

**Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* and Mahesh  
Dattani's *Dance like a Man*: A study of Marginal  
Identities and Performing Artists**

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## Declaration

I declare that the dissertation/thesis entitled “Girish Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain* and Mahesh Dattani’s *Dance like a Man: A Study of Marginal Identities and Performing Artists*” has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Alpna Saini, Associate Professor and Coordinator, Department of Languages and Comparative Literature, School of Languages Literature and Culture, Central University of Punjab.

No part of this dissertation/thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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## **Certificate**

I certify that Susmita Mohanta has prepared his/her dissertation/thesis entitled “Girish Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain* and Mahesh Dattani’s *Dance like a Man: A Study of Marginal Identities and Performing Artists*” for the award of M.A. degree of the Central University of Punjab, under my guidance. He/She has carried out this work at the Department of Languages and Comparative Literature, School of Languages Literature and Culture, Central University of Punjab.

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## Abstract

### Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* and Mahesh Dattani's *Dance like a Man: A Study of Marginal Identities and Performing Artists*

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The two plays under study are *Dance Like a Man* (1989) by Mahesh Dattani and *The Fire and the Rain* (1995) by Girish Karnad. The present study proposes to focus on the depiction of marginal identities of performing artists by the societal marginalisation like gender, caste, and class. In the play *Dance Like a Man*, the life of the dancers is pathetically portrayed as they are never privileged for keeping the classical dancing fresh and alive rather the dancers are marginalised. Politics and Patriarchy serve as an obstacle in the path of dancers like Jairaj, Ratna and Lata. Dancing is chosen as a profession and occupation by the dancers but frequent depreciation by the family members and the society has made them handicapped economically as well as socially. The society, the dancers dwell in, never misses an opportunity to exploit, criticise and blame them. Thus, a chapter of this study is about the marginalisation of the artist on the basis of societal marginalisation. The first marginalisation looked upon in the play for performing artists is gender divide, like how females and males behaving like female are treated. The second marginalisation is class divide and the third is caste.

The play, *The Fire, and the Rain* is about the marginalised actors who are hindered by caste, class, and gender. Acting chosen as a profession by Brahmin was not accepted in the medieval period in India. The actors were termed as low-caste. In this play, religion, politics, and patriarchy are the factors responsible for the marginalisation of the theatre actors. Karnad's, through this play, wants to save theatre by saving the theatre artist by using the tool of myth. This study focuses on unmasking the truth that the profession of an individual is not to be chosen by birth rather it is individual's choice that matters in choosing his/her profession.

This study aims to bring out the reasons and consequences for the marginalisation of performing artists depicted in both the plays.

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## Introduction

'Entertainment' for ages, the time when people didn't even know what that terminology means, was a part of their lives. They lived through performing art, expressing the inner self through dance, music, drama, paintings, etc. According to UNESCO:

Performing Art range from vocal and instrumental music, dance and theatre to pantomime, sung verse and beyond. They include numerous cultural expressions that reflect human creativity and that are also found, to some extent, many other intangible cultural heritage domain (Performing Arts).

In fact, when language system was not developed, it was through gestures or fine art that they try to communicate. However, the more the tendency of socialization increased in human beings, the more social norms we dress up with. Therefore, this led to hindrances in art.

Performing art, in India, is not always seen superior rather the performing artists are always made outcasts and marginalised in the society. The classical dancers, theatre performers, etc. during the kinship were treated out to be marginalised in terms of caste, class, gender etc. that has continued even till the twenty-first century. Performers are never treated with respect, as the societal norms always hinder artists. Performing artists in society are only meant to entertain the people in the society but except for applauds performers never get anything in return and that becomes a threat to the very existence of performing artists. In case, if a family has a performing artist, the artist is the burden for the family because neither the people would respect nor he or she can earn his or her livelihood because performing art is intangible and is unlike other art forms that are tangible like photography, painting, architecture, etc. Even the family tends to make the life of the performing artists terrible by forcing them to choose some other profession other than being a performing artist.

Marginal identities and performing artists in India are associated with each other. Performing art though is appreciated by the people abroad and in the

country, yet the performers face several problems. The artists have to face threat to his/her existence as they are frequently marginalised in terms of caste, class, and gender. This kind of marginalisation becomes an obstacle to the creativity of an artist. Performing artists, therefore, are hindered from being successfully identified as performing artist. Marginalisation, according to Oxford Dictionary means, "Treatment of the person, group or concert as insignificant and peripheral". Further, marginality is generally used to describe and analyse socio-cultural, political and economic spheres, where disadvantaged people struggle to gain access. Marginalisation in terms of gender, caste, and class comes under the category of societal marginalisation. Societal marginalisation is conditioned by social customs and social norms. Societal marginalization of the performing artist is the issue of concern in this research work.

In this research, Gender, caste and class divide is taken into consideration to highlight the pathetic condition of the performing artists in contemporary times. The societal marginalisation like Gender, caste, and class sometimes leads to the marginalisation of the self which is the extension of societal marginalisation. The marginalisation of the self only happens when the self, getting frustrated with the marginalised world starts marginalising himself or herself, for the forced identity he possesses, is not making the self eternally satisfied. Self-marginalised performing artists are mostly demotivated and therefore, they could not yield the kind of performances which they might give. Therefore, this hinders the creativity and uniqueness of performing artists because self-marginalisation under the shadow of societal marginalisation gives a threat to the identity of performing artists. Therefore, they face an identity crisis. Performing artist always craves to be respected and praised by the people for their performances but the absence of this respect for their artistic performances makes performing artists dishearten. Later, the performing artists begin to suffer from self-marginalisation.

The three societal marginalisations that are captured by the microscopic observation of the characters in the selected plays like *Dance Like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani and *The Fire and The Rain* by Girish Karnad are gender, caste, and class. Besides, the effect of this marginalisation upon the performing artists is also traced. Firstly, Gender discrimination plays a major role in dividing essence of performing art like- how females are looked upon as artists, how they are expected

to stay in the four walls of the house and help in procreation. Not only females but how male performing artists behaving like females, in other words how effeminacy is treated by the society and by his own family towards him. How these performing artists are mentally harassed which sometimes lead them to withdraw from the profession of being a performing artist. As we know each performing artist is different from the other in the portrayal of his or her art form but when these performing artists are condemned by the orthodox people, it let the performers, quit their profession as performing artists. Thus, when the performer quits, there is space of creativity created in the creation of performing art due to the lack of that artist and the lack of the talent of that artist which cannot be recovered by any other artist. However, this research also brings forward how gender discrimination obstacles performing art by hurdling performing artists.

The study examines how stereotyped gender identities are created and gender norms are reinforced, keeping in mind about the gender structures in the society in determining the life of the performing artists. The portrayal of performing artist in this text is studied under the purview of Judith Butler's theory, '*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*'. Judith Butler, in this essay, extends what Beauvoir means about gender as a social construct,

When Simone de Beauvoir claims that, "One is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman," she is appropriating and reinterpreting this doctrine of constituting acts from the phenomenological tradition. In this sense, gender is no way a stable identity or locus of agency through which various acts proceed; rather it is an identity tenuously constituted in time- an identity instituted by a *stylised repetition of acts* (519).

Here, Butler means gender is no way a stable identity and but it the agencies which are responsible for the constitution of gender, and those gender are to perform certain acts prescribed to them rather the individual identity is recognised when the 'identity is tenuously constituted in time'. Therefore, the identity is recognised by "*a stylized repetition of acts.*" In the very next line, Judith Butler exclaims with contempt about gendered self, as 'gender is instituted through

stylization of the body'. The orthodox way of visualizing gender is through the individual 'bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds'. This illusion is the reason for the 'abiding gender self'. However, Butler idea of performativity is used in this study.

Secondly, 'Class' plays a vital role in this bourgeoisie world where everything is termed in terms of money. Poverty handicaps the performers when not paid enough to carry on a healthy and wealthy living. In this case, performing art can be a subject to property or object which comes under the category of buying of morals from the artists through their performances like dance, music, drama, etc. Further, all performing arts, as well as fine arts, tend to reflect the positive and negative aspects of the life of the people having the motive to reform the society. Karl Marx believes that art is the part of the superstructure and is inescapably determined by the mode of production or the economic system. All artists are cultural producer aiming at bringing their creative art to sell in the capitalist market. This also hinders performing art because the producers always aim at the consumers in the market and in the same way performers on stage would also perform in accordance with the audience demand. This leads to the barrier of the art because artist then would only produce soulless art as they have to neglect the eternal voice of their heart and mind and perform according to the demands of the audience. However, when performing art is not able to satisfy what the chords of the human heart and the fashion that time actually demands, it leads the artist to face financial crisis leading them to become low-class people in the society. This is an issue of concern in this twenty-first century where the world is a materialistic one. Further, the problem lies with the performing art is that performing art is intangible in nature and it cannot be accounted for in terms of money. That is the reason why, unlike fine art, there is no object to be sold but morals and values for the reformation of the society. Therefore, my research would also deal with class, which is a dividing factor in performing art, marginalising performing artists.

At last, the issue of caste touches the peak of societal marginalisation with regard to performing artists. Performing artists have always been hindered in India because of their caste. Though, after independence things have changed to a large extent. Thus, in my research, I would bring into limelight how caste has

hindered the flow of art creating a dividing space of art in the past that is during the reign of kingship and how it is treated in the modern world where there is democracy prevailing in the country by the characters marginalised by Gender, caste, and class. Present lies in the deeds of the past, therefore, though caste isn't a very talk about the topic in the twenty-first century but still some shade of caste can be found in the depiction of art which creates an opaque wall in the creation of art. However, my research would also bring about how caste determines the identity of the performing artists. How performers are socially not acceptable when they are of low caste and how they are converted to low caste because they choose the profession of performing art. In India, it has been a tradition that artists are generally of low-class people who perform in the courts of kings for the entertainment of the people in the palace. However, things are getting evolved but we can also find that most people who tend to be in the field of performing art are mostly from backward classes, tribal people. Performing art like cultural dance is mostly performed by the people of backward caste and not much interest is taken by high caste people like Brahmins. Similarly, in the case of drama and cultural music, the artists are frequently marginalised. It is also observed that the instruments that are entirely eastern like flute, *mridanga*, *tanpura*, etc are played mostly by the people from the lower caste. Classical dancers, who were called as 'devadasi', were treated with disrespect as they belong to the low caste. Further, they were made to dance in king's court to the command of the kings for the sake of entertainment and slowly the condition of devadasis changed when they were used for prostitution. Before the reign of the Britishers, the people who were likely to take the profession of performing art were to be termed as low caste. Performing art, therefore, was much hindered when caste shadowed the performing artists because in India low caste people were mostly deprived of all that the high caste people owned. Thus, the reciprocal relationship between class and caste with respect to marginalised performing artists can be seen in this research work. Low caste people are, therefore, always looked down and not respected like other higher sects in the society. Performing artists always need the tool of encouragement but caste darkens their life as performers.

In order to understand how marginalization of performing artist is made throughout the play on the basis of caste and class, B.R Ambedkar's book

*Annihilation of Caste* is taken into consideration. This book is quite argumentative as Ambedkar tend to expose the ugly reality of the Hindus in the society. Ambedkar comes with reason that the there is no authentication of caste. Further, caste does not determine what profession is better for an individual but it is the right and privilege to choose what he or she wants to choose.

Thus, gender caste and class causes triple marginalisation and identity crisis of performing artists in this study. Therefore, the plays chosen to exemplify the research upon marginalisation of artists are Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* and Girish Karnard's *The fire and the Rain*.

### ***Dance Like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani**

Mahesh Dattani was born on August 7, 1958. He had his education in Baldwin Boys High school and then went to St Joseph College, Bangalore. He is a graduate in History, Economics and Political Science and also a post graduate in Marketing and Advertisement Management. He is influenced by Gujarati playwright Madhu Rye's play *Kumarni Agashi* and then builds up an interest in writing plays. He has worked as a copywriter for an advertising firm and subsequently with his father in the family business. The playpen was the theatre group that he formed in 1984 and has directed many plays ranging from classical Greek to Contemporary works. His first full-length play is *Where There is a Will* in 1988 and then he continued writing plays like *Dance Like a Man* (1989), *Tara* (1990), *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991), *Final Solutions* (1993), *On A Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998), *Seven Circles Around the Fire* which was played in radio in BBC as *Seven Steps Around the Fire* in 1998, *The Murder That Never Was* (2000), *30 Days in September* in 2001, *Brief Candle* in 2009, *Where Did Leave my Purda* in 2012 and *The Big Fat City* in 2012.

Dattani is the first Indian English Playwright to be awarded Sahitya Academy award for his book of plays *Final Solutions and Other Plays*. *Dance Like a Man* is awarded the best picture award by National Panorama in 1998. *Final Solutions* (1997), *Tara* (2000), and *30 Days in September* (2007) are the plays selected by Sahitya Kala Parishad as best productions of the year as directed by Arvind Gaur. Mahesh Dattani also teaches theatre courses at the summer

sessions programme of Portland State University, Oregon, USA, and conducts workshops throughout the country as well. He also writes radio plays for BBC Radio 4.

Mahesh Dattani can be labeled as 'living newspaper' because he updates the society by bringing forth the issues which people don't even want to talk about. Reading Dattani's plays actually make him a twenty-first-century reformer as everyone in the society can relate himself or herself to the characters Dattani portray on stage. The issues he brings forward are basically the issues which prevail in the contemporary society but the society tries to hide it by not discussing it. Dattani highlights the taboo issues of all type of gender marginalisation not only for females but also for transgender, homosexuals and even for males in his plays. The plays like *Dance Like a Man* and *Muggy Night in Mumbai* are the best examples of his presentation of all types of gender in urban. His perspectives of the world he inspects are entirely different from the other playwrights as he tries to look at the condition of each character in the perspective of that specific character as well as the perspective of other characters on that character. That is the reason why we witness not a single character responsible for a character's failure in something rather we are made to take into account by the playwright that all the factors responsible for the failure. Dattani's attempts to bring out innumerable themes of the contemporary times to highlight the un-talked issues. The uniqueness of Dattani's play lies in way Dattani shows hidden emotions of a character under the mask of laughter. All the comic lines in the play have serious meanings, which if understood by the audience can be felt, else it is just for laughter.

Dattani's play *Dance Like a Man* is a play of marginalisation of identities, suppression of ambitions, stereotype social construct, and sufferings of performing artists. Classical dancers in the play *Dance Like a Man* are seen spending their life with difficulty. In Act 1, the condition of dancer family is pathetically portrayed. Forty years of dancing has brought the family nowhere. The condition of the artist is found to be poor, except for the inherited house of Amritlal, who was the Gujarati seth. They haven't progressed much. In the first act itself, it is evident that the pathetic condition of the dancers was worst in the past but the condition has changed in the present. The artists have improved as they are more liberated in

choosing whatever profession they like than they were before the independence in the country. However, the play *Dance Like a Man* attempts to show the graph of marginalisation through the representation of three generations of people in a family. In Act 1, we see that the Parekh family is in a trouble as the musician Srinivas who was supposed to play Mridangam for Lata's performance tripped on his dhoti and ended up breaking his arm. So, the problem of the family is they want a musician to support Lata's Bharatanatyam performance. In this act, we also see Jairaj and Ratna never had a friendly talk since long, and Viswas asked Jairaj about his problems he said about his father, that he hated his father because he never gave him a penny to spend. However, Ratna and Jairaj are depressed as both failed being recognised as dancers and therefore they do not want their daughter to be unsuccessful as well. Ratna, therefore, grieves saying, 'We were never anything great, never will be, nor will our daughter be anything but an average human being (402).' However, the fear of failure for their daughter is the reason why Jairaj and Ratna flashback to their past where they themselves were unsuccessful as dancers. They blame each other for their failure. In this scene we also come to know how Jairaj was marginalised as a performing artist and resulted in quitting dance because according to his father Amritlal Parekh, dance was not making him 'a man' therefore he kept on saying to Jairaj to 'be a man'. The couple in order to be free to carry out their profession as dancers, they decided to leave Amritlal's house. The decision turned out to be a curse as Lata's uncle seduced her because she was different as she was a dancer. Therefore, Jairaj on that very moment decided to come back to his own house once again. In this scene, we also see how Ratna was obstructed as a dancer. She was not allowed to visit Chenni amma as people considered her prostitute. The status of the dedicated classical dancer during and after the time of independence was worst and therefore the politically powerful people attempted at converting the classical dancers to non-dancers by teaching them wrong and by providing them ashrams to stay. However, Chenni amma was marginalised in terms of caste, class and gender. Thus, though Chenni amma does not appear in the play but the words about her make us sympathetic towards her. Amritlal is seen successfully depriving her daughter-in-law to go to Chenni amma's house to learn the art of abhinaya because that would lower their status in the society.

Act 2 begins with the flashback where the dancing couple Ratna and Jairaj defeated by the attempts made to succeed without the help of the dominant father, returns back home. Amritlal accepts his son defeated and allows him dancing except growing his hairs long and earn his livelihood from dancing. Taking advantage of the situation, Amritlal makes Ratna his puppet to stop Jairaj from dancing. He showed his dominance in the life of his daughter in law by giving her offers that if she intends to continue dancing then she has to stop Jairaj dancing. As Jairaj will never progress unless he has left dancing because that was not making him a man. Firstly, he behaves not like a man and secondly, he cannot earn a living out of dancing. However, it is very evident in the scene that Ratna listened to his father in law and attempted to make hindrances to Jairaj like making him dance in the darker side of the stage whereas she herself would dance in the center. The reason behind her agreeing is that she realised that Jairaj is not capable of pursuing his career as a dancer because he could not resist outside the house for more than a day. In this scene Lata's dance performance is over and that her name is flying in the air. All the newspaper has her name, praising her dance in the fest. The newspaper also praises Ratna and Jairaj for their effort for which Ratna blossomed into such a graceful Bharatanatyam dancer. Lata earned name and fame. Ratna thought her daughter's success as her success. Therefore, she wanted to paste the reviews about Lata's success in her and Jairaj's album pretending those reviews as her. But it was Jairaj who realised her that she should not live in the dilemma that her daughter's success would be her success. Dattani brings flashback at the correct moment in the play. When the play is about the daughter who has won name and fame as a dancer in the city at the same time the flashback is shown of the son who had a fatal ending when born. The flashback is about an incident when Ratna returns from a show and Jairaj is heavily drunk. The incident shows the pathetic life of the couple when they returned back defeated. Jairaj had to leave dancing because he was jealous of his wife because his wife was a better dancer and that she was focused much on stage as she was always at the centre. Ratna is seen as a resistant woman who frequently resisted of leaving dance as a profession but Jairaj could not resist the marginalisation made as a performing artists by the orthodox patriarchal society. Hence, Jairaj gets defeated as a dancer. He ended up quitting dance and became an alcoholic. His frustration reached such a height that he commented on Ratna's

dance as a dance of seduction. He tried to confine Ratna into the four walls of the house by dominating her to the social constructs of the society by taunting her to stay at home. However, he is found responsible for the death of their only son, Shankar by giving him an overdose of opium. The death of Shankar made the couple depressed. Then again the time goes to the past when the couple is found renovating the old rooms and constructing new rooms. However, at the end flashback is no more but we find that Lata and Viswas are married and have a baby. The house is owned by Lata and Viswas. The demolishers are going to collapse the house because Viswas must have sold it. The time is when Ratna and Jairai are dead and that their souls meet and dance. Their souls are happy after death and they continue dancing.

The major characters like Jairaj, Ratna and Lata have a quench of thirst for getting recognized through their artistic talents. All the three characters are classical dancers. This play tends to highlight the life of these classical dancers in the past and in the contemporary times. The three characters, although are artists in their blood but the society do not let them flourish through art but creates a dividing space of art through gender, caste, and class and making them marginalised. None of the artists, in the true sense, enjoys identity with which he or she is happy with, but there is always a space created in the happiness of the life of dancers due to societal marginalisation. A true performing artist is only happy when the artist is able to perform his or her art on stage and it is Lata who gets recognition in the end through the efforts of her and her mother. However, the play ends with a happy note on the life of Lata. The characters of this play represent their own story of marginalisation. Jairaj, Ratna, Chennai Amma and the Guruji have gone through identity crises. The playwright has intentionally reflected himself in the character of Jairaj, portraying himself as an example of marginalised identity.

### ***The Fire and the Rain by Girish Karnad***

Girish Raghunath Karnad was born on May 19, 1938, in Matheran, Maharashtra to Rao Saheb Dr. Karnad and Krishna Bai Mankeekara. Krishna Bai was a Widow and serving as a homemaker for Rao Saheb and his bed ridden wife. Krishna Bai and Rao Saheb married under Arya Samaj tradition. His initial

schooling was in Marathi and then later they moved to Karnataka. Karnad and his family was deeply interested in village plays and the *natak mandalis* of Karnataka. He was admired by Yakshagana. He imparted his education in Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics and Statistics in Karnataka Arts College. After Graduation, Karnad went to England to study Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. He was the elected president of Oxford Union in 1963. He was a part of The Madras Players, the theatre group in Chennai when he left the job of Oxford University Press and was devoted to the writing of plays.

The most prominent playwright in Kannada and English has a blend of history and myth in his works. However, his works in Kannada are *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1964), *Hayavadana* (1972), *Taledanda* (1990), *Agni Mattu Male* (1995) also known as *The Fire and The Rain*, *Maduve Album* (2006), *Flowers* (2012) and *Benda Kalu On Tost* (2012). He also wrote some English plays as well like *Collected Plays vol-1* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005 (*Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Bali: The Sacrifice and Naga-Mandala*), *Collected Plays vol-2* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005 (*Tale-Danda*, *The Fire and the Rain*, *The Dreams of Tippu Sultan*, *Two Monologues: Flowers and Broken Images*). The other plays written in English are *Yayati* Published in 2008, *Wedding album* published 2009 and *Boiled Beans on Toast* published in 2014. Girish Karnad has received many honorary awards like Sangeet Natak, Varthur Navya, Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Kannada Sahitya Parishat Award, Sahitya Academy Award, Jnanpith Award, Kalidas Samman and Rajyautsav Awards. He also won four Filmfare awards out of which three are Filmfare award for Best Director- Kannada and the fourth a Filmfare Best Screenplay award.

The play *The Fire and the Rain* by Girish Karnad is the play actually written in Kannada naming *Agni Mattu Male*. The story is about the incident taken from Mahabharata's incident where Narad muni has considered Natak as the Panchama or the fifth Veda. However, Karnad has efficiently brought the concept from the Indian epics and beautifully blended it with the contemporary issue, on the status of actors. The story is about a kingdom where there has been a drought for many years and kings and the Brahmins of the kingdom decide to go for seven years of long fire sacrifice (yajna), to propitiate Indra, the god of rain. Paravasu is the conducting priest of the sacrifice as decided by everyone because of his

tender age of twenty-eight. The spirit, Brahma Rakshasa, created by Parvasu's father has not been provided with freedom from the earth and therefore, he is near to the *yajna* so that he can get his *Mukti* (salvation). We also see a theatre group arriving and asking for the play to be staged to please Indra.

Brahmins and the king did not allow the courtier and actors to enter into the zone where the fire sacrifice was being conducted, because the actors were considered low caste but realizing that *natak* (drama), that is the fifth Veda, they decided to have a play to propitiate Indra. Even Parvasu's brother Arvasu, though is a Brahmin because he does drama with the other actors, he is also termed low born by the society. Act 1 begins with the love story between Arvasu, a Brahmin boy, and Nittilai, a tribal girl from a hunter family and it is Andhaka that knows about them. Arvasu promises to talk with Nittilai's father about their love before the sun sets. In the very scene, Yavakri is introduced, who is the cousin of Arvasu and Parvasu and is in love with Vishakha, who is the wife of Parvasu. Because Yavakri had to leave for the forest to have a quest for knowledge from Indra, Vishakha's father had to make her marriage to Parvasu but Parvasu left her after one year once he was selected for the fire ceremony. However, Vishakha still is in love with Yavakri for which she did get intimate with him even after her marriage. But Arvasu comes to know about it but is confused. Reaching home, Raibhya, who is the father in law of Vishakha, questions Vishakha by physically torturing her by dragging her hair and kicking her. And then Vishakha confesses that she met with Yavakri whom she loved. Her father in law, Raibhya sends Brahma Rakshasa to kill Yavakri and says that he could only be saved if he stays in his father's hermit and if he steps out he will be dead and in case Yavakri is not dead, he would accept defeat and enter the fire. But when Yavakri is informed by Vishakha about Brahma Rakshasa by showing courage, he decided to stay there and challenge Brahma Rakshasa because the water in Kamandalu would save him but in the time of waiting for Brahma Rakshasa, he confesses that whatever he did the following day was pre-planned because he wanted to take revenge on Parvasu and Raibhya for insulting his father to such an extent that he ended his life and for that reason he went to the forest for ten years of rigorous prayer and meditation in the forest. However, when Vishakha heard this, she was grief-stricken and decided to empty the Kamandalu, where the water could save

Yavakri from Brahma Rakshasa and therefore, was speared by him by the time Yavari reached the gates of his father's hermitage.

In Act II, Arvasu reaches the village of Nittilai so late that the elders of their village had decided to make Nittilai marry someone else. On the same day, Parvasu returns home in the night to meet his wife and getting emotional says everything regarding her and Yavakri and further request her to kill her. He kills his father, Raibhya but tells Arvasu that he killed him thinking him as a wild animal. But Parvasu's actual intention was to kill his father because at first he killed Yavakri and he himself wanted to get into the fire sacrifice which Parvasu did not want. However, it is really heart-shattering when Parvasu being the eldest son refuses to fire the body of his own father but tells Arvasu to do that because he has no time and he has to leave to the place where the *yajna* was going on. And it is Arvasu who performed all the rites of penitence. On the way, Parvasu meets Brahma Rakshasa. Brahma Rakshasa requests to free him but he denies and leaves for the fire sacrifice. After completing the rites of obsequies and the expiration on the death of his father, Arvasu silently sits in the final fire-sacrifice which was to end that day. But when Parvasu saw Arvasu in the site, he is dumbfounded, and then blames, Arvasu for committing the crime of patricide.

In Act III in the outskirts of the city, when Arvasu wakes up, finds Nitilai close to him. He then is made realized that a group of actors actually saved his life and that Nitilai has also left her home when heard about Arvasu. However, the artists chose Arvasu to perform so he practised it and it only at the end of the play that Lord Indra is impressed by the *Natya* performed, by the time Indra came to fulfil the wish of Arvasu, Parvasu had already jumped into the fire sacrifice and sacrificed his life and Nittilai was even arrowed by her own tribe for not following the norms of the tribe. However, Arvasu when was asked by Lord Indra, what he wants, Arvasu requests everyone to bring to life, in that case, Indra says, he has to turn the wheel of time to get the lives back. In the meantime Brahma Rakshasa arrives and requests *moksha* to Arvasu, without thinking much he decided to free Brahma Rakshasa, thinking Nittialai would do the same if she was in Arvasu's place. However, all of a sudden there is rain and the people starts beating their drums and dancing.

Marginalisation on the basis of caste, class, and gender can be seen in the play through the depiction of the characters like Arvasu and the Actor-manager. Self-marginalisation can be seen in Aravasu, as Aravasu quits performing as an actor and being into theatre group because of the demotivation made by his brother, Paravasu. The condition of the Actor-Manager was hectic because due to drought his survival was difficult and his entire family was starving to death. So, the depiction of the performing artists through the medieval setting actually represents the contemporary society where this societal marginalisation hinders the artistic talents of performers. Girish Karnad's experience as an actor can be seen reflecting him through his characters as actors in this play. The importance of performing artists is equal to that Brahmin is beautifully portrayed at the end when Indra, the god of rain, is pleased more by the play than the yajna by the Brahmins.

## **Review of Literature**

In 'Review Of Dance Like a Man: Society's Desire For Wholistic Masculinity', Jerin Jacob, writes about the marginalisation of the performing artist, but he focused more on the gender marginalisation. He also talked about power-play in the bourgeois society and that Amritlal, is the representational character of the power-play which suppresses his children to continue being dancers.

'Critical Analysis of Mahesh Dattani's play Dance Like a Man' written by Aparna Venkat is praiseworthy because the author brought forward the idea of Judith Butler's Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity. The idea of the social construct of gender is clearly portrayed with regard to all the characters in the play and this article also puts light on the power-structure of the patriarchal father. Aparna understood each character in their perspectives of perceiving art. This critical analysis is close to the topic I chose for this research because of the liberal ideas about the author towards the conclusion, where she writes, 'Dance Like a Man is a play that does not present the character as pure White or Black but it shows their different shades in all possibilities. The play poses fundamental questions and presents the actors with the best of their talents. It demands the answer whether the world is progressive in a real sense or we are still in search of that utopian era where no dance form is actually attached to any gender of the dancer but considered as a pure form of Art.'

In an article by Anima Biswas, 'Girish Karnad's: A study in Myths of Power', she highlights the power structure of the high-class Brahmins and the low caste actors. She claims that the social inclusion of professional actors by the Brahmins and the Kings has been intentionally imbibed in the play to realize the pathetic condition of the marginalised actors. Therefore, the marginalisation between Artists and Brahmins should not be there as both are equally important.

The review of literature is made from the study of different articles which are somewhat close to my topic in this research. However, after reading innumerable articles on the two plays *Dance Like a Man* and *The Fire and the Rain*, these are four reviews which have ideas close to this topic. The first two reviews talk about gender marginalisation and class marginalisation but none of them used the ideologies of Marx for Marxist Atheism, how art is a part of super-structure, but they only talked about how power structure is portrayed through the patriarchal domain. The idea of people, power, and politics is vaguely portrayed. However, in case of Gender marginalisation Aparna Venkat has discussed Gender Trouble by Judith Butler. However, in the reviews about the play, *The Fire and the Rain*, the marginalisation of performing artists are discussed by these critics but none of them have used Gandhian and Ambedkarian ideologies about caste and class which marginalises performing artists in the play.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this research are, firstly to study how the artist face marginalised identity because of gender, caste and class divide in the two text *Dance like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani and *The fire and the Rain* by Girish Karnad. Secondly to examine how there has been a transition in the marginalisation of performing artist in the medieval period till the contemporary times in the two text chosen for the study. Thirdly to know the consequences of the marginalised performing artists when faces identity crisis. Thus, this research deals with the marginalisation of performing artists in the contemporary times.

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## Chapter 2

### **Marginal Identities and Performing Artists in *Dance Like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani**

Performing artists in *Dance like a Man* are basically artists on stage and for whom performing art is existence. Performing artists, unlike fine artists, do not have their tangible object to sell which is an output of their creativity. Intangibility of performing art is the first hindrance of the performing artist. Other than this, performing artists, like dancers, has to face, many challenges to continue being dancers. Dancers have certain marginalised rules to follow which is set by the society. If an individual goes beyond the societal margins to fulfill his or her desire as dancers, create something new as dancers, the individual is treated with awe in the society, not with respect. Performing artists as we know do not sell objects as a part of their creativity but entertain by performance on stage. Performing artist pines more to the sound of applause and the murmuring of respect and praise for them among the audience than just to earn money to live. But sometimes the audience does praise but then socially the artists are looked down because of societal norms like gender, class and caste divide. Artists like dancers in India have frequently been facing these discriminations for which they have been demotivated for which they sometimes step back from being a performing artist. In a way, performing artists are not considered in the group of social animals rather they are treated as alien. Mahesh Dattani's play *Dance like a Man* is an example of one such plays in the contemporary times which let the audience know what the status of performing artist is, especially dancers, in terms of gender and class and caste.

Identity crises are faced by the Dancers in the play *Dance like a Man*. The identity of the performing artist is at stake because of them being marginalised on the basis of gender discrimination and class divide. Performing artists, in general, are reformers but these reformers are condemned, criticised and are not accepted if they fall into the category of marginality which is literally grief-stricken. Artists, in general, are the ambassadors of the country, they represent rich culture and tradition, therefore, should be respected but in India, the subtle reality is something

different. In the play *Dance Like a Man*, the playwright's efforts to put light on the pathetic condition of the classical dancers who have been frequently marginalised socially in terms of their identity as an artist by the ugly social norms like gender and class.

When we speak of gender marginality of performing artists we always tend to read and hear of woman artists not allowed to carry out the profession of performing art. But in the play *Dance like a Man*, it is not only in the case of Lata who was hindered in carrying out dancing but also her better half Jairaj who was condemned by the society as well his own father Amritlal to quit dancing. For Amritlal, dance can only be considered as a 'fancy' but when it was considered as 'an obsession' by Jairaj, Amritlal wanted him to stop it because classical dance by men in the society was never privileged rather leads to the deterioration of the status. Here come the gender marginality and class marginality of a dancer. This play puts lights on gender, caste and class marginality in the life of a performing artist.

Mahesh Dattani is one such playwright who consistently has yielded plays on gender-based problems, especially about the man, though he has never avoided or lowered down woman. Through this play, Dattani takes efforts to manifest how society looks at a male classical dancers in terms of the social construct of a male. How the artists are ridiculed on the basis of their bodily movements and gestures. Judith Butler in *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory* views that,

Considering that "the" body is invariably transformed into his body or her body, the body is only known through its gendered appearance. It would seem imperative to consider the way in which this gendering of the body occurs. My suggestion is that the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time. (523)

Transformation of the body and the category in which it is placed is only known through the gender appearance. Butler analyse the individual who faces identity crisis with respect to gender divide and comes with an idea that gender is also a performative act performed in accordance with the demands of the society. It is not

fair enough to judge an individual how 'gendering of the body occurs'. Man is expected to dress up like a man, to talk and walk like a man, to do work which man does, should earn for the family, etc. Thus, masculinity is conceived of the orthodox notion of the society that 'maleness' is a stable identity. Sissies, being feminine, gay and not 'real men' are the words used basically to a male when he breaks of constructiveness for men in the so-called ordered community, that is society. Classical, ballet, etc. are the dance forms where male adopts feminine gestures and qualities. These dance forms need swiftness in the upper part of the body for which after a continuous practice their body is imbibed into effeminate being. Until and unless we break the notions of patriarchy about distinguishing male and female on the basis of the dance they choose and those that are specifically meant to them, it will never allow the creativity to flourish in dance. It will also make the individual mentally harass, which would further lead to the change in the temperament of that dancer. It is even in the case of a woman who performs hip-hop, a dance form that requires stiffness and jerks in the body, makes her masculine in nature for which she is called, 'tomboy'. Is Dance really based on sex? This question when is thought of, beyond patriarchy, the answer is a big 'NO'. In fact, Dr. Seshadri Iyenger (International Bharatnatyam dancer), says in Times of India,

Dance is asexual. It is a dance that dons the role of either Krishna or Radha or Parvati or Shiva. It has nothing to do with gender. If one is a good dancer he will be appreciated. The male dancer can perform and portray all the *roles* as well as the females. Dance is beyond being male or female. It has nothing to do with the body. The external body is the manifestations of the eternal – the *bhava* and the *abhinaya*.

The above paragraph sets in the character of Jairaj Parekh, who was frequently been depreciated by the patriarchal father Amritlal Parekh, a man of reformation and liberal views in the society in the post-independent days. He did not like his son dancing under the guru who had long hairs and exclaims, 'All I'm saying is that normal men don't keep their hair so long. (417)'. Further, disgustingly continues saying about the guru, 'I've also noticed the way he walks. (417)'. It is surprising that sadhus can have long hairs but dancers cannot. Do we actually have much difference between a sadhu and a dancer? Just like sadhus need dedication and devotion to meditate in the same manner dancer also needs devotion and dedication

to dance. Further, long hairs would enhance abhinaya in Bharatanatyam. Amritlal, unpretentiously, is a representation of the patriarchal society. Amritlal's mindset is moulded and then he moulds others accordingly by the orthodox society we dwell in. Rightfully remarks Judith Butler,

The personal is thus implicitly political inasmuch as it is conditioned by shared social structures but the personal has also been immunised against political challenge to extend that public/private distinctions endure (521-523).

In this way, Amritlal is conditioned by shared social structures to obstruct his son from dancing. He is seen in this play as a political agency or domain that marginalises his own son from talking up dance as a profession because of the social construct of gender. However, Jairaj becomes non-confirmer of gender construct and dares go against his father and dance in accordance of his own will. Amritlal, is so socially construct that he thinks society would condemn him for supporting his son to dance. Therefore, he requests Ratna to make the guru leave the home as soon as possible, else he would be embarrassed by the visitors. The question upon Jairaj's maleness makes Jairaj discourage no doubt, but it also lead him to into psychological problems and therefore he wanted his son Shankar to grow up as a dancer. He, therefore says, 'Then when he grows up, I'll teach him how to dance the dance of Shiva. The dance of a man (441)'. He was so traumatised that he became an alcoholic after not carrying out his profession as a dancer, always curses his wife and is responsible for the death of his only son, Shankar, by giving him opium. Gender marginality shattered the life of Jairaj as dancer. Throughout his life he himself felt like an effeminate, therefore, he often asks what would make him a man, example, 'Will finding a musician make me a man?'(402). Frequent, gender marginalisation of the performing artist like Jairaj, has faced bitter problem, therefore, not able to be flourished as better dancer than Ratna. Amritlal even comments, A woman in a man's world may be considered progressive. But a man in a woman's world is pathetic (427).

Therefore, a man should not condition to dancing according to Amritlal, and therefore Jairaj accounts saying,

The craft of prostitute to show off her wares-what business did a man have learning such a craft? Of what use could it be to him? No use. So, no man would want to learn such a craft. Hence anyone who learnt such a craft could not be a man. How could I argue against such a logic? (406).

Thus, this shows that the social construct of Amritlal regarding male and female in accordance to performing art is transferred to Jairaj.

'Masculine and Feminine rules are not biologically fixed but socially constructed'- Judith Butler. Women in *Dance Like a Man* is considered like 'other' by Amritlal. Therefore, he gives an anti-feminist statement that, 'A woman in a man's world may be considered progressive. But a man in a woman's world is pathetic (427).' This means woman stand inferior to men. Therefore, if men are into the world of the female then it is disastrous. Especially when dance is concerned. However, Ratna's strong zeal to live through dance could not save her as compared to Jairaj. The lady remained so determined that nothing could actually stop her from dancing, neither Amritlal nor the situation. Amritlal, Ratna's father-in-law made conscious effort to make Ratna away from dancing, by obstructing her from meeting Chenni amma. Ratna as a woman was marginalised as she was expected by Jairaj to look at the son and confine herself to the four walls but when Ratna goes beyond the four walls of the house to carry out her profession as a dancer, she is blamed of killing her baby, Shankar. Although the death is because of Jairaj giving overdose of opium but the playwright takes the conscious effort not to put the blame of the death of Shankar on anybody rather on the situation they were placed in. According to Simon de Beauvoir's, 'The Second Sex', woman is seen as the 'other' and man is seen as the 'self', this can be seen in this part where woman is expected to be in the house and take care of the house and help the progeny to grow. However, Ratna's identity never flourished as a dancer because of the patriarchal gender norms which restricts woman. Although, she continues dancing but is never happy. Therefore, she remarks, 'In my life I've had problems . . . (401)'. In fact women are also no less than man as portrayed in the play, through Lata for her mother Ratna. Ratna tries hard to make her daughter earn her identity as a Bharatanatyam dancer but in case of Lata she pays no concern to the pathetic condition of her mother. Her comment towards her mother, 'But she'll tell me the miseries of her life. I don't want

to hear that all night' makes us feel pity towards her. Even Jairaj comments the same. This might also be the problem of Ratna's distress and disturbance throughout her life because nobody understood her. Her suppression of desire to gain identity as a dancer is therefore inculcated towards her daughter. Her desperate desire to make her daughter receive identity was the reason for her rude behaviour towards other dancers like Chandrakala. Performing artist, especially woman faces a lot of problem from patriarchal domain like the confinement which is discussed and then an 'Object' of entertainment for male. Woman dancers can be considered 'double marginalised', first, they are woman and second is that they are dancers. That is why even the uncle of Ratna asked her to bed, the reason is what Jairaj mentions, 'Do you think your uncle made such interesting proposals to his nieces? No! That would be great sin. But you are different. You are meant for entertainment. (410)'. This eventually meant that dancers those who are female are also meant for sexual pleasures, like giving up their bodies for the existence of art. Therefore, female dancers condition is found to be weaker and thus, attempted to be exploited.

The marginal identity of women classical dancer can also be traced in the play through Chenni amma, seventy-five years old who is not actually present in the play but is told about by Ratna who secretly goes to her, lying her father in law so that she could learn dance steps. But Amritlal when comes to know about it, he stops Ratna from visiting her. 'Prostitute' are the terms used to the female artist like Chenni amma who was actually a 'Devadasi' (one who performs classical dance to please God). 'Most of them have given up art as you call it and have taken to selling their bodies' exclaims Amritlal. The condition of the women classical dancer is worst in the society because they are marginalised to a level of being called as a prostitute and thus, is never respected for preserving art.

Lata, eventually with the effort of her mother is able to receive honor from the society because of her dance. Though she is successful at receiving name and fame in the society, her fiancée still shows his dis-likeliness towards her dancing-steps which showed vulgarity. Thus, this also puts hindrance in the path of performing artist towards the movement of her on the stage. Even, marginalisation can be seen in the third generation of the female artist, when Lata asks her husband whether he would allow her to dance in the same house where her parents used to

practice. Thus, we can see male dominating society in the modern age also, especially for the female artist.

Judith Butler in her essay '*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*' says,

Actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance. Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives (526).

Therefore, the dancers on stage are actors in real life where they wear a mask of pretention in the society because they are supposed to play the role prescribed by the dominant in the paternal as well as political society. The gendered body especially performing artists is culturally marginalised in the society when they fail to act in accordance to the script provided. Therefore, when Jairaj was getting the success of being a dancer on stage but at the same time was failing to be an actor in the real life. His real life affected him as a performer because he could not endure the pain of not getting accepted in the society.

The marginality of the performing artist in terms of class in the play *Dance Like a Man* is equally relevant as gender marginality. The existence of performing artist is impossible because of 'money', though respect and applauds come first. But applauds and respect won't satisfy life when everything is counted in terms of money. Thus, class of an artist is an essential exponent in carrying out performing art. In this bourgeois world when everything is considered in terms of money then how can 'performing art' not be? The life of a performing artist like dancers and musicians are threatened when not paid for carrying out their creativity as a performer on stage. Fine art has a plus point of selling object in exchange for money but in the case of 'performing art', what would they sell? The question is very complicated to be answered of. In this case performing art like dance, music, plays, etc. can be subject to property or object for the performing artist as they can sell morals in order to reform the society and show the mirror to society about the evils. In fact, we could also feel that when performing artist is present on stage, they present 'us' on stage. Both the positive and the negative aspect is presented on the

stage. Performing art like dance is a combination of music and rhythmical movements on stage, through which our senses are captured and therefore, more effective in reforming the society. According to Karl Marx, Art is a part of the superstructure and that all artist's art inescapably is made for the capitalist market. Therefore, performing artists are part of cultural producer for the audience to the cultural consumers.

In the play, *Dance like a Man*, Dattani puts light on the condition of the classical dance and putting halogen in the life of the dancers. Class plays a vital role in determining the growth of the performing artist. Financial insecurity in the life dancers like Jairaj, Ratna, and Chennai amma was categorised of marginalised identity. The character Amritlal, therefore remain dominant in the decision he takes because of power, where he earns so much that he has the power to make rules in the nation. He is the member of the British Raj and is involved in reforming India. However, he does not understand the relevance of classical dancers therefore despite giving rewards to the woman who danced in the temples in order to preserve art and encourage woman dancing, he attempts at building ashrams in the name of reformation to educate women not to practice art in other words, not to 'practice open prostitution', which people like Amritlal thinks they do. Hence, it is the class of Amritlal that enables him to become an obstacle in the life of performing artists like the woman dancers in the temples. And it is also because of the low class dancers, who unwillingly has to give up dancing in order to exist. Thus, class division marginalises dancers, belonging to a lower class, to have their identity as dancers. Chennai amma can be the best example of a woman who practiced classical dance but their life as dancers is a disaster and shamed by the society as 'prostitute'. When Ratna was accused of telling lie to his father-in-law about her visiting of temples on Monday, she accepts that she has told lie but has never done anything wrong to spoil the name of the family but her desire to learn dance steps which were vulnerable those days, has let her go to Chennai amma's place. Thus, Ratna says to Amritlal regarding Chennai amma,

I have always been taught to speak to my elders with respect, but since I haven't done anything wrong there's no reason why I shouldn't speak up. Chennai amma is the oldest living exponent of the Mysore school and is the only link we have with the old school. She doesn't

have a single student who have is dedicated enough to absorb her knowledge. She is seventy-five and dying. There's nobody who even visits her, not even her relatives or her children. Oh, she get the occasional journalist or a curious foreigner knocking at her door. But they don't do much for her, except maybe give her a few annas out of pity. But she doesn't mind all this. She doesn't mind at all being poor and lonely. What she is frustrated about is she did not have the freedom to express her art. All her childhood years were spent in training. Training which she could never use. All a waste-for her. She spends her time now at temple steps, selling flowers. When she came to know that I was a dancer, she greeted me and pleaded, yes, pleaded with me to learn the art of abhinaya from her. She even tempted me by offering to teach me some old dance compositions which she knew by memory. It was important for her that she should impart her knowledge to someone worthy of it. And it is important to learn what she had to offer. So, instead of going to the temple every Monday, I go to her house. (420).

With this, we can determine the condition of the classical dancers. Class played a vital role in creating a diving line between the artist and her art. Further, between the artist and her identity as an artist. Thus, marginalising the identity of a dancer. Class paralysed her as a performer. The other substitute of performing art for Chennai amma was to sell flowers at the steps of the temple. An artist life is pathetic when he or she knowing art is handicapped for not performing art. The marginality of an artist can be seen when people like Jairaj give an Artist like a Chennai amma, a donation of five hundred rupees so that she won't be able to meet her daughter-in-law. Thus, the class can be seen as depriving artist in learning art.

Jairaj and Ratna's condition is worst as an artist and that is the reason why they are exploited not only by Amritlal but also by Ratna's uncle. Marginal is the identity when the performing artist is not allowed to perform because marginality like class becomes a factor of obstruction. Jairaj, though is the son of the rich father Amritlal but still remains aloof from the property of his father. Amritlal, at the place of his father, was correct up to one extent that his son should earn his livelihood from whatever he was doing, though he did not like dance because it was making

him behave like a woman. The question of Amritlal, though rude was correct when he asked, 'Where is your Dance going to lead you?'(415). Status of the performing artist was the dividing line between artist and their art. Jairaj, as a dancer is not able to flourish because the dancing that he has chosen is not for men and even though he has chosen it, he should try his best. Performing art needs resistance. Practice would make him a fine performing artist and would be appreciated and can earn a living out of it. If, Jairaj would have resisted the troubles in spite of indulging himself in drinking, he could have actually reached the peak with his wife in Bharatanatyam and would have been happier. Dance actually made Jairaj handicapped in terms of financial security and that he has to beg for money to his father every time. For Ratna, Jairaj stopped being a man, not because he did danced Bharatnatyam, but because he could not stay outside his father's house for not more than two days. Therefore, Amritlal takes the advantage when he realised his son defeated in finding a living out of the dance. They are in the house again "out of necessity". It is for this reason that Ratna agrees with her father in law to make him away of dancing because he himself was not able to resist as a dancer and was also not seen as 'progressive' as her. Just the opposite is what happened, Jairaj couldn't do anything because dancing was all he knew, and when he couldn't resist being a dancer, he himself indulged in drinking and became a 'spineless boy', according to Ratna. Jairaj's frustration also reaches a height when he says, 'The seth of the house is not in! He's away receiving awards for serving the nation- while his Lakshmi-of-the-house has been away receiving acclaims for her . . . talents. (440). Thus, even after forty years of their marriage, the couple did not have enough money. Even in case of Ratna, she is seduced by her uncle because they were homeless, hopeless and rootless as dancers.

Caste can also be found as a hindrance to the life of the dancers. Jairaj Parekh wanted to know the caste of the guru, whether he is a son of a devadasi, who belonged to the lower caste. Ratna was an outcaste but Amritlal married his son with her so that he could have a societal status but on the other hand he never like Ratna. Even in case of Lata, Viswas tries to show his family superiority in terms of caste and this somehow depicts that the after-life of marriage in the life of Lata may be troublesome, in a sense she may not continue her dance. Caste, in the play,

though not clearly mentioned of hindering the life of the artist but it does, though not abundantly but up to some extent.

Ratna sits in the kitchen 'crying' and Jairaj, 'drinking'. This is all they do when they were marginalised as a dancer. Ratna's obsession of making Lata a dancer was so much a height that she thinks Lata's 'Rave reviews' as her own and therefore, was going to attach on their (Ratna and Jairaj)'s album. It is only Lata that acclaims identity in the society with the efforts of Ratna and Jairaj. After a long trouble of the generation of Jairaj and Ratna that Lata's life was made easier.

Performing artists like Ratna and Jairaj, though could not meet the identity they expected of but always has been getting marginalised through gender and class divider. This divider demotivated the life of the artist in carrying out the profession of artists. Artists were suppressed by the power of the patriarchy. The playwright attempts to bring into the limelight, the dreadful condition in the life of the artists and that the artist's resistance to art. The society is so cruel towards the artist that they always remained marginalised even till they died, but it only after death that their soul meets eternally and dance the way they want not the way society wants them to. Beautiful are the lines at the end,

We dance perfectly. In unison. Not missing a step or a beat. We talk and laugh at all the mistakes we made in our previous dances. (447).

Their souls are happy because there are no marginal rules eternally. They loved, embraced and danced.

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## Chapter-3

### **Marginal Identities and Performing Artists in *The Fire and the Rain* by Girish Karnad**

*The Fire and the Rain* by Girish Karnad is one such plays which attempt to put light on the status of theatre artists who are made downgraded as compared to the status of the graded Brahmins and Kings. Castes in India, have been playing a dominant role, determining the class of the orthodox society, marginalising the people of the society belonging to the minorities. Castes in India was actually created in terms of the profession. People like Brahmins were meant to devote themselves at the feet of god and conduct religious rituals. Kings who were to serve the people were known as Kshatriyas. The artisans, tradesman, merchant, farmers etc. were categorised as Vaishyas and the people who worked under someone to earn were the laborers and were known as Shudras. However, these four terms were divided according to their profession of a family or category of people. But, pathetically it got curved differently and this four category of people, according to their works were further categorised in terms of caste and class. Brahmins became high caste because of their knowledge in scriptures, perform religious ceremonies and because they were decision makers to the kings; the second category was that of the kings and rulers, the Kshatriyas who were of high class and at last Vaishyas and Shudra, who were categorised as low by the dominant category of Brahmins and the Kshatriyas.

Miserable are the conditions of the artists as portrayed by Karnad, in the play *The Fire and The Rain*. Performing artists are outcastes in the society. In fact, performing artists, who are by birth from Brahmin family, were de-casted because they tend to go beyond the structured norms of the patriarchal society where a Brahmin only has to perform his rituals in front of God. If he wants to be a performer, he is marginalized from the society. It is ironical that 'Drama' is considered as the fifth Veda in the Indian scriptures yet the artists who would carry out the drama as a profession was considered outcaste. Karnad with this play helps the people to entangle their thoughts about the caste of the performing artists who were not

outcasted by birth but were made so. His attempts at suspending the belief that performing artists are outcastes and that the Brahmins are superior is a success at the end of the play.

Gandhian philosophy on caste is that the caste of a man was determined by his birth. The profession or occupation of a particular caste was decided by the principles of the hereditary profession of his ancestors. On the other hand, Ambedkarian philosophy of caste was opposite to that of Gandhian philosophy on caste. B.R Ambedkar believed in the philosophy of equality, fraternity and right to choose what the person wants to. Therefore, disagreeing with Gandhi, he condemned religion based on rules and that caste cannot decide the profession to choose of an individual, rather it is the equal rights for the individuals to choose what he feels like. Girish Karnard's idea about caste is same as that of Ambedkar. Girish Karnad reflect his ideas about caste, that caste cannot determine which profession is suitable for an individual to choose rather all the professions should be respected as all the professions are relevant in the society. Whereas Gandhi's idea of caste is different as it was in favour of caste system in India and therefore says that a person should carry out his hereditary profession which their forefather chose on the basis of caste. However, the character Arvasu in the play becomes the representative character with the ideologies of Ambedkar against the ideologies of Gandhi. Therefore, we see Arvasu is marginalised for becoming a theatre actor and the society disagrees of him being identified as a Brahmin, but an outcaste. He is marginalised, even from getting close to the fire sacrifice conducted by the Brahmins. Though, he is purest by heart than any other Brahmin of his families like Parvasu, Raibhya, and Yavakri. Arvasu's choice to be a performing artist makes him discriminated and therefore, is ordered to stand at a distance from sacrificial enclosure so that he, as an actor, will not 'pollute' it. Actor-manager, uttering the words of Arvasu to ask permission for performing theatre along with fire sacrifice,

“ARAVASU: A message from your brother. Dear elder brother, you once said to me: 'The sons of Bharata were the first actors in the history of theatre. They were Brahmins, but lost their caste because of their profession. A curse plunged them into disrepute and disgrace. If one values one's high birth, one should not touch this profession.' And I accepted this. But I am a criminal. I have killed my father, a noble

Brahmin. I already stand tarnished. I may now become an actor. This follows from your own words. So please do not bar the way now. (108)”

Therefore, Girish Karnad breaks the wall of belief that caste chooses the profession. Karnad smartly chooses reason and logic through the lens of myth to dissolve the idea of inequality, one caste dominating other caste. Actors are not be subjugated under caste system. They should not be marginalised but should be given status as that of a Brahmin. Therefore, Karnad takes the example from the scriptures to remove the dividing line between the Brahmins and the Artists-

“ACTOR-MANAGER: Sirs, as is well known to you, Brahma, the Lord of All Creation extracted the requisite elements from the four Vedas and combined them into a fifth Veda and thus gave birth to the art of Drama. He handed it over to his son, Lord Indra, the God of Skies. Lord Indra, in turn, passed on the art to Bharata, a human being, for the gods cannot indulge in pretence. So If Indra is to be pleased and bring to an end this long drought which ravages our land a fire sacrifice is not enough. A play has to be performed along with it. If we offer him entertainment in addition to oblations, the god may grant us the rain we're praying for. (107)”

According to Ambedkar, Gandhi's Vanashrama Dharma was itself the source of the productive mechanism of the caste system and untouchability which was unscientific and irrational, therefore, had no far-reaching consequences. So, Ambedkar opposed the inhuman mechanism of the caste institution and untouchability but favoured inter-caste marriage and inter-dinning. In the same way, Karnard in his play tried to tie the thread of the couple who were of different caste but he also depicts the Indian castes which barriers inter-caste marriage. Caste becomes a barrier in love and performing art. Therefore, Aravasu and Nittilai's fatal unintentional breakup made Aravasu so broken in his heart that he gets a flashback losing control over his actions on the stage when he was performing in front of the people in the yagna, his words and his actions were not in his control, therefore, he challenged Indra, in spite of praising him. It is after the play that Indra comes in front of Aravasu. The death of Nittilai shocked him so much that he tried to turn the wheel of time when given the option by Lord Indra. However, though the caste system

prevails in the society even in the contemporary times the playwright makes an attempt through the myth that love and art can be superior to caste. Therefore, Indra meet Aravasu and fulfilled his wish to rain, even though Aravasu was an out-caste by the Brahmins for becoming an actor. Therefore, caste is just to marginalise the society's minorities so that the dominance of power would lie in the hand's of Brahmins. But for God, all are equal and there is no discrimination.

Gandhi tried to uplift the status of Harijan by removing untouchability but Ambedkar, on the other hand, tried to give equal status to all the caste in the society. Caste, according to Ambedkar, is socially constructed and there is no authenticity of the Vedas which people follow to have themselves divided into a caste. According to Ambedkar, Vedas are created by Brahmins, where they have made themselves superior and closer to God and made others inferior. Thus, in other words, caste is politically framed so that the upper caste people would suck the lower class people and enjoy an upper hand. Girish Karnard, therefore, tried to give equal status to the performing artists in the play by making his modern idea of caste blend with the society's orthodox idea of caste, favoring towards the equality of all. The subjugation of actors by the Brahmins in the play ends with the message that humanity is more important than caste and the marginalisation of the artist is worthless.

However, marginalisation of actors in this play can also be seen in terms of class. Ambedkar in his book *Annihilation of Caste* exclaims of class with regard to religion and caste is that,

“Now the caste system will not allow Hindus to take the occupations where they are wanted if they do not belong to them by heredity. If the Hindu is seen to starve rather than take to new occupations not assigned to his caste, the reason is to be found in the Caste System. By not permitting readjustment of occupations, caste becomes a direct cause of much of the employment we see in the country. (39)”.

Similarly, Caste can be seen in this play shadowing class because the profession of individuals are divided on the basis of caste and the readjustment of the occupation of the Brahmin to an actor is not accepted. The actors, who are low caste do earn less as compared to the Brahmins because the works done by the low caste/low-born people deserved less than that of Brahmins. Gandhi stressed more

on the political issues than on the social issues related to caste but on the other hand, Ambedkar evaluated the society logically. In the book *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar reminded especially to Gandhi and W.C Banerjee - "Every congressman who repeats the dogma of Mill that one country is not fit to rule another country must admit that one class is not fit to rule another class. (28)".

Caste was categorised by the Brahmins, according to Ambedkar and that was done so that Brahmins can dominate other lower castes. Ambedkar in his book *Annihilation of Caste*, "Religion, social status, and property are all sources of power and authority, which one man has to control the liberty of another. (36)". This we can see in the play when Brahmins possess all the sources of power and authority. They also have control over the liberty of others. Aravasu in the play can be seen as the minority by Brahmins for choosing acting as a profession as, firstly he is out from the Brahmin society, secondly, there is a loss of social status and thirdly, because he is the youngest son of Raibhya, he does not own any property as well. Thus, the liberty of his taking decision was in the hands of Raibhya and his elder brother Paravasu, who denied him to be an actor. The lack of liberty was also the reason for self-marginalisation of Aravasu and at a point in his life, he himself denied of becoming an actor. However, it was only because of the attitude of revenge in Aravasu and his love for acting and the approach of the Actor-manager at the same time, that he decides to be a part of the play at the fire sacrifice.

The status of Brahmins improved as they earned more because they were close to the court of the king. This hampered the class of the working class people. Devastating is the condition of the actors in the play in terms of the class which became a hindrance in the performing art consequently, as there had been no theatre in the village for past few years after the famine broke out. We could see, the Brahmins continuing their fire sacrifice to please Indra but on the other hand, the theatre was stopped because it was not considered that relevant as compared to yagna, by the people. Therefore, the very existence of life of an actor in this play is threatened because they could not earn their livelihood due to famine as actors perform occasionally, and they earn occasionally and that occasional earning make them survive. Therefore, the family of the actor who saved the life of Arvasu were starving and thus, they were to migrate from the famine clutched area to some other area where they could survive. However, they could only perform when they met

Arvasu and come to know that Aravasu also has skills of acting and therefore, they decided to replace Aravasu with the injured artist. The life of actors in this play is very difficult as they were made paralysed by the people tagged as 'Brahmin'. Thus, the identity of the artists is seen getting marginalised by the weapon caste.

The resistance of art for its own survival is seen in the play. When Arvasu was found half dead in the burial area, it was the family of the actors who came to his rescue and saved his life. The tragic living in the famine prone area where caste is the dominant factor for their low standard of living is the reason for the actors to quit theatre and leave the village so that they could survive.

“ACTOR-MANAGER: We came here to perform a play for the sacrifice, but this town hasn't been good for us. The old man died. My brother's foot got infected-

ARVASU- (excited): How can you give up so easily? Surely you have a duty to your art.

ACTOR-MANAGER: Couldn't agree more. But a body needs to be feed before it can act. In fact, even the gods, who are bodiless, need to be fed before they will act. Hence all these oblations. But there is no oblation without a performance, and there's no performance without actors. I don't have enough actors. (158)”

Societal marginalisation had made the actor-manger so depressed that he ended up marginalising himself, thinking he is worthless as an actor. However, Arvasu, helps the actors, making a proposal to the kings and priests for himself being a part of the play. Acknowledging the fact that people in the society would not accept him but Arvasu dares to be a part of the play and perform so that he could avenge upon his brother, Parvasu, the chief priest of the fire sacrifice. Therefore, Arvasu and the actor-manager decided to stage a play in honor of the fire sacrifice. The actors had to come forward and resist to the orthodox notions of the society about their inferiority. Although, the performing artist are marginalised on the basis of caste, their resistance to it makes them visible in the society and once the society understands the importance of them, they would never want them to be wiped off. In the play when a play was proposed at the Yajna, Brahmins in the sacrificial enclosure with the kings denied but it was the audience that demanded a play and

that play turned out to be the reason of rain. Girish Karnad skilfully highlight the importance of theatre in the play, *The Fire, and The Rain*. Arvasu knew that people, due to famine and continuous fire sacrifice, are bored and that they are in desperate need of entertainment, therefore, he sends Actor-manager to speak to the people in the fire sacrifice, the importance of the 'art of Drama', for which the king comments in anger, 'They are twisting our arms. They knew the priest are desperate for entertainment. (107)'. The King and Parvasu, though disinterested in having a play, that too by Arvasu, to whom Parvasu calls 'demon', but the resistance and approach of the artist were so strong that that made other priests desperate to have some entertainment for enlightenment. So, neither the King nor Parvasu could deny of having a theatre performance but had to accept their proposal.

Performing artist, like actors, always want stage to perform, to be on stage eternally satisfies them. All they want is applauds.

'ARVASU: He's agreed, Nittilai! He'll be there to watch the play! But where are you? Why aren't you here? Nittilai! Nittilai! I am going to act on stage! I hope you are watching. Please, please watch. The play is about to begin. Yes, after many years. It's going to happen..... (109)'

The happiness of Arvasu is at height when he is given permission for staging a play. The eagerness of audience makes him even happy. He also wants Nittilai to watch his performance. However, the actors who were marginalised in terms of caste, class, and gender had a threat to their life, as the art of dancing and the art of acting are the only tools through which they can earn and have a livelihood. The resistance of the performing artist from the severe suppression of the marginalised world, though difficult, had prevented them from rotting away as they were able to perform their art because performing their art is the only thing they knew.

Arvasu had excellent talent in acting for which even Nittilai praises Arvasu, 'Come on now, you keep bragging about how, given a chance, you could stun thousand with your wit and eloquence (111)'. He's so much in love with mimicry and acting that he could capture the very essence of a thing and imitate in such a way that it seems real,

'ARAVASU (*ecstatic*): Triumph! They say one shouldn't imitate! One should embody the essence. Only the essence! It means I have captured the essence of a Bison- (117)'

His desperate desire to be on stage and be an actor but the hindrance of caste and class makes him feel low of loving art and kept inferior to Paravasu. Aravasu is disheartened as an actor,

'I'll never be learned like father or uncle. I shan't ever conduct a royal sacrifice like Paravasu or perform penance like cousin Yavakri. All I want is to dance and sing and act. And be with Nittilai. It doesn't matter a flake of cow dung to my father whether I'm alive or dead. . . . (113)'

Marginalisation to performing artist when starts from one's own father, how can one bear the marginalisation in the society. Raibhya's consideration of his youngest son as an outcaste proves that social construct comes first in the family when people are your own and you have the right to share all your feelings. Paravasu demotivated Arvasu at first, for his love for theatre when he was found dancing with the hunters. To his brother Paravasu, Aravasu makes him remember saying,

"ARAVASU: Don't you remember? Long ago-before you left for the sacrifice-I was dancing with the hunters and you said: 'Bharata's son lost caste because of the stage.' I haven't acted on stage since then."

Aravasu had a deep sense of love and gratitude to his brother Paravasu but his brother Paravasu, on the other hand, puts the crime of patricide on him, making him marginalised in the society for which he was dragged out of the fire sacrificial area. But Aravasu's desire to perform do not restrict of him rather at the end of the play he breaks the marginal Brahmins rules for the outcastes, dares to perform with the outcastes and become an outcaste. Acting comes from the heart and is connected to the heart and the mind of an artist. Thus, the two are inseparable. The desire to perform was converted to reality only when the marginal walls of caste and class was broken.

The gender marginality is also highlighted in the play by Karnad of the medieval ages where woman are not even allowed to be a part of the drama. Therefore, the male actors were the performers on stage and not a woman. Women

were only allowed to play music, with a few wind instrument and a drum. Karnad's idea in the contemporary time of putting woman representing the status of woman in the medieval period is praiseworthy. The depiction of women in the play is the representation of the woman in the present society with respect to their marginality. Women in the play are confined to the four walls of the house. Both the female characters, Nittilai and Vishakha are expected to be under the structured norms of the male chauvinist society. Therefore, none of them is into art. Although we see Nittilai loves dancing with Aravasu. Vishakha is restricted in the high caste Brahmin family and is exploited sexually by the men of her family, like her husband Paravasu, her father-in-law Raibhya and her lover Yavakri. She is the dead soul in the living body. Nittilai, daughter of a hunter is very active, but she is demanded by her family to be confined to her house but she is the one who tries to break the structured norms of the society by helping her Brahmin lover, Aravasu, when was left dead. Though she belonged to the low caste family she dares to love Aravasu and is ready to marry if her family permits. And she is the one who dares to go to the sacrificial area where a woman is not even allowed to enter. She went to watch the play so that she could encourage the actors, especially Aravasu on stage.

The identity of the performing artists is marginalised in this play in terms of caste and class. Thus, to study class and caste the ideologies of Gandhi and Ambedkar in the book *Annihilation of Caste* by Ambedkar is taken into account. The ideologies of both the social reformer are put in the life of the marginalized artist in terms of caste and class. It can be found that Ambedkar's philosophy of equality, fraternity and liberty of choosing the profession an individual wants is far better than Gandhi's upliftment of the Harijans. The ideology of Gandhi is very orthodox, although he removed untouchability, not in the context of equality for both the Hindus and the Dalits but in the context that the out-castes (Dalits) should not suffer. Ambedkar's idea about equality of all caste, about choosing of professional not in accordance to caste and hereditary but free will of an individual, caste responsible for class, and that his idea about society to be the protector of caste and a victimizer of it. All these principles can be seen in the play, *The Fire and The Rain*, by Karnad, which shows that he is a liberal-minded person. Gandhi's idea of caste and class and Ambedkar's idea of caste and class runs parallel. Thus, this play within a play

depicts the marginalised artist in the contemporary society through the lens of Ambedkar's ideologies of caste and through the book *Annihilation of Caste*.

Through this play, Karnad tried to make the society realise the importance of performing artist as without entertainment the world be meaningless. Thus, the artists should not be marginalised on the basis of gender, caste and class rather they should be treated with respect like other professions.

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## Chapter 4

### **Comparative Analysis of *Dance Like a Man* (1989) and *The Fire and the Rain* (1995): Marginal Identities and Performing Artists**

Mahesh Dattani and Girish Karnad are the contemporary playwrights of the twenty first century. Drama for them are tools to reform the society by dealing with issues in day to day life. Marginalised identities of performing artists in Indian society is the major issue of concern because artists represent the tradition and culture of society and that if they quit, the country would lack represent to represent the rich culture of the country to the world outside. Our society runs through structured rules and conventions made by the dominant people having power in the society and that the rules are made by them to make them powerful each time. And playwrights like Dattani and Karnad questions upon the rules structured by the dominant power. The rules are not meant for progression but are hampering an individual or groups and they take into consideration the evolvement of the society. Marginalisation of performing artists, because of the structured norms of the society, hinders the growth of them and thus, the creativity to produce a good performance on stage is also confined and that the artist has to follow certain structured pattern in the society before they perform on stage, else it will not be accepted by the society. Thus, marginalising performing artist also means marginalising performing art. Mahesh Dattani's play *Dance Like a Man* and Girish Karnad's play *The Fire and The Rain* brings into light the dejected life of the artist conditioned by the social norms like gender, caste, and class. Hence, this chapter significantly deals with the comparative analysis of both the plays in the context of marginal identity and performing artists.

Gender is the greatest hindrance in the life of performing artists because the structured rules create a boundary for the performing artists and that their creativity is restricted to that structured rules. In *The Fire and The Rain* gender marginality was at the height, therefore, the play has only males as performers and females are restricted to stay in the house and involve in taking care of the family, be a partner for lovemaking and then they would procreate. The play is set in the medieval period,

where the life of woman marginalised so much that they were not even allowed to be a performer, in fact not even allowed to the places where rituals are carried out. But because Karnad is presenting the medieval play in the modern times, he brings two powerful women Nittilai and Vishakha to present the woman of the medieval period.

In the play *Dance Like a Man* by Dattani, gender has been put at gunpoint for marginalising identity of dancers like Jairaj, Ratna, Chennai amma and Lata in the contemporary world. Jairaj is a classical dancer but he is not considered 'man' because of effeminacy. As a male, he is expected to carry masculinity in his behavior but his quest for the thirst of learning more classical dance and gain his identity as a dancer, actually makes him a marginal identity. He is forbidden of learning dance by his father, Amritlal, who also instigates Ratna, wife of Jairaj to make him leave his profession because "A woman in a man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in woman's world is pathetic" (427). In case of woman artist' marginalisation, there are three dancers who are marginalised because they are women and are expected to behave in a structured way by the rules and conduct of the patriarchal society structured for them. First, Ratna as a woman works entirely according to the orders of the males in the family, she marries Jairaj because he himself was a dancer and he would allow Ratna carry out her profession as a dancer. But when Jairaj fails to continue dancing, he becomes the barrier for Ratna to carry out dancing. Even after she leaves home and went to her uncles home, she is asked by her uncle to bed him because she is 'different' and 'meant for entertainment', ultimately we can see the objectification of a female performing artist. Even, when the couple returns from her uncle's house, taking advantage of the situation, Amritlal says that the 'decision to let you dance is in my hands, not his', therefore, she was used by Amritlal as a puppet to restrict Jairaj from dancing. When Jairaj, couldn't resist being condemned as a dancer, and quit dancing in his own choice, he became jealous of Ratna, because she flourished as dancer, therefore, he tries to marginalise Ratna, for being a dancer and not taking care of their only son and he even held her responsible for his death. In spite of marginalisation, Ratna turns out to be a recognised dancer and could not touch the sky of success because of these marginalisations. Chennai amma, is also marginalised in terms of gender, she is a devadasi, the one who performs a dance

in the temples, but the patriarchal society makes use of them as a prostitute and has de-framed the very existence of Devadasi, and that the idea of reforming devadasi is to let them quit dance. Thus, Chenni amma's identity as a dancer is always marginalised in the name of a prostitute. Lata, is the only dancer in the play who receives some identity with the efforts of her mother, but despite of the success and despite the modernity of thoughts, her would be husband Viswas also disliked the vulgarity of her dance when reading about it in a newspaper, which suggests that he also has a modern structured ideas of patriarchy which he would imply in future towards Lata and would hinder her as a performing artist.

Thus, gender marginalization hinders the artist and that they become so exhausted, that exhaustion becomes a barrier because gender in India is always a talk about talk in the mouths of the people. Therefore, this gender marginality blocks artist mind as Jairaj, who when left dance, was indulged in drinking and spoiling his life. Not only Jairaj but also Ratna and Chenni amma could receive their identity as a dancer but gender marginality destroyed their identity as a dancer.

Caste divider is equally responsible to suppress the performing artists in the plays, *The Fire and The Rain* by Girish Karnad and *Dance Like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani. The play, *The Fire and the Rain* is mostly based on Artists' marginality on their caste. Performing artist belonged to the lower caste stature and are untouchables. Even, when a Brahmin becomes an artist, he is considered as 'low-born' and outcaste. Caste and hereditary determined which profession is to be chosen by the individual. Similar to *The Fire and the Rain* is *Dance like a Man*, where the high caste people, like Parekh's, are not to choose dancing because that would hamper their status in the society. In, *The Fire and The Rain*, caste degrade the life of artists like Arvasu and Actor-manager. Arvasu has to lose caste because of caste marginality structured by Brahmins in the name of myth created by God, but actually, it is created by Brahmins, keeping in mind their superiority. Thus, this obstructed Arvasu to perform theatre because had told Parvasu once that he would lose his caste if he became an artist because Bharata has to lose his caste when he was handed over 'the art of Drama' by the creator of Drama, Brahma. Even, the actors were not even allowed to go close to the sacrificial enclosure because they are of low caste. Even in the play, *Dance like a Man*, playwright brings forward the marginalisation of the artist on the basis of caste, first, Amrilal made his son marry

a low caste girl, Ratna so that he would be great in front of the eyes of the people. Amritlal also asks the caste of Jairaj's guru, whether he is also a son from wed luck from a Devdasi or not. In fact, Amritlal, disagrees Ratna going to Chennai amma, because she is of low caste and that she is a prostitute, though she is actually not. Dis-satisfied by the people from because of their caste from whom Amritlal's son and daughter in law are learning dance, he decides to make both of them away from their gurus. Thus, the learning of a performing art, when obstructed leads to the obstruction of free flow of performing art.

Class, is also a marginal divider for performing artists. In this contemporary world, where without finance, life is just impossible. Just like the Actor-manager claims saying, "but a body needs to be fed before it can act. In fact, even the gods, who are bodiless, need to be fed before they can act" (158) in *The Fire and the Rain*. Class, is therefore determined in terms of the way people live for existence. Performing artists in both the plays is seen to be of low caste because they do perform only when required and called to perform. The life of an artist is very difficult because they do not get a good living being an artist, neither the characters of *The Fire and The Rain* has any social status in terms of class, neither the *Dance like a Man* has that class of living. In the play *Dance Like a Man*, the condition of the artists which is portrayed, is very pathetic, as even at the age of sixties they don't have enough financial security that is why Lata has to tilt the gas to make coffee for the family. Dancing, when taken as a profession cannot let the characters like Jairaj and Lata earn because performing artists moral are an object which they sell for the reformation of the society and the development of performing artist because an artist to let people love their performance has to create performances which fulfill the demands of the audience. In this way, the artist talent is hindered because the art would be created for the sake of the audiences and that this would definitely lead to change in taste of the artist in accordance with the audience. Thus, the life of the performing artists is very pathetic as earning out of dance is difficult, though without entertainment life on earth would be no less than hell. In *Dance like a Man*, Jairaj unable to earn, let his father Amrilal instigate Ratna to make his son away from Dance and that would make him an adult.

Caste and class interrelation can be seen in both the plays. In the play *The Fire and The Rain*, Caste leads the way to class, because Brahmins are made to be

of high caste because they in the medieval period were only the learned people and that they write in order to protect the status of Brahmins. They conducted all religious ceremonies and are therefore close to God and that the belief of Kings upon priest is so much that the important decision of the king is more often chosen by the priest. Therefore, they remained close to the king, and thus their status in the society remained dominant. Whereas, working class people are outcaste and untouchable, even the performing artists. Caste is religious-political constructed phenomena. It is because of caste that the dominant group, Brahmins always enjoyed the luxury of kings but in the case of performing artists, they are so marginalised that they can't even come close to the higher caste people. If this is the case then how can the artists survive and how can they carry out entertainment. During the famine in the village, the Brahmins enjoy feast at Kings' place but others were starving to death, especially the actor-manager family, because all they knew is to mimic, dance and sing and that they don't even know how to hunt.

In both, the plays, politics plays a major role. In *The Fire and The Rain*, it is Brahmins who kept themselves superior, and in case of *Dance like a Man*, it is Amritlal's politics that keep himself superior. Thus, in *The Fire and The Rain*, the upper-class people enjoy the best of their lives whereas the lower caste people are depicted as penniless and are starving to death. In the case of *Dance like a Man*, it is class that comes above caste. However, in both the plays, the power structures like Brahmins, kings, and politicians of the social systems that set margins for the performers and eventually hinder their creativity.

In this chapter, the transition of the performing artists from the medieval period to the modern period can be seen. The play, *The fire and the Rain* show the life of marginalised artists in the medieval period which has some shade even in the contemporary times. The play *Dance Like a Man* shows the life of marginalised performing artists in the colonial and post-colonial times. Aravasu is the marginalised actor of the medieval period, Chenni amma is the marginalised dancer of the colonial period, Jairaj and Ratna are marginalised dancer of post-colonial whereas Lata is the marginalised dancer of the contemporary times. All the marginalised identities have their own stories of marginalisation representing the marginality pertaining to the social conditions of that times. But overcoming those marginalisation is a difficult task for the performing artists as each artist is different

by nature. The result is that they quit being performing artists when they face an identity crisis. Self-marginalisation is also the reason of drawback for the performing artists. As self-marginalisation is the extension of societal marginalisation.

The Marginalisation of the playwrights is reflected in the play through the marginalised character. Mahesh Dattani is marginalised for being termed as gay. He is even condemned of bringing issues of the queer in his play like, few say, "We are all liberal-minded people, but do we really have to go to the theatre to see gays on stage? (Preface 2000)" and one of the homosexuals speaks out, "I have nothing against heterosexuals, but do we have to watch them on stage? (Preface 2000)". Even the marginalisation of Mahesh Dattani is seen when Dattani himself says his own marginalising story,

Hopefully my plays make a good commercial sense, I know that I am an artist. I don't need to underline it in my works. I write for my plays to be performed and appreciated by a wide a section that my plays speak to and are about. This is perceived by some as 'selling oneself'. Or 'prostituting one's art', or some equally fashionable term for simply wanting to communicate (Preface 2000)

Further, he grieves,

I now realise that I am practicing theatre in an extremely imperfect world where politics of doing theatre in English looms large over one does. Where writing about the middle class is seen as unfashionable. Where if I wrote about working classes, I am told, I would gain international recognition. (But in fact, a working class person, no middle-class critic or theatre practitioner would give me the time of the day.) (Preface 2000).

Dattani's life is marginalised because he is a playwright and playwrights in the twenty-first century are not valued much. His inferiority lies in writing plays. Therefore, in the preface he writes, "Where in the literary circles, I am seen as inferior because I am a playwright".

Thus marginalisation of performing artist is pathetic if the individual accepts his or her marginalisation. But if the power of resistance is strong then the wave of

marginalisation cannot save the performing artist and there won't be any hindrances to performing art. Further, drama and theatre are the tools used to sensitize the general public on the matters that affect them in the daily life. Therefore, Dattani and Karnad seek the help of drama, a performing art to rejuvenate another or the same performing art like dance and theatre. These two plays satirise the orthodox conventions which make the performing artist marginalised. The motive behind satires is to bring about the sensitive issue or marginalisation of performing artists into the eyes of the people as drama is best suited to stimulate social change.

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## Conclusion

The plays *Dance Like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani and *The Fire and The Rain* by Girish Karnad depicts the pathetic condition of the artists in terms of societal marginalities like gender, caste, and class. Artists are puppets in the hands of authority, the power that dominates the minorities. In these plays, the minorities are the artists by profession and are regularly threatened by the structured norms of power dominance like the males, high caste people like Brahmins, the politics, etc.

Innumerable works have been done in these two plays discussion on the matters related to caste, class, and gender, but none of the works spoke about how the performing artist's life is socially marginalised and what are the consequences in the lives of the performers because of marginalisation. Marginalisation cage the performing artist's consciousness and creativity resulting in the failure of the performing artists. Therefore, when mind and heart are trapped, the performing artist is paralysed and they are unable to portray themselves with confidence.

This research wholly depends upon the marginal identities of the performing artists in terms of societal marginalisation norms, both in the past and in the contemporary society. The marginalisation like Gender, caste, and class is not new to the life of the performing artists, especially to Indian performing artist. But each performing artist has his or her own story of being marginalised. However, the comparative analysis made at chapter four shows the transition of marginalisation in the life of a performing artist through ages like during kinship, colonialism, post-colonialism and the contemporary times. The play chosen in this research represented the hectic condition of the performers not only in the modern day but also of the medieval period, through modern ideas blended with myth and spirituality.

However. The efforts put in this dissertation is to appreciate the way the playwrights have put forward their creativity the look at the life and sufferings of the performing artist. Identity crisis is found to be the main reason for the self-marginalisation of performing artists.

Therefore, I took some critics ideologies as, from Judith Butler's book named *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and*

*Feminist Theory* gender marginalisation, Marxist ideology for class divide and then B.R Ambedkar's book *Annihilation of Caste* is taken into account to depict the caste marginalities in the lives of performing artists.

The result of marginalisation of performing artists in most cases is that they put an end to their profession as performing artist. This study deals mainly with the unconventional attitude of the society towards the performing artists in terms of gender, class, and caste. The different types of societal oppressions have led to different types of marginalised performing artists. Each marginalised character in the plays chosen has his/her own story of marginalisation. Therefore, attempts have been made to highlight the identity crisis of the marginalised performing artists.

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## Declaration

I declare that all the changes suggested by internal examiners in the dissertation entitled, "Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* and Mahesh Dattani's *Dance like a Man: A Study of Marginal Identities and Performing Artists*" submitted by me for the award of degree of the Maters in English in the Department of Languages and Comparative Literature has been incorporated in the dissertation.

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