

THE PROPERTY OF AN ADVANCED MANLINESS: A FEMININE FELLA IN THE DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

Feminine Man in Indian English Theatre is the subject of this paper as a new location for gender politics. Society develops gender assumptions based on how men and women behave in a cultural environment. Many detractors argue that gender is a social construct, whereas sex is biology. Since the start of civilization, each epoch has had its own distinct vision of what it means to be a man. Masculinity in today's society is defined in a broad sense. Feminine Man is a result of today's masculinity. In modern Indian English theatre, the 'invisible' issue of gender identity is revealed. Mahesh Dattani's comedy *Dance Like a Man* is about masculinity. Jairaj Parekh, the protagonist of India's new age theatre, represents and emphasises this Feminine Man tendency, which is influenced by social circumstances in some way.

Keywords: India, sociological phenomena, play, staging, protagonist

INTRODUCTION

Gender study, even in the sphere of physical power, is divisive due to its emphasis on social equality or the emancipation of the will. Men may have become more aware of the differences between men and women as a result of gender awareness. To be clear, existing gender theories do not rule out sexuality because the biological body is understood to act as a platform for the viewer's social and political judgments. As a result, society assigns gender roles to both genders and stigmatises people who do not conform to their assigned positions. They are incorporated in such a way that the person does not feel objectified, but rather accepts that one might become an object just by adhering to gender roles. Feminist theory claims that gender is an ideology since it implies what society considers as natural, predetermined, and immutable. According to postmodern theorists that agree with the deconstructive concept, gender isn't a strict or consistent

notion everywhere. Gender appears to be a performance, similar to a text, that must be repeated and affirmed in specific social and cultural situations, but that is also susceptible to dispute or compromise. Postmodernism gender theories appear to be anti-essentialist in nature. Postmodern gender theories, to a greater or lesser extent, question the very conceptions of universal legitimacy, universal authority, and objectivity. In this view, texts like Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* deconstruct the old societal structure's rigorous adherence to gender roles, resulting in an acidic father-son relationship and undermining a dance artist's pure devotion.

Personal preferences have evolved as a result of modernization, departing from historical norms. The concept of a socially imposed gender role is being dismantled in today's culture. Within a specific socio-cultural setting, a person meets a range of socialisation processes throughout his or her life. Family, school, friends, and other social institutions offer an individual with a social environment that aids in the formation of social identity, which is facilitated by relatives, mentors, and other acquaintances. Jairaj appears in Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* as a Bharatnatyam dancer under the supervision of his guru. Dance, an Indian performing art, is traditionally seen as a female-dominated field. As a result, Jairaj's dancing performances aid in the formation of his gender nonconforming role in society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review's purpose is to find areas of research that have already been done, as well as elements of those studies that have gone unnoticed. Choosing a career as a gender politics hotspot has been the topic of several fascinating studies. According to previous study, a person's work has a substantial impact on how they socialise and form stereotyped gender identities.

According to C.K.Meena (1999), Dattani's plays expose a reoccurring topic of gender identity while unmasking the middle-class society depicted in them.

Angelie Multani (1996) claims that in Mahesh Dattani's drama *Dance like a Man*, Jairaj's passion for Bhartanatyam is underappreciated by his own father, who brutally tramps on it for traditional gender construction.

According to Neha Mehta, when a "pathetic" man enters a "woman's world," he stays to it like glue (2004). *Dance Like a Man's* storey does the same effect.

According to Claude Dubar's research, individuals build socialisation processes in their families and at work (2005a, 2005b).

Beemyn and Rankin (2011), for example, focus on anti-transgender identity discrimination.

Dance as a performance art form can be used to establish a man's non-conforming gender identity. There is currently little study to indicate men's gender non-conformity in patriarchal society. We may better understand how dancers (like Jairaj) create their identities via the perspective of gender studies when we think about masculinity in connection to this "invisible" site of masculinity. Judith Butler's germinal theory of gender performativity is used to critically analyse Mahesh Dattani's play *Dance Like a Man* in the perspective of socio-cultural environment.

STRUCTURE AND SPECIALISM

Because of the argument over whether sexuality is intrinsic or socially moulded, it has become a heated topic in feminist circles. Biology or personal preferences decide whether someone is gay or straight. Gender, on the other hand, is a separate feature that both sexes share. Before deciding whether or not gender is a social construct, it is necessary to grasp the fundamental concept of social construction. Social construction is one of the most essential philosophies in social studies. Meaning is created by human action, feedback, and communication. It is founded on a shared knowledge of a variety of human requirements, including language, customs, symbols, and colour, among others. Humans create society; unlike popular belief, it is not necessarily natural or inborn. It's adaptable, and depending on the situation, it can take on various shapes. This implies that the social environment has an impact on human identity formation.

In her book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (1990) established the concept of gender performativity as a fruitful arena for feminist debate. According to Butler, gender binaries are artificial social creations imposed by men and women. Refuting the socially assigned roles of a specific sexual category requires defying gender norms through performance. By destabilising mutually incompatible gender types, different gender 'positions' could be produced. To completely comprehend the cultural significance of gender, one must examine how men and women act and think in society. In regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and, most crucially, gender, sociopolitical aims affect sexuality and link it to power. From an anthropological standpoint, it's feasible to claim that since the start of civilization, each epoch has had its own idea about what it means to be a man. The social makeup of today's culture often reinforces one's masculinity. It is considered as the dominant component in a gendered culture,

symbolising male supremacy. What's interesting is whether or not the person in command is a man's feminine self. Jairaj illustrates that gender is a created identity based on societal conventions by taking the passive role following invasion.

According to feminist critiques of professionalism literature, professionalism is frequently modelled on existing masculinized institutional systems. Even if they have familial problems, dancers' personal interests and artistic ambitions influence their job choices. Being a professional dancer is a well-known and widely accepted job for women. As a result, a man's career in dance threatens the dance industry's hegemony as well as traditional notions of masculinity. Choices about one's profession are crucial in creating one's identity and avoiding gender norms.

CURVACEOUS MALE AND MANHOOD

Feminine The modern man's attitude toward masculinity might be considered as a major topic of discussion right now. Masculinity is considered the polar opposite of femininity. A critical assessment of masculinity, on the other hand, reveals a very different picture. The social construction of a man's behaviour, manners, and portrayal is based on his biological characteristics. Manhood is a concept that is acquired through socialisation after birth, rather than being born with it.

Gender identities are formed from infancy, as children are socially moulded into accepted masculine and feminine standards. Gender identities in men and women are not only formed in early childhood, but they are constantly reconfigured and renegotiated throughout their lives. On a daily basis, this procedure takes place. As a result, masculinity can be considered as a notion akin to feminism, which concerns with men's place in society, according to Jackson (1991). It examines how masculinity influences power dynamics in a social, political, and cultural setting. Men's studies are frequently linked to women's studies, gay men's studies, and transgender studies. Masculinity research is a relatively recent topic of study, having begun around 1970. It first appeared in the critique field to show men's rights in society. The feminine man, on the other hand, differs from the traditional representation and perception of men in some ways. Every epoch in human history has had a different philosophy about what it means to be a man, as history demonstrates. In 3000 B.C., masculine masculinity was defined by bravery and daring; in mediaeval times, it was defined by Christianity and gallantry. We now have Feminine Man as a result of this increased masculinity. Feminine Man can't be traced back in time, but there was a

probable cause for his birth after World War II, when there was no such thing as an absolute man in western culture and women took on the job of working men. The Feminine Man is a brand-new type of man. Masculinity was traditionally regarded as a sign of initiative and drive, the polar opposite of femininity. Women perceived themselves as weak, inferior, and docile at the time.

FEMININE MAN

Jairaj plays the new men's spokesman in this play. As a coming-of-age play, it was initially published in 1989. It's one of the most acclaimed plays in Indian theatre history. The situations and circumstances presented in this drama are all unique. Dattani's plays are about modern experiences of middle and lower-middle-class families, in which family relationships play a key part in showing gender discrimination for both men and women. Dattani. The family is at the heart of society, and it combines various aspects to form the total. As a result, the family acts like a camera, recording the big image. Dattani goes into society's patriarchal foundation when it comes to harsher aspects of society, such as rejecting individual choices to family members. Dattani uses the cover of a fight between tradition and modernity to portray an unorthodox and innovative side of gender politics in this play. Individual behaviour that deviates from patriarchal conventions puts the modern man in a difficult situation, which he expertly reflects in his present play. As Neha Mehta writes in her review of the book, a "pathetic" man intrudes into a "woman's world" and then sticks to it fiercely. Mehta's study found that (2004).

Despite his liberal beliefs and progressive ideas, Amritlal Parekh, the oppressive father in *Dance Like a Man*, validates his son Jairaj's attitudes and manners. Jairaj is an Indian classical dancer who specialises in Bharatanatyam. The drama begins with senior Jairaj and Ratna reminiscing their days of struggle and the 1950s, when Bharatanatyam had become a societal shame. It's a public dance, and decent-looking women don't do it. As a result, pursuing a profession in a physical dance that was previously only open to women is now twice as tough for guys. Dancing isn't about femininity for Jairaj; rather, it's about perfect artistry and a female safety valve, he claims. Amritlal serves as a guardian of traditional gender roles throughout the play. He depicts himself as a father whose power is based exclusively on the manipulation of his son's free choice, all while claiming to love him.

Amritlal: I've always been willing to accommodate your wishes. You must, however, fulfil your responsibilities at some point. What makes you want to dance? See Dattani for further information (2000) As a result, Amritlal takes tremendous satisfaction in his mission: to cleanse society of heavenly prostitution, which he considers a "shame." But underneath his hyperbole lies the truth: he is more concerned with exposing the depravity of the flesh trade than with assisting those poor unhappy ladies. Amritlal's humanitarian mission has the unforeseen consequence of imposing his ideas on the people he helps, preventing them from pursuing their own aspirations. Jairaj makes a gallant effort to express himself via dancing, despite being caught up in the rigid gender roles system. He engages in dance, which is considered a shameful and feminine pastime by society. He seeks out the creative freedom that artists yearn for and discovers it in their work. As a result, Amritlal considers dancing to be a sort of prostitution, while Jairaj considers it to be a sacred art form with divine connotations.

The drama delves into the dark aspect of masculinity. Dattani presents Jairaj as less macho than traditional men while dressing up the 'invisible' problem of gender development as a wonderful family conflict by masterfully interrogating social boundaries for men's and women's labour, gender stereotypes, and gender roles. Amritlal, a patriarchal believer, prefers gender roles to be fixed. As a result, rather than dancing, he would demonstrate his masculinity by playing cricket. He pondered. In this work, the lines between gender and physicality are blurred.

The body's actions reveal a person's gender. However, if a person's body is internalised in ways that cause it to recur in terms of expression, it can harmonise an artistic performance. Jairaj's "normalcy" is debunked with the help of Amritlal. A portion of reality exists outside the world of art, while another exists within artworks, where it is changed in response to the demands of the artists who produce them. However, it's a depressing fact that every reconstruction includes a reference to the outside world so that communication between the two parties involved can continue.

The phallus, which represents authority and is the only one who may initiate meaning in the storey, is a symbol of patriarchal role in Dance Like a Man. Jairaj, the new man, is afraid of being castrated, but not because of his mother's wishes, but because of his dance. He appears as a location on which meaning is imposed for the sake of continuing to carry what has already been built. After running into troubles on his own, he went back to his father's house and entirely sacrificed his self-esteem to him. In attempt to reconcile his son's self-expression with his own

gender, Amritlal tries to persuade Ratna to doubt Jairaj's 'manliness.' Amritlal devises a plan to transform Jairaj into a "manly man" rather than a "feminine man" with her assistance. Jairaj is interested in learning dance, but his father opposes his intentions since our society's traditional socio-political framework prohibits men from pursuing dance as a vocation and views dance as a lower-class hobby for women. Amritlal tries to dissuade Jairaj from dancing, claiming that a woman is progressive in a man's world but pathetic in a woman's. See Dattani for further information (2000).

Dattani deftly exposes gender issues using the traditional dance style in his show *Dance Like a Man*. The patriarchal system of gender binary classifications is undermined when a person's employment choice becomes a contentious matter of gender identification. Amritlal said that Ratna had misled him and that his son, Jairaj, had chosen to pursue a career as a dancer. We can understand how gender politics operate in Indian society because of the play's socio-cultural setting. As a result of viewing the play, one is compelled to consider how society shapes one's actions and whether or not they should be questioned. The textual analysis from a post-feminist perspective justifies the objective of the previously described topic. His plays transcend time and geography because they address major social concerns including changing gender roles. Dattani, as a result, will remain relevant for generations to come.

CONCLUSION

A dramatic text is a piece of literature written by a dramatist and presented on stage. Theatre is technically designed to uncover and portray social norms in a cultural context. It is used to bring attention to patriarchal plots against a society's freedom of choice. As a result, a theatrical text can be critically analysed from the perspective of gender studies in general and masculinity studies in particular. Dramatic writings, as social reflections, serve as platforms for individuals to speak out against gender oppression by reflecting the reality that lies underneath socially manufactured conventions. Isn't it self-evident that theatrical texts are an important mode of representation all throughout the world? Although there are several explanations for drama's popularity, the most logical argument is that it can be found in almost every element of society. The material world is full with trials and tribulations. If you have an issue, it might be a person's output or the social setting, both of which can be influenced by a socio-cultural scenario either

directly or indirectly. Women's freedom of choice in gender roles is hampered by politics, religion, beliefs, society, and tradition. To put it another way, the new trend in Indian English Theatre reflects socioeconomic developments. Mahesh Dattani's film *Dance Like a Man* elucidates the complicated yet hopeful problem of gender politics. He introduces himself as the 'change element' in the present structure of Indian English Theatre. It's not just about Jairaj; the characters' mindsets and demeanors change dramatically. They lack a strong sense of hostility and have no intention of acting aggressively. There is a new self-defined male personality that can be simply associated with a feminine outlook that ignores the set masculine attitude. *Dance Like A Man* reflects today's cultural climate with its portrayal of the masculine "feminine" man.

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