Gender Discrimination, Individual Space, and Orthodoxy versus Modernity in Mahesh Dattani’s Select Plays

1) Introduction:

The aim of the proposed research is to study the central theme of gender discrimination and the sub-themes like Individual Space in Indian scenario contextualized by Mahesh Dattani’s plays. Dattani throws light on the discourse of otherness in Indian society. The playwright has followed the tradition of social realism that illuminates the contemporary social problems like inter-caste marriage, sex power and wealth, chauvinism, orthodoxy versus modernity, homosexuality etc. This research comprehensively studies representative works like ‘Where There is a Will’, ‘Dance Like a Man’, ‘Tara’ and ‘On a Muggy Night in Mumbai’. This research endeavours to study the experiences of marginalized characters like women, homosexual men etc. This research also throws light on themes of individual space to show individual quest for self-existence.

1.1 Significance of the Study:

Some of Indian writers since pre-Independence era to contemporary writers have tried to paint the feelings of fractured psyche of people of society. Anxiety and insecurity are personified in characters of plays by Mahesh Dattani very beautifully and aptly. All four proposed plays illustrate the central theme of gender discrimination as well as Individual space too.

The research studies the psyche of people in Indian society who are oppressed by family kin only. Such socio-cultural and psycho-cultural aspects are scrutinized in this study to understand the emotional condition.

1.2 Scope and Limitation of Study:

1.2.1 The Scope of the study:

The Scope of the study is quite elaborate as it looks at interdisciplinary studies involving psychology and literary texts. The target literary texts are Mahesh Dattani’s four stage plays:

1. Where There is a Will (1988)
2. Dance Like a Man (1989)
3. Tara (1990)

The study of Natyasastra will be helpful to gain a vision about playwright’s ideas of above mentioned literary texts at different points and from different perspectives. There is scope and limitation too of this research.
1.2.2 Limitations of the Study:

The study does not include poetry or autobiography or chronicles that tell about the mental traumas of orthodoxy and modernity. The study of play does not allow the inclusion of other literary genres.