratna spent their lives dancing and practicing. Vishwas is astonished by seeing such a big and spacious house, he suggests Lata to sell the house but Lata makes it clear to Vishwas that the house cannot be sold at any cost as there is presence of a lot of sentimental attachments with it. Jairaj has bonding with that house but he is always been blamed by his father for being a dancer which was not accepted by him. Despite of the differences between Jairaj and his father, Jairaj respected his father. Jairaj and Ratna are both equally passionate about dance. This is not liked and encouraged by the father- Amritlal. However, Jairaj allows his wife Ratna to pursue her dream.

As the play develops Ratna gets worried about her daughter's dance performance that was to be held the same evening with President of India and Foreign Diplomats as chief guests. Ratna is agitated about Lata's career as a dancer. Both Jairaj and Ratna are exasperated as they were unable to arrange for a mridangam player for Lata. Ratna remembers her father-in-law Amritlal's attitude towards dance and quotes it to her husband Jairaj. Amritlal was not happy because his son has chosen dance as a profession, for the reason that society associated a male dancer as unmanly and in a different way than other walk of life.

Amritlal a strong patriarchal product of the play comes in an oral agreement with his daughter-in-law that if she is able to succeed in removing the very thought of dance from Jairaj's mind this will benefit her as she will be given property and will also be allowed to continue her career as a dancer. Ratna agrees and accepts his words. We learn that Amritlal and Ratna have their own selfish motives; the consequences of which is paid by Jairaj. In the midst of the play the vested interests of gender and patriarchy is seen:Jairaj as a dancer was tied up by his father and deprived by his wife, as the result he becomes a failure in dancing and an alcoholic.

The dejection of the this play is that a man choosing 'dance' as a profession which was/is 'right' only for women then and even today in the orthodox Indian families is considered to be wrong and so was wrong for Jairaj according to his father Amritlal. In the play Jairaj and Ratna holds a dark covert something that makes readers anxious. The suspense of the play is that Ratna and Jairaj had a son who was taken care by a nanny, she was irresponsible and a slacker; she over-dosed Jairaj and Ratna's baby with opium which caused the death of their baby. The blame of this is equally shared by both the parents.

**Examination:** Mahesh Dattani is one of the best playwrights in India. He is the first playwright in English to win the 'Sahitya Akademi Award'. Dattani is selectively chooses his topics. He often selects such themes and topics that are never being spoken in society majorly in an Indian society. 'Dance like a Man' is a two act stage play. The story highlights the ambition, hypocrisy, compromises of three generation i.e., Amritlal, Jairaj and Lata. The title of the play itself brings to the attention of the readers that there is a strong sense of gender role stereotype. Jairaj's father Amritlal does not want his son to pursue dance as a profession which would make him womanish. Dattani title questions on the man's sexuality as to how when a man opted for dance as his work is considered to be effeminate and is marginalized by society.

**Conclusion:** This research article leaves behind some serious issues like how an individual is harmed by social norms, how the selfish motives of the ones we think are dear to us can ruin our lives. As seen in the play Jairaj turns out to be a failure as a dancer and he also becomes

alcoholic because of his own people. Amritlal and Ratna who are suppose to love and support his son and husband respectively turn out to be hypocrite as it is evident in the play that both are selfish for their own concerns. The social norms are made by society are rigid and as society evolves they still tend to be the same. The thought of gender roles played by men and women are instilled in the minds of people from the very young age and it becomes impossible for an individual to fight against them. An individual is criticized for opposing such social norms by the society. Mahesh Dattani's play 'Dance like a Man' has succeeded in bringing such evil discrimination of the society.

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