



Invisible Issues of Indian Society in Mahesh Dattani's *Where There's a Will* (1988) and *Dance Like a Man* (1989)

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Abstract

This research aims at tackling some invisible issues of Indian society in Mahesh Dattani's *Where There's a Will* (1988) and *Dance Like a Man* (1989). His main themes are marginalization, invisibility and the clash between the individual and society. In *Where There's a Will*, he tackles the idea of the patriarchal egoism and 'Hitlerism' by presenting the character of Hasmukh Mehta who acts like the colonizer and controls his family during his life and even after his death, he continues to live in the form of a ghost through his will. In *Dance Like a Man*, he presents forms of resistance to colonial domination and what happens when the colonized people have been pushed to the edge. In addition, he crystalizes the gap between old generation and young ones by the use of his technique of flashback and minimalism of his characters.

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Introduction

The origin of Indian drama in English can be traced back to the pre-independence era. Krishna Mohan Banerjee (24 May 1813 – 11 May 1885) wrote the first Indian English play entitled *The Persecuted or Dramatic scenes Illustrative of the present state of Hindoo Society in Calcutta* (1831) (Tandon 12). In addition, Girish Karnad (19 May 1938-) is one of the outstanding playwrights in modern India. He had considerably enriched and enlightened the tradition of Indian English drama. The next great dramatic voice in contemporary era that needs to be discussed is that of Vijay Tendulkar (6 January 1928 – 19 May 2008) who provides a new force and direction to Marathi theater as well as Indian English theater. Another brilliant star in the literary firmament of India is that of Badal Sarcar (15 July 1925 – 13 May 2011) who externalizes the existential attitude of modern life through his dramatic works. Another prominent dramatist in the arena of contemporary drama is Mohan Rakesh (8 January 1925 – 3 January 1972) who is best known for his play *Halfway House* which is a translated work of his Hindi play '*Adhe Adhure*'.

Indian English drama was enriched after India had gained its independence from the British Rule in 1947. In the pre-independence era, most plays were written in verse, whereas the post-colonial dramatists showed much inclination to prosaic drama. India is a multi-lingual country. In India, plays were written by great dramatists in their own regional languages. Mohan Rakesh wrote his plays in Hindi; Girish Karnad in Kannada; Badal Sarcar in Bengali and Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi. They wrote a number of plays which gave a new meaning of life to Indian drama. On the other hand, Mahesh Dattani wrote plays in English. Moreover, Girish Karnad and Dattani are considered "the two pillars of Indian Drama in English, today" (Khatri 9). Passing through different stages of imitation and translation, Indian English drama has ultimately got an independent entity in the last quarter of the 20th century at the hands of Mahesh Dattani.

Mahesh Dattani (1958-) is the first Indian playwright to be honored with the prestigious Sahitya Academy award for his *Final Solutions and Other Plays* (1998). He is a social reformer; he explores invisible issues in post-independence Indian society such as gender roles and the exorcism of the patriarchal codes. According to Dattani, his one recurring theme is "the individual's struggle over societal demands or inflictions" (Banerjee 166). His

presentation of problems from real life situations is a significant contribution to Indian English drama. Besides, he presents serious problems and gives voice to the suffering of the marginalized people in Indian society. He was influenced by great playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Elkunchwar, Tennessee Williams and Shakespeare. Dattani uncovers social problems in Indian society and uses theater as a medium to mirror Indian people's life. According to him, "theater being a mirror to society has a great deal of truth, no matter whatever theater one creates" (Dattani, "The Playwright's Quest", n.p.). He sees that theater is a shared experience among the actors and performance. Further, he thinks that it is very important for playwrights to realize that they cannot write in their head alone. He considers himself as a playwright, a part of that rehearsal process among the actors and drafts of the plays. His plays depend on the contribution of the actors and their motivations and actions (Mee 21-22).

Dattani's *Where There's a Will* and *Dance Like a Man* were chosen to be tackled from a postcolonial perspective. These plays unveil the problems of Indian society and the suppressed identities of the subalterns after India gained its independence in a very authentic and realistic manner. Post-independence India does not mean the end of colonization but its effects still haunt Indian society in a form of subalterns and hybrid characters (men and women), and characters who act like colonizers. Regarding the main themes in Dattani's plays, he explores the relationship between men and women. Besides, his plays tackle social issues in Indian society, such as patriarchy and gender roles.

Dattani is one of the few dramatists who write their plays originally in English. English is a hybrid language and unofficially spoken in India. Hence, he does not follow western dramatic canons, but he has indianized his English plays which have the real Indian spirit. He stresses that "my milieu is theater, you can't operate in isolation. I do want a theater movement to happen. The major block for that is lack of sound training and professionalism. We have the talent, but theater is more than that, it's a craft of communicating through the language of action" (qtd, in Dasgupta, n.p.).

Dattani explores invisible issues in Indian society, such as gender roles and the clash between individuals and society. According to him, "a lot of social issues in India are also what I would call invisible issues. For example, patriarchy is a given. The privileged gender and many a times even the oppressed gender

does not see it as an issue. It is the duty of theater to make it visible" (personal interview by the researcher). He uncovers the invisible identity of his characters. Dattani bursts into the complex Indian social system to give these invisible issues a visibility.

The patriarchal egoism and 'Hitlerism' of Dattani's characters like Hasmukh Mehta in *Where There's a Will* and Amirtal Barekh in *Dance like a Man*, lead to the invisibility of his characters like Mehta's son, Ajit and Barekh's son, Jairaj. In *Where There's a Will*, Ajit asserts his individuality and his personal identity by saying, " And what becomes of me? The real me. I mean , if I am you then where am I?" (461). Further, Dattani presents how the traditions and customs of the patriarchal Indian society invisibilize their struggles and sufferings.

The invisibility of Dattani's characters reminds the reader/audience of Ralph Ellison's novel, *The Invisible Man* (1952) which addresses many of the social and intellectual issues facing African Americans early in the twentieth century. Ellison argues, "I am an invisible man ... I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me ... When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me" (7). He writes like an individual plagued by his dualism as a Negro and as an American. As for Dattani, his character's invisibility is out of double colonization by imperial power from one hand and the society from the other. His characters suffer from the effects of this double colonization and the quest for their identity which results in having the status of being a margin, a subaltern, a fragmented and an invisible person.

The exorcism of patriarchal code is evident in Mahesh Dattani's *Where There's A Will*. The word 'patriarchy' literally means the rule of the father or the 'patriarch' in a family where the eldest male is the head of the family and controls his wife, children, and other members of the family. Patriarchy can be defined as, "a social system in which males hold primary power, predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property; in the domain of the family, fathers or father-figures hold authority over women and children"(Chavan 108). Patriarchy can be seen in third world societies. Moreover, it should be noted that its nature is different in different societies, in different classes in the same society and also in different periods of history.

Patriarchy is an essential tradition in Indian society as Dattani confirms that some tribal cultures follow a matriarchal society, but for most Indians, patriarchy is a given and unquestioned hierarchy. He thinks that patriarchy existed long before the colonials arrived in India. It is to do with the ego. A man would see himself 'womanly' if he was not responsible of women in his life (personal interview by the researcher).

The play presents how patriarchal egoism destroys and spoils the relationship between the protagonist and his family concerning the relationship between a husband and a wife, and between a father and a son. The egoistic man is a man who develops his life only around his precious self and he never notices other people around him. He never notices other people and their interests and their needs and their troubles. Further, he always bothers about his own problems. He is always looking for problems in other people. He will never realize that he is the only reason for those failures and he will always blame other people in things that go wrong in his life. The egoistic man is a man, who will never be a good husband and a good father. He will never notice the loneliness and pain in the eyes of his wife and he will never care about problems of his son who needs him more than anything in this life. According to Buneti Monappa, "Where there is egoism there is no place for love. There is no way for love to live next to egoism. Egoism kills love" (423).

Family relationship is the focus of Dattani's dramatic representation. He presents "the follies and prejudices of Indian society as reflected within the microcosm of the family unit, the most tangible and dynamic reality in middle class Indian lives" (Chaudhuri 27). Hence, in the words of Anita Nair, "he aims not at changing society but only seeks to offer some scope for reflection in the hope that his plays will give the audience some kind of insight into their lives." (n.p). The marginalized and the invisible persons in the society are his priority. According to Dattani, "all of us want to be a part of society of the mainstream but we must acknowledge that is a forced harmony" (Chandra 342). He seeks to show the world "how the victims of this forced harmony are denied their right to be visible and compelled to drag on dignity, invisible sort of living" (Chandra 342). In addition, he has "the unique capacity to read the rumblings of contemporary urban Indian society and smell the perennial clash between tradition and modernity" (Tandon 20).

Gender is a representation and Dattani's theater is "a representation of representation" (Misra 188). His play mirrors the real problems in Indian society. M.N. Chatterjee suggests that "the projection of Indian womanhood is decorous, pious, and modest that set the stage for demonstrating the superiority of Indian culture against the British colonial state" (622-633). The play presents "how women in their own homes are marginalized. Though the kitchen or home is described as the kingdom of women, they are no longer ruling over there. Instead, they are pushed on the margins of invisibility" (Parmar 37).

The main themes of the play are marginalization, invisibility and the clash between individual and society. It is a family play which presents the male-female relationship. The story revolves around a self-made industrialist Hasmukh Mehta, the patriarch who feels that his marriage is a great tragedy. He is embodied with "patriarchal canons and tried to control family even after his death through his 'will'. He is both dead and alive, but his business remains unobstructed and unceasing" (Parmar 38). He tries to control his family even after his death through his will. Sita Raina makes an observation on the play as she says that Mahesh described it as the exorcism of the patriarchal code. Women—be it daughter-in-law, wife or mistress—are not independent and this play uncovers what happens when they are pushed to the edge. What interested her in particular was its philosophical twist. To be the watcher of one's self is to make intelligent changes in this life. In *Where There's A Will*, the protagonist has control over his family through his money and forges an opportunity to improve his interpersonal relationships. Therefore, when he becomes the watcher of his actions, he perceives that his desire for control has led him to be the victim of his own machinations unlike Kiran who uses power fundamentally to improve her relationships (451).

Dattani carefully structures the play to fit in with the needs of the plot. The play is divided into two acts and each act falls into two scenes. Act one, scene one opens with a conversation among the members of the family. Hasmuch Mehta is the head of the family, the narrator of the story, the commenter on the actions and the watcher on events even after his death. Dattani gives him an omniscient role in the play to highlight the thought of the colonizer who wants to control everything during his presence and after his departure. The scene depicts his relationship with his wife, Sonal, his son Ajit and his daughter-in law, Preeti. Moreover, Hasmukh is

a selfish, arrogant man who expects blind obedience from everyone. Dattani emphasizes the relationship between father and son which mirrors disrespect and distrust. Hasmukh curses his son as he finds him irresponsible and childish.

The protagonist Hasmukh Mehta is dissatisfied with his wife Sonal and makes Kiran Jhaveri his own mistress. He keeps this as a secret from the members of his family till his death. He too is dissatisfied with his son Ajit and his daughter-in-law Preeti who married his Ajit only for money. Before his death, Hasmukh Mehta made a will, making Kiran as the trustee. His wife, son and daughter-in-law would get their maintenance only if they act according to Kiran's instruction. After that, Kiran came to stay in their house and she won the hearts of the members of the family by helping them. Sonal insisted on Kiran's staying in her room and Ajit realized his mistakes. Preeti was forgiven by Kiran for taking away Hasmukh's blood pressure medicine and keeping her vitamins in its place.

Hasmukh has been a good boy to his father all through his life and expects the same from his son Ajit. Furthermore, he allows his son not to intervene in his plans and regrets having fathered him, "Oh God! I regret it all. Please let him just drop dead. No, no. What a terrible thing to say about one's own son. I take it back. Dear God, don't let him drop dead. Just turn him into a nice vegetable so he won't be in my way" (455). Ajit shows his need for his father's money and the following words provide a sort of insight into his plans as well as into the real crisis of the play, he says, "I mean, it's not as if I want the money for myself. It's for his factory. But he just won't listen to me. I don't think he has ever listened to me in his entire life" (455). He makes mockery of his son and shows his displeasure towards his attitude. Ajit asserts his individuality and his personal identity by saying, "And what becomes of me? The real me. I mean, if I am you then where am I?" (461). He protests against paternal hegemony and challenges the dictatorship of his father. The following dialogue crystalizes the clash between father and son:

AJIT. Don't have any right at all?

HASMUKH. You have the right to listen to my advice and obey my order.

AJIT. Thank you – you are so generous. I could kiss your feet.

HASMUKH. There is no need to do that, just polish my shoes every

morning. I will be happy

AJIT. You will never be happy. Not until all of us dance to your tone. And I will never do that. (458)

The play dramatizes another form of patriarchy which does not only marginalize the women folk of the family, but also spots other male members of the family. Beena Agarwal comments, "the first part of *Where There's a Will* is the assertion of patriarchy, second is the mockery of patriarchy second part of second act is collapse of patriarchy" (112). The play dives deeply into human psychology as Hasmukh is trying to nurture his son his patriarchal egoism. Moreover, it examines the father-son relationship in which the father wants his son to follow his footprint and the son refuses to toe the line. According to Roomiya Manzoor, Dattani shows that "strong desires of old generation to preserve its authority over the young and the determined bid of the young to break free of the patriarchal code" (24). Dattani remarks that the real danger of the patriarchal code lies in denying one's individuality. In the name of tradition, good manner and duty, the son is expected to follow blindly whatever he is asked to do.

Hasmukh is suspicious of his daughter-in-law Preeti, whom he thinks "pretty, charming, graceful and sly as a snake" (456). Additionally, he is hard on his wife, Sonal. He views her as nothing but mud and he sees her as:

Sonal. My wife. My son's mother. Do you know what Sonal means? No? 'Gold.' When we were newly married. I used to joke with her and say she was as good as gold. But that was when we were newly married. I soon found out what a good-for-nothing she was. As good as mud. Ditto our sex life. Mud. Twenty-five years of marriage and I don't think she has ever enjoyed sex. Twenty-five years of marriage and I haven't enjoyed sex with her. So what does a man do? You tell me. I started eating out. Well, I had the money. I could afford to eat in fancy places. And what about my sex life? Well, I could afford that too. Those expensive ladies of the night in five star hotels! (Act one, Scene one, 472-473).

Hasmukh's words bring out the patriarchal prejudice which almost all men of the Indian society possess, "why does a man marry? So that he can have a woman all to himself? No...May be he needs a faithful companion? No. If that was it, all men would

keep dogs. No. No, I think the important reason anyone should marry at all is to get a son because the son will carry on the family name"(475). He is unhappy with his life and distrusts the members of his family.

Hasmukh invests his passions in his executive secretary in his office, Kiran Juaveri. She is a beautiful woman with real brains and he makes her his mistress and also raises her status to the directorship. He has enough reasons for doing so as he points out to the reader/audience:

I mean, a man in my position has to be careful. I needed a safer relationship. Something between a wife and a pick-up. Yes. A mistress! It didn't take me very long to find her. She was right there in my office. An unmarried lady. Not an ordinary typist or even a secretary . A shrewd hard-headed marketing executive . If there was anyone in my office who had brains to match mine, it was her. She is now one of the directors of the company . Not entirely due to her shrewd head. She lives now in a company flat in a polish locality. I won't tell you where. Well, it's walking a distance from here. Convenient for me. All right, what's wrong with having a bit on the side? Especially since the main course is always without salt. (Act one, Scene one, 473)

This scene ends up with the sudden death of the tyrant, Hasmukh Mehta. His death is a plan to control other members of the family through his 'will' and uncover the inner feelings of his family.

Act one, scene two opens with Sonal, Ajit and Preeti coming from the solicitor's office, dissatisfied with Hasmukh's will as if they have seen a ghost. Sonal says, "he has ruined us" (480) and Ajit opens the photograph of the family remarks on his father's photo, " you really have us concerned" (480). The photograph of the family symbolizes the memory and the past. According to his will, Hasmukh Mehta has donated all his property, finances and shares to a charitable trust named, The Hasmukh Meta Charitable Trust. This included the house they are living in. The will says that the trust will be dissolved when his son Ajit turns forty five. Besides, it also mentions that no new business project of Ajit should be sanctioned. The trustee is Kiran Jhaveri who is a marketing executive and turned to be the company director and Hasmukh's mistress. Act one, scene two ends up with the climax of

the play, with the appearance of Kiran, Hasmukh's mistress and the trustee of his charitable trustee. She decided to come and stay with the family.

Act two, scene one, opens with a conversation among Kiran, Preeti, Ajit and Sonal to know more about Hasmukh's mistress. The reader/audience knows that Hasmukh has a control over other people like Kiran as she is a married woman and Hasmukh has chosen a husband for her:

KIRAN. He said it wasn't nice for a woman to stay single after thirty.

SONAL. (*Sarcastically*). That was my husband. Always concerned about other people. (491)

Hasmukh ordered her to leave her husband and join Mehta Family as Kiran says, " Yes. As one of you. To put it in his own words, 'as part of the Mehta Family" (493). The scene ends with Kiran threatening the family if they intend to get her out of the family, saying that she has the right as a trustee to divide the trust between charitable institutions which means that they will not ever get to see a single rupee by Hasmukh. Finally, they welcome her at their house and let her stay.

Act two, scene two opens with a monologue by Hasmukh Mehta. He is delighted with the transformation that happened to the family, especially his wife. Dattani makes "configuration of time, speech and movement in the character of Hasmukh" (Bijay Das 129). After that a dialogue between Preeti and Ajit starts. Ajit points out, "can't you see? He is still alive. Through his will! Through his mistress!"(501). Preeti blames him for protesting against his father. She says, " What did he do? He! He was a slave driver, your father. He almost drove me mad with his bossy nature" (502).

As regards male dominance, the play reflects on " the intricacies of patriarchal code where women are destined to be in peripheral position. Neither education nor economic independence would help them in gaining their dues unless male ego undergoes complete change and transformation (Chandra 346). A dialogue between Sonal and Kiran starts after that as Kiran tells her about the nature of her relationship with Hasmukh.

SONAL. I suppose my husband was useful to you— financially. Was he useful in any other way?

KIRAN. I guess he was. He respected my judgment and intelligence. That gave me a lot of confidence.

SONAL. Anything else?

KIRAN. He trusted me. Which was rare for him. He never trusted anybody. (507)

The agony of being a woman in such a male-dominated society is well expressed by Kiran when she recalls her past to Sonal, who thinks her lucky as she is an educated woman. Kiran tells Sonal about her family, and she compared her drunken father with Hasmukh. Kiran says, "yes. Mrs. Mehta. My father, your husband—they were weak men with false strength. Hasmukh was intoxicated with his power, He thought he was invincible. That he could rule from his grave by making his will" (508). Dattani calls men who demand blind obedience as weak men with false strength and condemns those who submit this type of subjugation.

The most disappointing thing is that women are struggling for a shelter where they can protect themselves outside the nutshell of male domination. This misery is crystalized in Kiran's words:

Isn't it strange how repetitive life is? My brothers. They have turned out to be like their father, going home with bottles of rum wrapped up in newspapers. Beating up their wives. And I-I too am like my mother. I married a drunkard and I listened to his swearing . And I too have learnt to suffer silently . Oh! Where will all this end? Will the scars our parents lay on us remain forever? (Act two, Scene 2, 508)

Kiran is an intelligent woman, and she knows how Hasmukh thinks about more than his wife does. She says, " Hasmukh Mehta was living his life in his father's shadow. He had no life of his own. Where were his own dreams? His own thoughts? Whatever he did was planned for him by his father" (509). Sonal confirms, "at times he even sounded like his father. So crude and loud" (509). Kiran sheds light on Hasmukh's inertia that haunts him throughout his life thanks to the patriarchal Indian society which controls one's life and has an effect on one's identity like colonization.

Kiran tries to control and rule Mehta House after the death of Hasmukh. She tells Sonal to be herself and not to take orders from her sister Minal who controls her life as well. Sonal says, " yes, It's true of me too. I have always lived in my sister's shadow. It was always Minal who decided what we should wear, What games we should play. She even decided which Maharaj is suitable for our family. Even at my Husband's funeral, she sat beside me

and told me when to cry. But everything is going to be different now. I can feel it"(511). Sonal is a silly and naïve woman and can be easily controlled by Kiran.

Kiran shares her experience with Sonal , and she sympathizes with her and tries to console her. She adds," I should have hated him. Like I should have hated my father, my brothers and my husband. But all I felt for him was pity. Even his attempts to ruling over you after his death, through his will, are pathetic. The only reason he wanted to do that is because his father had ruled over his family" (510). Hence, she confesses that her relationship with Hasmukh was just to build up her financial status and it turns to a kind of pity on him and his dependence on her. She emphasizes, " he is dependent on me for everything. He thought he was the decision maker. But I was. He wanted me to run his life, like his father had. Hasmukh didn't really want a mistress, He wanted a father. He saw in me a woman who would father him! Men never really grow up!"(510). She believes that " men never really grow up", but she thinks Ajit a better man than his father because he has the courage to face him and challenge the authority. Kiran sees that Ajit is not like his father and he escaped from being a picture of him. She says, " he may not be the greatest rebel on earth, but at least he is free of his father's beliefs. He resists. In a small way, but at least it's a start. That is enough to prove that Ajit has won and Hasmukh has lost" (510). On the other hand, Hasmukh tried all his life to be a good boy to his father. Ajit never risked his individuality and searches for his own. Preeti always blames her husband and irritates him when she accuses him of having stepped into his late father's shoes without a peep" (500). Ajit firmly resents, saying, " I did not step into my father's shoes without a peep" (500). He is proud of having protested against him as he points out," All right. I can't fight him now. He has won. He has won because he's dead. But when he was alive, I did protest. In my own way. Yes, I'm happy I did that. Yes. I did fight back. I did do 'peep peep ' to him! That was my little victory" (501). Ajit asserts his individualistic identity as he protests against parental hegemony. In this sense, "father-son relationship is a postcolonial dichotomy of contemporary society" (Monappa 426). Ajit is content at the idea that he is disobedient and challenges the dictatorship of his father. Hasmukh symbolizes the past, where Ajit symbolizes the present and Ajit's son presents the future. Later, the reader/audience knows that Preeti changed Hasmukh's medicine of

high pressure with her vitamins which kills him. Kiran discovered this accidentally but she did not tell anyone to make Preeti her friend.

Dattani succeeds in conveying the marginality of his characters in Indian society. Even his protagonist Hasmukh is also marginalized, as he plays a second role which made him unable to participate in the conversation with the family. In act one scene two, he says, " You never really know how famous you are until you are dead" (479). Moreover, he feels regret at the end of the play. The play ends in a very interesting way as Sonal, Kiran and Preeti have decided to be one. Hasmukh decides to quit the house and lives in the shadow or in a tamarind tree. The family members decide to cut the tree and forget the past. The happiness of the family is evident in Hasmukh's words:

No. I don't think I can enter this house. It isn't mine ... any more. I will rest permanently on the tamarind tree. They are not my family any more. I wish I had never interfered with their lives. They look quite happy together. With Kiran sitting in my place. Oh, I wish I had been more. I wish I had lived. (515)

Hasmukh Mehta has lots of money, still he is very unhappy. He is a very self-centered man. Though he is only 45 years old but he has many health problems like high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes and an enlarged heart. He wants to control every member of his family. According to him all of them should obey his orders. He has a strained relationship with every member of his family. He thinks that his wife is a dumb and stupid housewife who pampers their son unnecessarily. According to him his marriage with Sonal has been the greatest tragedy in his life. Another tragedy in his life is his son. He thinks that his son is the biggest mistake of his life as he is an immature, foolish and spoiled brat who will waste his money in his useless and impractical business ideas. He says, "Why do I have a mistress? Because I am unhappy. (Pause) Why am I unhappy? Because I don't have a son. Who is Ajit. Isn't he my son? No. He doesn't behave like my son. A son should make me happy. Like I made my father (475). He feels angry why he has prayed to God to give him a son. He should have asked for a daughter. He thinks that his daughter-in-law is a shrewd woman who is after his money. It is true and appreciable that he himself has been a very obedient son but as Kiran comments towards the end of the play Hasmukh has lived his life just as his father's shadow. He has never

tried to come out of it and think independently. He expects the same from his Ajit. Hasmukh is a hard working person who has taken his father's small business to greater heights, but he is very priggish and inconsiderate when it comes to give freedom to his wife and son. Hasmukh is too prejudiced to consider any other person's point of view. He demands too much from everybody.

Sonal, Hasmukh's wife and Ajit's mother is a typical Gujrati housewife. Restricted to her house, she is a devoted wife and a caring mother. She is worried about her husband's medicines on one side and about her son's food on the other side. Hasmukh is dishonest and self-conceited as he always looks down upon his wife and treats her badly. He explains that the biggest tragedy of his life is his marriage to Sonal. He thinks that she is a dumb and good-for-nothing woman. He has had a series of relationships with other women, and finally he decides to keep a mistress as he can afford one. He does not feel wrong about this whole affair as he explains that he eats out because the food at home is with no salt. This means that he goes around with other women because his own wife is simple and meek. He is rude to the extent to confess that he knows that Sonal takes proper care of him and is faithful to him as a dog. Comparing Sonal's devotion to her husband and family with that of a pet shows how emotionless and unfair Hasmukh is towards his wife. He takes Sonal for granted. She is a docile woman always ruled over by somebody in her life. She tells Kiran that she is too dependent on others. Earlier in her girlhood, her elder sister used to take decisions for her. After getting married to Hasmukh, he always has had the upper hand in the relationship. However, if Hasmukh is unreasonably rude with Ajit; Sonal is excessively sweet with Ajit. She still treats her like a small boy. Hasmukh makes fun of the way she calls Ajit as 'Aju'. The father thinks that the mother has spoiled the boy by her extra care and love. He thinks that he has given his son a strong name like Ajit, but Sonal has reduced the name to a childish pet name. According to Hasmukh, Sonal has spoiled the boy by her extra and improper care.

Dattai depicts two differently crafty traps played by two characters of the same family against each other. The first trap is planned by the patriarchal egoist Hasmukh Mehta who uses his 'will' as a weapon to control his family even after his death. Ajit is the only son of Hasmukh and he is the victim of this trap. He is a college dropout and at the age of 23, he is working as the Joint Managing Director in his father's company. The post is only a

designation given to him as he has no powers in his hand. Hasmukh thinks that Ajit is too immature to handle the business. He has to learn a lot before Hasmukh actually gives him any real responsibility. Hasmukh often devalues and insults him in front of his friends. Ajit is not satisfied with the treatment he gets from his father but he is too naïve to walk out of the family business and do something on his own. He is not exactly after his father's money but he knows that it will all come to him one day. He has some business ideas with him but they are all useless and extremely risky, according to her father.

The second trap of the play is played by Hasmukh's daughter-in-law, Preeti who kills her father-in-law to have the entire patriarchal property for her. She is Ajit's wife, and in Hasmukh's opinion, she is "pretty, charming, graceful and sly like a snake" (456). He knows that she can go to any extent and can do anything to get his money. When the play opens she is pregnant and the delivery is due in a few weeks. In fact, she proves Hasmukh to be true also in his observation as she is after the money of her father-in-law. She has got married to Ajit only because of his father's money. She is very shrewd. She talks sweetly to everybody till the death of Hasmukh and after his death only she shows her real colours. She is the one who has hastened Hasmukh death by changing his BP tablets with her vitamin tablet. Later in the play she suggests Ajit that they can challenge the will of Hasmukh by proving in the court that Hasmukh has not been in his senses at the time of writing the Will. She is the one who tries to argue with Kiran initially but she fails badly as Kiran is a way too smart for her.

Dattani employs the character, Kiran to uncover the real motivations of the other characters in Mehta House. She is smart, beautiful and the brainy mistress of Hasmukh. She is the only one on whom Hasmukh believes in his life. He is very impressed with her and he makes her the trustee of the Hasmukh Mehta Charitable Trust. As the trustee of this trust she is the one who will take care of the entire business of Mr. Hasmukh Mehta till Ajit becomes forty five years old. Hasmukh thinks that she will make the members of his family do whatever he wants them to do even after his death. She is a mature woman who has seen much in life. She is very straightforward and she is the emissary of change in the Mehta's household. However, she has a story of her own. She has seen in her childhood her drunkard father beating up her mother every

night and her mother trying to behave normal in front of the children; so that children should not hate their father.

The rebellion or defiance is displayed by Dattani's Kiran who speaks of the gradual loosening of grip of the patriarchal and conservative powers over the margins (women and young generation). Kiran learns her lesson about life that this cruel world cannot be fair to women. Women have to learn to ask for the returns of their sacrifices. They should not simply submit to the whims of men. Moreover, she realizes the importance of money in life. She tells it openly that she has maintained the relationship with an old man like Hasmukh just for the sake of money. Though she has a licentious relationship with Hasmukh, yet she is not a bad woman as she never thinks of taking advantage of the situation before and after the death of Hasmukh. She is the most important character in the play as she is the one who introduces the audience as well as the other characters themselves to the real personas of Hasmukh, Sonal, Ajit and Preeti. She discloses the secret of Hasmukh's untimely death as she unveils that Preeti has hastened Hasmukh's death by changing his BP tablets with her vitamins tablets.

It is proven in the end that Hasmukh has taken the right decision by making Kiran the trustee as she is quite capable and wise to fulfill Hasmukh's desire of controlling his family and teaching them a lesson even after his death (though not exactly in the way in which Hasmukh has planned). Kiran is a subaltern and a victim too, but she refuses to stay victimized. She becomes part of Hasmukh's life with her eyes wide open, and aware of the benefits that she will derive of her relationship with Hasmukh. She is the one who explains that Hasmukh has been a mere shadow/extension of his father throughout his life. She makes Sonal realize that the Sonal is not a dumb and good-for-nothing woman as her husband has believed her to be; rather she is a dedicated wife and mother who has given much to her husband and family without asking anything, not even some respect and love, in return. Kiran makes the audience also realize that only because Hasmukh thinks so, Ajit is not a total loser. It is good that Ajit thinks differently from his father and he is not just an extension of Hasmukh. It is not right on the part of Hasmukh to always criticize Ajit even without giving him a chance to prove himself. Moreover, she is the one who shows mirror to Preeti and make Preeti realize the dangers of being over-clever.

The difference between Hasmukh and his son Ajit is out of the gap between generations. This play is about understanding the inner feelings of the members of the family to live together and happily. Kiran brings this understanding among the members of the family. The dead man wishes, " I wish I had ever interfered with their lives. They look quite happy together. With Kiran sitting in my place. Oh, I wish I had been more... I wish I had lived" (515). Bijay Das asked Dattani via his email, "How can a dead man exchange words with the living" (52). Dattani replies, " in theater, reconfiguring time, space, and movement is where the artist" (52). Hasmukh Mehta suffers from psychological projection as Dattani asserts, "that makes a lot of sense. He thinks his son is brainless, but he himself is blind to his actions. He wants his son to follow in his footsteps because he feels his son is unworthy of individual thinking. His biggest moment of realization is when he understands he was his father's ghost" (personal interview by the researcher). Hence, he denies some bad aspects of his behavior and attitudes, and attributes instead that on his members of his family.

The characters in the play *Where There's a Will* by Mahesh Dattani could not find any door open to solve the problem of the will. The play not only depicts how women are subjugated and suppressed by their male counterparts in patriarchal social set up but also it depicts how the son is thought useless by the father. This instance is also very common among Indian set up. Ajit, Hasmukh's son, wants to expand his business but Hasmukh does not allow this. He feels him useless. Throughout the play, Ajit is working hard to prove his efficiency, but it all ends up in vein. He wants his son to dance to his tunes, but Ajit does not respond to his wishes and desires. He cares and respects his own individuality and does not want to be a mere image of his father.

The reason behind Hasmukh's desire to dominate in his life time and even after his death is explored well in the play. He has been a victim of paternal authority. The tendency to dominate the son's life is not limited to any particular generation. This is something that continues generation after generations. Hasmukh wants Ajit to live his image as he himself had lived under the shadow of his father, " A son should make me happy like I made my father... happy. I listened to him. I did what he told me to do. I worked for him. I worked hard for him. I made him... happy. This is what I wanted my son to make me" (475). Hasmukh Mehta exercises hegemonic power to perpetuate his own conception of

self, which he has in turn received from his father. However, Ajit rejects the irrational concept of paternal authority. The difference between Hasmukh and Ajit is a clear result of generation gap. Ajit has no faith in his father because his father has never given him any right except to listen to Hasmukh's advice and obey Hasmukh's orders. He does not give importance to his feelings.

Dattani employs the character of Sonal as a subaltern who follows orders and cannot speak or has not the power to speak for herself. She is a highly fragile character but she is advised by her sister, Minal, about how to run the family and look after her husband. Sonal's opinion about Hasmukh goes as follows, "he thinks that he is king of all he surveys! And we are his subjects. But you know the story about the crow painting himself white to become a swan? well that's him. He can put on all the airs he wants to, but he doesn't fool me. I know who we are. We are just middle-class with a lot of money that's all" (472). Hasmukh introduces Sonal to the audience as 'Gold' that is what her name means, but he was sarcastic about it. He says that it was his opinion when they were newly married. Now she was good for nothing, she was mud. One visualizes that Sonal is deeply concerned about the family but the head of the family is deeply disinterested in her. This keeps her in the margins.

Dattani employs Preeti as a margin who tries to kill Hasmukh to reach her inner motivations. She seems to be a brilliant daughter-in-law who manages every one. In the words of Hasmukh, she is presented in the play as an individual who knows how to proceed to the next goal without help. Hasmukh paints himself as a symbol of authority and perfectness, but in reality he is not so. However, he hides his own weakness, and he is dissatisfied with his married life, he had a mistress called Kiran Jhaveri, who looks after his office and later took over his house after his death. He calls Preeti, his daughter in law as brilliant. According to him, she is after his money, that is the reason why she married Ajit.

Mahesh Dattani's entire work may be seen as a depiction of conflict between the older and the younger generations. He has accorded greater importance to those issues which largely remain hidden in our society. He has the unique capacity to read the rumblings of contemporary Indian society and smell the perennial clash between tradition and modernity. Family relations are the keys to the plots of Dattani's plays. He takes his subjects from within the complicated dynamics of modern urban families.

Families are composed of unique individuals. That uniqueness stems from the fact that every individual has creativity and free will and he/she is able to make his/her own choices. Beena Agarwal on analyzing Mahesh Dattani's plays, says that " People make choices either actively or knowledgeably or by default, that determine the course of their lives. These choices are influenced by a number of factors, including age-expectations, race and ethnicity, religion, social class, gender "(20) .

The tone of sarcasm and humour runs throughout the play as Dattani writes his plays for an entertainment. The humour of the play is " sheathed in layers of Ibsenesque black comedy with asphyxiated overtones that are Dattani's main tool" (Chaudhuri 28). This humour evokes thoughts of the patriarch Hasmukh who presents a second colonizer in Indian family. The names of the characters signify certain virtues and ideas but none of them act according to the virtue or merit symbolized by their names for example, Hasmukh Mehta means a smiling face but he rarely smiles and Sonal means gold but she hardly shines. Hasmukh Mehta has not respect and love for his wife Sonal. According to him, she is good for nothing. Preeti means affection but she is unaffectionate to almost every member of the family. Only Kiran is in a way the real hope for the family.

Traces of symbolism can be found in the play. Dattani depicts the past, present and future in his play. Dattani tackles the past which is represented by Hasmukh, the present is represented by son Ajit and the future is represented in Ajit's baby. The baby's kicking in the womb of Preeti symbolizes the future and "the advent of new life in the lives of family members" (Jain 5487). The play forms a link among three generations. It focuses on the lives of Jairaj and Ratna, Lata and Viswas and Amritlal Parekh. In addition, Dattani portrays his drama in three time frames of the past, the present and the future. The reader/audience recognizes that Amritlal is carrying the baggage of his own times and tries to manipulate the next generation – Jairaj and Ratna –to carry it forward. Jairaj and Ratna ironically do the same with their own progeny and try to pass on their preferences to Lata. The play finally ends in the present times while Jairaj and Ratna have been united in matrimony, Jairaj admits that being 'human', they 'lacked ' the 'grace', 'brilliance', and 'magic' to" dance like God". The last lines of the play reverberate, " we were only human. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God" (447).

Dattani successfully uses supernatural element in the form of the ghost of Hasmukh. The banishment of Hasmukh's ghost symbolizes the exorcism of the past and its effect on the present events. Dattani peeps into the past to find out the reality that is lying in the darkness of the past. The supernatural element i.e. the ghost of Hasmukh provides humour and sarcasm to the tone of the play. According to Beena Agarwal it also acts as a device for the self-assessment for the characters. Another innovative technique used by Dattani is injected dialogues of Hasmukh which is unheard by other characters but introduces further dimension of implication for reader's/audience's benefits.

The title of the play is very significant. The word 'will' has two implications. It indicates a legal document prepared by the head of the family. This word, 'will' also means the will-power to stand on one's feet as in the case of Kiran, Preeti and lastly Sonal. The 'will' for Hashmukh Mehta symbolizes dominance whereas for the women it represents liberation from the shackles of male domination which they acquire through their intelligence. Dattani describes the space of women as repressive and marginalized lot overshadowed by masculine presence. In the words of Spivak, Sonal and Preeti, occupy a subaltern space as follows. Spivak says, "Subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for the 'Other', for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie. In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern a space of difference" (3). Ajit survives as a subaltern who cannot speak about his rights to his father but this voiceless act turns to a hybrid manner. Dattani shows the reader/audience that social prejudice and conventions hinder the individual choices and deprive them from the path of possible growth and development. The colonial sensibility and social commitment does not give way to the self-desire and dreams. He explores the illusion of perfect and complete control over the family for a longer period. The play arise the questions that why a man aspires too much for authority and power.

Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like A Man* is a stage play which falls in two acts. The play depicts social issues such as marriage, career and the place of a woman in a patriarchal society. It deals with the lives of people who feel exhausted and frustrated on account of the hostile surroundings and unfavorable circumstances. The story is unfolded in past and present times. The first act begins with a dialogue between Lata and Viswas. Lata is the only child of

Jairaj Parekh and Ratna Parekh. Jairaj is a Gujarati, whereas Ratna is a South Indian. Both are dancers. Thus, Lata combines in herself two different Indian castes. Viswas is Lata's friend. They seem to love each other and they want to marry. Viswas too is a Gujarati and he is the son of a wealthy man. Viswas is upset that her parents are not in the house to discuss the proposal. Lata remarks that her parents will accept him as he will let her dance:

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

LATA. Actually, they couldn't 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 still be dancing in his harem! No seriously, they are not worried.(388)

She tells him about her grandfather and how she was a social reformer and tells him also the history of her grandfather's shawl. Jairaj Parekh and Ratna Parekh enter and they are talking about a problem. Ratna and Jairaj recount Amritlal's response to his wanting to be a dancer. This act ends with Jairaj's revolt against his father. Jairaj and Ratna leaving the house of Amritlal Parekh to get rid of rules and regulations imposed upon them by him.

The second act begins with Amritlal who criticizes Jairaj and Ratna. The time is 1940s, two days later Jairaj and Ratna left home and evidently they come back defeated. The play revolves around the lives of 62 years old Bharatnatyam dancer, Jairaj Parekh and his wife, Ratna who is also a dancer. They are living with their only daughter Lata in an old fashioned house, which is located in the heart of the city. Lata is an aspiring and promising young dancer. She finds herself in love with a young man named Viswas and has decided to marry him. All actions of the play take place at the present living room of Jairaj Parekh. The play swings between past and present time. The present living room often changes into a rose garden which denotes past events and presents Amritlal Parekh , father of Jairaj, as the head of the patriarchal family system.

The living room is associated with the present showing Jairaj and Ratna in their sixties and rose garden indicates past, showing Jairaj and Ratna as a young couple. Dattani's characters have double role. Dattani has used time shift technique in the play. Dattani uses the technique of shifting between the scenes to

connect the past with the present thanks to the use of flashback technique.

Dattani uses the motif of dance throughout the play. He says about his play, "I wrote the play when I was learning Bharatanatyam in my mid-twenties...a play about a young man wanting to be a dancer, growing up in a world that believed dance is for women" (Raj Ayyar, *Gay Today*, n.p.). His women can be described as, "my women protagonists fight, scheme and get a piece of the action albeit at great personal cost. These are seen as 'negative' qualities, sadly by some women too... but really we have yet to see feminisim find expression in Indian society" (Ayyar, *Gay Today*, n.p.). The play is a powerful drama of post-independence society, involving the aspirations of a middle class South Indian couple, who by their choice of profession as a Bharatnatyam dancer reflect the past and the present Indian culture, problems of identity and gender roles. It describes "the colonial and nationalist biases against traditional dance forms that make the postcolonial Patriarch Amritlal insists that his daughter-in-law Ratna stop taking dance lesson from a seventy-five-year-old dying devdasi who is the only living exponent of the Mysore school of dance"(Gautam Sen 133). The play is about "the self, about the man and the woman in self" (Erin Mee 21). Bharatanaytam dance is originated in Southern Indian state in Terminad. It started as a temple dance tradition called Dasiyattam (the dance of the maid servants) 2000 years ago" (Mrinalini Chavan 109). Additionally, it is the most advanced and evolved dance form of all the classical Indian dance forms.

Dattani questions the man's individuality to dance like a man, and portrays the gender discrimination which is based on social issues in India. According to *A Note on the Play* by Mithran Devanesen, the play "provokes an examination of —our own individual and collective unconscious" (383). Beena Agarwal remarks that the issue of gender discrimination is only a socio-cultural phenomenon but it is also integrated in human consciousness and is closely associated with individual choices, self-improvement and self-identity. It is a strong determination of human personality and its suppression is bound to lead to terrible consequences. The role models, professional achievement habits dresses, and morality, are expressed in terms of gender bias (97).

Conversing with Sachidanada Mohanty, Dattani sheds light on the theme of the play, " It is about an old couple, dancers, ex-dancers. They are in their sixties and they are looking back at the

past when they struggled against the stigmas attached to the Bharatnatyam in the fifties, that it was a devdasi's dance, compounding the problem for the man"(n.p). The patriarch, Amritlal represents Indian tradition and culture whereas the son Jairaj, adapts the western ways. The colonizer aims at deconstructing the fiber of the home and family. Partha Chatterjee thus notes, " the home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility for protecting and nurturing this quality. No matter what the changes in the external condition of life for women, they must not lose the essentially spiritual (feminine) virtues ... they must not, in other words, become essentially westernized" (118). Dattani stresses on traditionalism and maintain the customs which uncover the real identity and spirit of Indian families.

Dattani sheds light on the role of women in Indian society. Cooking food and bearing the child were still considered to be the essentially feminine duties assigned on women. Thus, when Viswas—Jairaj's would-be son-in-law and the fiancé of his daughter Lata—hears that Lata does not want to have children after marriage, he reacts, "my father almost died when I told him I'm marrying outside the caste. Wait till he hears this!" (389). A little later he says, "Me marrying a Southie my father will tolerate, but accepting a daughter-in-law who doesn't make tea is asking too much of him" (391). Dattani sheds light on the caste system in India which traps women with fixed social orders.

Dattani uses the flashback technique as one of his dramatic devices in the second part of Act one to focus on the conflict between art and society. Young Jairaj and Ratna face tremendous opposition from Amritlal Parekh for their unflinching passion for dance. While Ratna is prevented from learning the Mysore school of dance from an old devdasi, Chenni Amma, Jairaj's heated argument with Amritlal culminates in his abandoning of the house with Ratna. Ratna expresses her view about Chenni Amma as, " she doesn't mind at all being poor and lonely. What she is frustrated about is that in her youth she did not have the freedom to express her art" (420). The first flashback ends with this defiance. Act two continues the flashback with Jairaj and Ratna's return to the mansion, within forty eight hours, absolutely defeated. Their helplessness is exploited by Amritlal, who strikes a deal with Ratna, promising to allow her to excel as a dancer, only if she schemes to prevent Jairaj from evolving as a male Bharatnatyam

dancer. Ratna obeys traditional patriarchal societies and accepted Amritlal's opinion about dancing is for women only as Sidi accepted polygamy. As Amritlal buys her at the ambition of Jairaj's passion, she deliberately 'destroys' Jairaj by undermining his "self esteem" as an artist.

In the second flashback, one sees how the neglected Jairaj is reduced to drunken impotency, while Ratna continues to deliver brilliant performances, often sponsored by Amritlal himself. The flashback ends with the death of their infant Shankar owing to an overdose of opium, while Jairaj accuses Ratna of parental irresponsibility. Jairaj was dreaming of teaching his son the art of dance as he says, "then when he (Sankar) grows up, I'll teach him how to dance—the dance of Shiva. The dance of a man" (441). It is noteworthy that Dattani does not blame Ratna for her parental irresponsibility and there is a probability that the child is from her uncle as he wanted her to sleep with him when she and Jairaj left Amritlal's house and went to stay at his house. Ratna blames Jairaj by emphasizing his inability to support his family financially and Jairaj tries to prove that he is a responsible man as he says to her, "while your uncle asked you to go to bed with him? Would I have been a man then? Giving my wife to her own uncle because he was offering us food and shelter?" (410). The tragedy of Jairaj can be witnessed in Ratna's deception as she misguides him twice by her pact with Amritlal and by her illegitimate child.

Dattani's gender relations are well portrayed in this play. Both Ratna and Lata are subalterns. His subaltern genders are suppressed by "co-genders". Though the suppression, genders have their own societal reasons to back up, dominative genders dominations on other gender would be taken into account with the concern of solving the societal reasons first and cultural revolution and psychological approaches next" (Maheswari 676). The subalterns according to Gayatri Spivak are forced to maintain silence against oppression and injustice. Dattani gives another twist to "the stereotypes associated with 'gender issues' that view solely women at the receiving end of the oppressive power structures of patriarchal society. The play dispels hidden notions and explores the nature of tyranny that even men might be subject to in such a structure of society" (Marigold 605). Both men and women are marginalized by the social orders which repress their identity.

Amritlal cannot stomach the idea of his son, being a dancer. As for him, manhood is not shown in performing as a dancer or

putting on long hair, dressing up as a woman or walking in a particular feminine style typical of a dancer. He says, "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" (414-415).

Dattani's play is also about patriarchal domination and Amritlal stands for the repression initiated by orthodox patriarchy" (Deb 4). According to Risha Sharma, "in *Dance Like a Man*, Dattani has highlighted that patriarchy is an invisible component of Indian culture. Guys hold essential power and prevail in the area of the family. They tend to hold the reins of expert over ladies, kids and different individuals from the family" (36). Amritlal acts like a colonizer and wants to control the members of his family.

Jairaj struggles in quest of freedom and happiness, under the weight of tradition, gender constructs and repressed desire. Amritlal sees the dance form of Bharatnatyam as the lowest level of art form as it was once practiced by the temple-prostitutes or devdasis. His discouragement of Jairaj's dance does not only come from dance's being a feminine performance, but also its being performed by the lowest form of art, the temple-prostitutes:

AMRITLAL. You are mistaken. Gaining independence was part of our goal. And someone has to be in charge. It's what we do now that counts. As you know, our priority is to eradicate certain unwanted and ugly practices which are a shame to our society.

JAIRAJ. Like dowry and untouchability.

AMRITLAL. That too. And ... you know perfectly well what I mean.

JAIRAJ. You have no knowledge of the subject. You are ignorant. AMRITLAL. We are building ashrams for these unfortunate women! Educating them, reforming them ...

JAIRAJ. Reform! Don't talk about reform. If you really wanted any kind of reform in our society, you would let them practice their art. AMRITLAL. Encourage open prostitution?

JAIRAJ. Send them back to their temples! Give them awards for preserving their art.

AMRITLAL. My son, you are the ignorant one. Most of them have given up their 'art' as you call it and have taken to selling their bodies.

JAIRAJ. I hold you responsible for that.

AMRITLAL. You have gone mad. ... I will not have our temples turned into brothels! (416- 417)

Dattani tries to "project how the biased society does not respond to the call of humanity and acknowledge the true art"(Vishwakarma 121). The social convention of gender inequality "spoils the grace of life both for male and female...The dramatic structure of the play evolves around the idea the individual will have make struggle against social conventions" (Agarwal 97). According to Poornima, "the gender inequality is the social evil which has overwhelmed the Indian society and it can be erased only when the people change their support to gender equality" (84). The colonized people suffer from the bad impact of colonization from one hand, and the patriarchal society from the other.

Dattani also highlights how the social restrictions and the consequential conflicts affect the familial relationship of father-son and husband-wife. Amritlal imposed his beliefs on the next generation. He gives priority to the culture. Indian culture is strongly rooted in its tradition and values, while the modernism is attempting to consolidate itself in Indian space. To describe the consciousness of Amritlal, Asha Kuthari remarks, " the underlying fear is obviously that dance would make him 'unwomanly'- an effeminate man- the suggestion of homosexuality hovers near, although never explicitly mentioned" (qtd. in Chaudhary 68). Amritlal follows traditions and is used to make orders like colonizers.

Like the play *Where There's a Will*, Dattani highlights the relationship between father and son. Jairaj revolts against the thoughts of his father who refuses him to practice dance as he says, "You have no knowledge of the subject. You are ignorant... If you really wanted any kind of reform in our society, you would let them practice their art" (416). His fault is that he tried to "march to the defeat of a different drummer in this gendered biased society" (Sharma 265).The title of the play *Dance Like a Man* deals with the main themes of the play which are the clash between the individual and society, and marginalization. Dattani himself, in one of the interviews with J. Karthika, says:

Thematically, I talk about the areas where the individual feels exhausted. My plays are about such people who are striving to expand this space. They live on the fringes of the society and are not looking for acceptance, but are struggling to grab as much fringe space for themselves as they can. (127)

Marginalization is the essence of resistance of his characters. Dattani weaves in "the intricate web of gender relationships and the givens of societal norm spanning three generations. The minimal use of characters maximizes the staged impact of the stereotypes through time. Amritlal and the old Jairaj, Vishwas and the young Jairaj; Lata and the young Ratna are "to be played by the same actor" (Chaudhuri 68). The individual keeps changing roles within the power structure of family.

Amritlal Parekh is a man of liberal ideology but he does not like his son's obsession of dance. The father is traditional and the son is modern in his ways of life. The father symbolizes traditional values, whereas the son symbolizes modernity. The play dramatizes the conflict between the age and the youth through the characters of the old father and the young son.

The main themes of the play are the family ties and marriage which highlight the conflict among the members of the family as follows:

JAIRAJ. I can't even have a decent rehearsal in this house.

AMRITLAL. You can't have a decent rehearsal in this house? I can't have some peace and quit in my house! It's bad enough having has to convert the library into a practice ball for you. (414)

Amritlal does not like his daughter-in-law Ratna's association with a devdasi and learning art of dance at her house as he fears of being spoiled his family reputation. This can be shown in the following dialogue:

AMRITLAL. We are building ashrams for these unfortunate women! Educate them, reforming them.

JAIRAJ. Reform! Don't talk about reform. If you really wanted any kind of reform in our society, you would let them practice their art. (416)

Amritlal thinks that supporting and allowing them to practice dancing is an indirect encouragement for open prostitution. On the

other hand, Jairaj has high respect for the art of dancing. These two different views can be shown in the following dialogue:

AMRITLAL. I will not have our temples turned into brothels!

JAIRAJ. And I will not have any art run down by a handful of stubborn narrow minded individuals with fancy pretentious ideals. (416)

Amritlal also tries to control the movement and manner of Ratna. In this way, the clash between tradition and 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. (419)

Amritlal cares for the name of the family and tries to control Ratna and her Jairaj as well. The following dialogue highlights the ego of the colonizer who wants to control everything even individuals:

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. (420)

Ratna is obsessed with dancing and she asserts, "you can't stop me from learning art" (421). Amritlal strongly objects Ratna's dancing in old lady's courtyard as he says, " And people peer over her walls to see my daughter-in-law dancing in her courtyard" (420). Devdasi system is "a religious practice in parts of southern India, including Andhra Pradesh, whereby parents marry a daughter to a deity or a temple. The marriage usually occurs before the girl reaches puberty and requires the girl to become a prostitute for upper-caste community members" (Chavan 110). Ratna describes her dancing as divine activity as she confirms, "yes, dancing the divine dance of Shiva and Parvati" (420). All forms of dance and drama are connected with religious ceremonies and rituals. Rana Uniyal asked Dattani in one of the interviews about

his play, Dattani remarks that *Dance Like a Man* is about Bharatnatyam dancers. In their old age, when they are in their 60s and they are looking back on to their struggling days, when they had their ideals and in the 50s where there was a stigma attached to the dance forms; that it is a dance form of the Devdasis. It is a prostitute's dance and people from respectable families do not practice that form of dance (n.p). Dance is an important custom in Indian society but it has restrictions.

Jairaj and Ratna leave the house as they protest against traditional notions and restrictions imposed upon them by Amritlal. This is evident in the following heated dialogue between Jairaj and Amritlal:

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. (422)

Jairaj does not want to stay a minute and resolves to never set a foot in the house again. Jairaj says, " we don't need anything fancy. (Turns around and speaks defiantly) As from now we are no longer under your care. And will never be again. Never. (Exits followed by a bewildered Ratna)" (424). Family name and social recognition are the chief concerns for AmritLal Parekh, but for Jairaj they are the obstacles in carving his self-identity. The primary focus is on the construction of male stereotypes and the question of one's essential identity. In this way, Jairaj and Ratna go away from their house. The clash between the father and the son symbolizes the clash between tradition and modernity. Jairaj struggles in quest of freedom and happiness, under the weight of tradition, gender constructs and repressed desire.

Amritlal is the patriarch and the second colonizer of the play. He is the money-earner, head of the family, and has an authority over dependent son and daughter-in-law. He is enslaved by the social code as he says to Jairaj, "there comes a time when you should do what is expected of you" (415). Amritlal locates the happiness of a man in "being a man"(426). Jairaj's father equates the art of dance with prostitution. He argues, "The craft of a prostitution to show off her wares- what business does a man have to learn from such a craft? No use when compared with dance"

(406). Jairaj replies, "you took it away bit by bit. You took it away when you made me dance my weakest items. You took it away when you arranged the lightening so that I danced in your shadow" (443). Amritlal wants Jairaj to follow his footsteps and erase his identity like Hasmukh Mehta wants his son Ajit to follow his footsteps in a form of psychological projection.

Amritlal's tolerance even of his daughter-in-law's learning the art form of the prostitute in exchange for ruining his own son's career as a dancer, is the culture's fear of men acting like women. To act like women is considered a greater threat than liberation of women, "A woman in a man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman's world is pathetic" (427). When Amritlal says that he will not allow the temples to turn into brothels, Jairaj objects by saying, "and I will not have my art run down by a handful of stubborn narrow-minded individuals with fancy pretentious ideals"(416). The dramatist has sketched the discrimination based on gender faced by Indian man and woman and its consequences (Poornima 80). Jairaj revolts against the strict rules in order to restore his identity.

Amritlal remains a constant presence even after his death, like the ghost of Hasmukh Mehta in *Where There's a Will*. The shawl symbolizes the past and the old days that turns to a trauma that haunts the presents. The 'shawl' is "a significant metaphor of autocracy perpetrated by Amritlal Parekh and also stands for Jairaj's unfulfilled desire to be recognized as a dancer. Every time Jairaj puts on the shawl his tussle with his father is enacted and thus the shawl symbolizes the menacing past" (Deb 7). In addition, Jairaj makes it clear he did not sell the house because it contained his childhood not because, as Viswas put it, it was something like a "shrine in memory of him"(406). Dattani highlights the relationship between the past and the present, and how the past effects the present with all its rules and customs.

In Dattani's play, Ratna finds herself in Amritlal's trap who convinces her to be with him against her husband as he says, "help me and I'll never prevent you from dancing" (427). Ratna is faced with the alternative of sacrificing her pursuit of her career on the one hand, and sacrificing Jairaj's career and thus ensuring financial security on the other. The husband-wife relationship between Jairaj and Ratna exhibits so many visible and invisible facts. According to Mheswari, "the marriage is a deed like as Ratna gets her freedom of choice to dance " (676). The devdasi of temple dancer

traditionally worships Shiva in his role of Nataraja, the lord of dance. Shiva's dance "symbolizes an ecstasy of motion which with its vital rhythm holds the universe together while perpetuating the cosmic activities of creation, preservation and destruction" (Nevile 13). Dattani uses the technique of traditional dance as a medium to portray the conflict of gender issues in the play. Ratna is a subaltern character who follows orders like Sonal in *Where There's a Will*. The difference between the two characters is that Ratna is a loyal wife and wants to help her husband to practice dance and maintain his identity without breaking the rules. Sonal accepts to live in the margin as she lacks the power to speak.

Jairaj fails not only due to the secret deal between his wife and father, but it is also a consequence of a social condition. Jairaj suffers from the identity crisis. He falls a prey to the dichotomy between his own chosen identity of a "dancer" and the forced but failed identity of "man" that precludes his former identity. The only time Ratna recognizes Jairaj's masculinity is his capacity not to cry, "That is because you are a ...man!" (437). He wants to fulfill his dream and maintain his identity.

Dattani is pulling the wool over the eyes of his audience and let them feel the dancing atmosphere by the sound of dancing bells. He confirms, "I guess I have used dance as a metaphor for personal expression in *Dance Like a Man*. But dance is definitely one of the tools of resistance. I think music is perhaps a tool used more often than dance" (personal interview by the researcher). As Indranee Ghosh rightly observes that there is no actual performance of the Bharatanatyam by any of the actors although it is the context in which the drama unfolds. The musicians and teachers remain unseen, their presence suggested by the mimetic actions of the main protagonists – taking in a tray of coffee cups, commenting on the musicians' reactions, bidding goodbye with folding hands, all of which take place off stage. Such omission may be taken as deliberate, indicating the virtual loss of the value of the art itself in its transformation into commodity (298). Amritlal's house moves through time, changes character along with its owner. The old cupboard, the shawl, the rose garden and the rest of the stage set all leave their impact in the juxtaposition of the stereotypes. The family mansion is demolished, and new flats are made. The demolition of old family mansion is "the symbol of cultural conflict between generations" (Chavan 111). The younger generations

suffer due to the oppressive fathers who act like colonizers and see nothing but the rules, customs and the family name.

All in all, Dattani succeeds in highlighting invisible issues in Indian society such as the gap between generations, marginality and gender roles. He uses techniques like flashback, and minimalism of his characters to convey his message. The younger generation suffers from the oppressive father as it represented in his two plays, *Dance Like a Man* and *Where There's a Will*. Dattani's plays principally deal with humanism in general and justice to marginalized sections of society in particular. Ajit protests against paternal hegemony and challenges the dictatorship of his father, Hasmukh. The tragedy of Jairaj is that he has chosen to pursue a career that is considered right only for women. That is why Amritlal is willing to have Ratna as the dancer and not Jairaj.

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القضايا غير المرئية في المجتمع الهندي في مسرحيتي حيث توجد الوصية 1988 و الرقص مثل الرجل 1989 لماهيش داتاني

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المستخلص

يهدف البحث إلى تناول بعض القضايا غير المرئية للمجتمع الهندي في مسرحيتي حيث توجد الوصية (1988) والرقص مثل الرجل (1989) لماهيش داتاني. و موضوعاته الرئيسية هي التهميش والتخفي والصراع بين الفرد والمجتمع. ففي مسرحية حيث توجد الوصية ، يتناول داتاني فكرة الأنانية الأبوية و "الهتلرية" من خلال تقديم شخصية هسموخ مهتا الذي يتصرف مثل المستعمر ويسيطر على أسرته أثناء حياته وحتى بعد موته من خلال وصيته. و في مسرحية الرقص مثل الرجل ، يقدم أشكالا من المقاومة للهيمنة الاستعمارية وما يحدث عندما يتم دفع المستعمرين إلى الضغوط الاستعمارية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، يبلور داتاني الفجوة بين الجيل القديم والجديد من خلال استخدام أسلوبه الأدبي في الاسترجاع والتقليل من استخدام شخصياته.

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