



Available online at [www.jlls.org](http://www.jlls.org)

---

## JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

---

ISSN: 1305-578X

*Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(4), 3084-3087; 2021

# Power Politics In Mahesh Dattani's Dance Like A Man

M. Kalaiselvan<sup>a</sup>, Dr. T. Jayakumar<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Par-Time Ph.D Scholar, PG & Research Dept. of English, Periyar EVR College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University), Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

<sup>b</sup> Associate Professor & Head, PG & Research Dept. of English, Periyar EVR College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University), Tiruchirappalli Tamil Nadu, India.

### APA Citation:

Kalaiselvan, M., & Jayakumar, T. (2021). Power Politics in Mahesh Dattani's Dance Like a Man, *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(4), 3084-3087

Submission Date: 11/10/2021

Acceptance Date: 25/12/2021

---

### Abstract

Power politics is all pervasive. It intrudes into every space. Every living thing – human beings, wild animals or pet animals with their physical strength-- is under the hues of its own identity with its unique colour of the society. Rich dominates poor because the former has money; Ministers domineer the bureaucrats. Man rules his family and makes all the decisions. Stronger animals control weaker ones. Thus power monger is everywhere. Mahesh Dattani's drama is a one that underlines the fact of power politics in his drama with the characters in the name of myriad relationships.

**Keywords:** Power Politics, Religion, Gender Issues, Predicament, Family Relationship, Interpersonal Relations.

---

## 1. Introduction

Mahesh Dattani is one of the most important Indian playwrights in English. He has received the Sahitya Akkademi award for his contribution to the World drama. He teaches Theatre Courses at the summer sessions programmes of Portland University in US. Also he writes radio plays for BBC. His play deals with religions, tension, sexuality and gender issues. According to NeeruTandon, "What one loves about them is the way he brings in the dynamics of personal and moral choices while focusing on human relationship." Dealing with the desolation of human predicament of human beings, *Dance like a Man* (1989) is a wonderful drama which provides an insight into current social scene in India. As Rachel Bari and M. Ibrahimkhalilullah aver:

What is interesting about Dattani is the fact that in every human drama of this everything is placed in family and never for a moment for getting that the family is an important a part of the human psychic in this part of the world

Family relationship can be defined as the way in which a person is similar to somebody else in a family. All this falls within the ridge of a family relationship. Dattani has granted a good set of family relationship in his play *Dance like a Man*. It is the play about the couple Jairaj and his wife Ratna, the two emeritus Bharatanatyam dancers. Also the play deals with Jairaj's father, Amritlal Parekh his

daughter Lata and her fiancé Viswas. Past and present move together in the play which brings into a cute focus upon the interpersonal relationship between these members of the Parekh family.

*Dance like a Man* focuses on domestic conflict that mostly builds around the relationship between Amritlal Parekh and Jairaj. In the play, the old man and his son appear to be living in two lonely worlds which had no interaction. Introducing the old image of patriarchy, Amritlal is an autocratic father who is not receptive. He does not make any sort of attempt to understand even in smaller amount about the feelings of his son who has a lot of ambitions. Amritlal possibly tries to control over his son Jairaj, a dancer, to resolve the career with a prejudiced vision of life. The myths and misconception of his father is crystal clearly obvious. The dialogue between the father and son reveals what kind of relationship they have:

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)

It is an axiom that the son's sign depends upon creating a precinct between himself and his father. As his father is very hard to impress him with his self-styled ethics and wants Jairaj to adhere his ideology and to perpetrate those on him deliberately. As a result, Jairaj takes an expeditious decision at once, makes up his mind to leave his father's house with his wife and determines never to come back. He tells his father sternly: "As from now we are no longer under your care and will never be again never" (424). However, Amritlal finds himself incapable to support his family on his own and is interested in "something better than just working for money alone" (411),

Accommodating all the pitfalls in his mind, Jairaj comes back to his father's home with enfeebled state just within two days of his leaving and intends to make harmony of a hairs knuckling under the ability of his father who exploits the circumstance to curtail his (Jairaj) freedom. Now, Jairaj is able to practice dance only "twice a week in the morning" and unable even "grow [his] hair any longer" (425). However, he continues to hate his father's guts till the end of the story. His disdain for his father is also vividly portrayed when he tells Viswas,

I removed his [father's] memories. The gardens. He had plenty of spare time. He used to do a lot of gardening. A rose garden. Creepers climbing the wall. When he died, I had everything removed. (406)

To the greatest extent, it is a matter of wider generations issues. Its feature that the contrast between youthful aspirations and compromises. It is brought into an account, when the discussion occurred between the Jairaj and his wife, Ratna in the play. The dramatist exposes the blankness of the traditional patriarchal authority through the portrayal of the conflict between Amritlal and Jairaj which amounts disastrous effects on the life of Jairaj, professional dancer and his wife Ratna as well. This is ubiquitous that this sort of rigid inclination of the parenthood against such determined people in Indian families is incessantly noticed.

It is a two-act stage play by Dattani who focuses on the most fundamental form of familial relationship that is unleashed upon relationship between Jairaj and Ratna. One comes to know that both of them are sensible and of a profound in their live which they seek for remedy or at least to palliate in the public world of "consumerism" and situation. They have apparent different between their social life and status. They are found commenting upon each other's adequacy and inadequacy in every discussion they have which leads to fast deteriorates into an worth arguments. They show celebration for each other's desire and feelings and seem to be patronage to each other.

In the first act of the play, Rata opposes the views of her weekly visit to Chennai. As Ratna says, "My husband knows where I go and I have his permission" (420). But the relationship between the husband and wife undergoes a strong change just after Jairaj's familial abode. Ratna drops her faith in Jairaj and she is no longer to be proud of her husband. As she tells him, "You are nothing but a spineless boy who couldn't leave his father's house for more than forty eight hours.... You stopped being a man for me the day you came back to this house"(402). And her affection for husband dance makes her go to the around to betraying her husband when she promises her father-in-law, trying her level best to "help him (Jairaj) grow up" (427).

The playwright profitably exposes to make Jairaj's psyche to the audience. He condemns Ratna for her failure as a dancer and becomes envious of her as she has earned name and glory. He favours his wife and he is the only person responsible for the existence of their son, Shankar. At the end of the play, Jairaj is blessed with Ratna compromising in bridal life.

The story of Jairaj and Ratna is similar to their daughter Lata who is prepared to establish herself as a dazzling dancer. Lata is a great genius who is deeply affected by the deserted ambitions and irritation of her parents. Since Bharatanatyam dance is fading under modern India's sun shine, their daughter and the senility couple struggle to keep that art form alive in the walks of their life ahead. Ratna strikes one as the mother figure whose only interest is to see her daughter a successful dancer. She has huge mood that swings from ecstasy to mentally depending upon how her daughter's professions progress. As Rathna asserts:

... I wish Lata more fame than we have had. Why, she can be best! We just have to push her a bit and, with our experience behind her, she can't fail. I'll do anything to see that she reaches the top. (412)

As it is put, she butters up C. V.Suri, a popular critic by inviting him as the chief guest at the Navratri festival only to make sure that he gives an orgiastic review of her daughter's introduction as a dancer. But at same time, Ratna's acts are selfish and she gives the stinging of being related only with how she and her family look to others diverse the true happiness of her daughter when Lata deploys herself as a shining star in the sky of Bharathanatyam, (432).

It is obvious to know that she becomes envious of her. Her daughter reminds of her own defeat in life and she finds herself incapable to understand how success can come so facile to a person. As far as Lata's attitude towards her mother is concerned, she has been presented herself as daughter of loyalist and it is under lined as, "Mummy, whatever happens I'm going to dance at the fest for all those people and for you" (402). She gives the whole honour of her success to her "mummy's efforts" (433) and when one considers the relationship between the father and the daughter i.e. Jairaj and Lata, it seems to be a normal one. One comes to know that Jairaj loves his daughter and Lata too reciprocates her father's a lot: to keep her father away from liquor drink, she "makes [it] sure there is none in the house at any time" (408).

Jairaj's broad love for his daughter is evident when he is eager on reading the rare reviews of her activity and says: "She's a genius! That's what it means. Our daughter is a genius" (432). Jairaj's compliment is supplemented by Viswas' who says: "A shining star of in the sky of Bharatanatyam (432). The new pattern of the patriarchy is espoused when Lata comes to know that the son should fulfill the dreams of the parents but not the daughter. The dramatist makes it a matter of perennial genre as the mythical and myopic conception and fabric in Indian families.

Another significant one delineated in the play is that the relationship between Ratna and her father-in-law Amritlal. Self-centeredness and opportunism of the memberships of a family and their interpersonal ties has been conveyed successively through the relationship. Also, there seems to be failing attachment between the two. In all the time they are found to be talking to each other in a business like tone. Amritlal being a classical and adamantly old man has got controlling behaviour of

his daughter-in-law and stopping her from going to Chennai. She argues reasonably with her father-in-law and he finds that she is inflexible. But he has no doubt about her sharpness and brain.

## 2. Conclusion

Therefore, eventually, the couple Jairaj and Ratnachange their mind and return to their house. As the adage says, 'Strike while the iron is hot,' he uses Ratna as a weapon for having a control over his son and strikes a deal with her as though there would be intricacies in the life ahead.

But their tenderness proves to be an intimidation to the personal as well as the vocational life of Jairaj. So it can be concluded that the play *Dance Like a Man* is a spectacular study of the power politics as reflected in their behaviours of various people who tend to establish their being in the name of familial bonds in the family. The perennial issues like prejudice, guilty, dishonesty, selfishness and ego are all the inevitable stuff that explodes in the spectrum of their life. As Mahesh Dattani writes in his "Preface" to volume of *Collected Plays*:

I am certain that my plays are a true reflection of my time, place and socio-economic background. I am hugely excited and curious to know what the future holds for me and my Art in the new millennium in a country that has myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally. (xv)

## References

- Bari, Rachel, Ibrahim Khalilullah, "Reading Dattani : A View Point," *The Literary Criterion: Special Number on Modern Indian English drama*, Vol 42, Nos. 3 & 4 (2007), 61.
- Dattani, Mahesh. *Collected Plays*. London, Penguin Books House Ltd, 2000.
- Tandon, Neeru, ed. "Mahesh Dattani and Badal Sircar," *Perspective and Challenges in Indian-English Drama*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors. 2006. P.91.