



The miserable life and mutual relations of the hijra community in *Seven Steps Around The Fire*

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Abstract

The play *Seven Steps around the Fire* presents deplorable condition of eunuch in our society. It is a gruesome tragedy in the life of a transsexual and also who loves and reveals sympathy towards marginalized eunuch community. They are not considered as respect able and acceptable human beings. They dress up themselves in woman's costumes but are not considered woman. The human identity of eunuch is covered under the cloaks of myths and conventions. The play reveals their position in our society. Perceived as the lowest of the low, they yearn for family and love.

Key words: miseries, hate, mutual, distressed, deplorable

Mahesh Dattani has come into his own as an Indian popular dramatist is seen today as a pragmatic writer who has the capacity to deal with taboo issues. His audience in the main is drawn from the ever-growing English-speaking Indian middle class which has come to form a metropolitan fraternity. It is clear that Dattani's plays talk to the audience. Sometimes they call for recontextualizations of response sometimes they introduce revisioning in what may appear to be a standard cultural discourse. Dattani's conversations raise questions from recent years, questions that pertain to power and gender.

For some however, there is a sense of increase that in performance there may have been on ever simplification of vocabulary. It is almost a if the audience has been taken under scrutiny. Dattani takes his audience into the politics of lack in the area of identity, on stage he uses memory provides physical spaces for both past and present sides separate action at multiple levels, which transform s

faces into masses frenzy into voices that within contexts are only too familiar in what seems to be a returning matter. Dattani creates a bipolar world in *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. The point of reference is the world of marriage. The world of the hijaras the freak community who cannot procreates clashes with the normal heterosexual community who necessarily must procreate from this bipolarity.

The play *Seven Steps around the Fire* compassionate feelings of the dramatist for the miseries in the life of the hijra community. They are treated in a way as social outcasts and nobody treats them like human beings. This impression has been presented since the very beginning. Uma has selected this topic for the study of her research work and she indents to argue and present their life in a different way and that her work will be something extraordinary. She tells, "It is important, my guide is very impressed with her case. He feels it will go long way in making my paper relevant." (23)

Since the very beginning we are made to

feel that everybody in the society hates them and looks down upon them. In the jail, Anarkali is beaten by the prisoners and when she cries, they enjoy and makes loud noises of joy Munswamy, an ordinary constable does not love a woman of the status. Of Uma should involve in the case concerned with the hijras and requests her to deal with same other case will because it wibe insulting for her and her family. However when Uma is informal he likes that Anarkali should be called in the office instead of Uma herself going to her prison cell. She has great kindness for Anarkali and expresses it before Suresh. But like others, he also does not like it and feels that they always tell lies and often quarrel among themselves. He desires Uma: "I am allowing you to go through these cases for your thesis but don't feel any compassion for them." He again tells, "they are all just castrated degenerate men. They fought like does every day."(37)

The hijras also know very well that the society has to give up them so they become arrogant but some of them like Champa are very wise. They don't want to mix with the people of higher status. Their pathetic situation is showed in the beginning and we feel that they are thirsty for love like the other human beings of the world. Anarkali makes relationship sisterhood with Uma because she is deeply impressed by her sympathetic behaviour. Both Champa and Anarkali know the fact that whatever they say. Nobody is going to trust them and so though they know everything about the murder of Kamla, they do not open their mouth. Anarkali tells Uma, "They will kill me also, if I tell the truth. If I don't tell the truth, I will die in jail," (51). They are satisfied in themselves to think that god has made them to suffer in this way and so they are quite helpless. The moment Anarkali sees Uma before her, she pleads that she has not murdered Kamla and that being the wife of a powerful officer. She should help her to get out of jail.

Uma's visit to Champa throws better light on the distressed life of these hijras. Champa is a very wise hijra and when she comes to know that Uma has a lot of money in her bag. She honestly asks her. "Are you mad? Hold the bag tightly. You should not bring so much money into such places. "She is well aware of the fact that such places are not safe.

They love each other very deeply inspite of the fact that they often quarrel together. She trusts that Anarkali has certainly no hand in the murder of Kamla and expresses her affection. "She should die in jail. But after all I am the head hijra she is my daughter." Anarkali also trusts almost the same views about Kamla, "I did not do anything to Kamla. She was my sister." Her affection for Kamla is the greatest when she tells the fact that the had no bad desire in quarreling with her and scratching her face. Because when she came to know about her relations with Subbu, she at once reveals that it would be most dangerous for her and wanted these relations to be broken. She tells "I fought with her, I scratched her face, hoping she will become ugly and Subbu will forget her." Kamla also had a great faith in Champa and gave the photo of her marriage to Anarkali to be given to Champa. (73)

Their affection reaches the extreme when Anarkali has been brought back home from jail. She has been badly beaten and suffers miserable life. Champa sympathised her, puts her head in her lap and thumps her like a small child. Champa treats all of them as her daughters. When Kamla becomes a hijra, she loves her most presenting a photo to Uma, Kamla tells, "These were his first father and mother. Afterwards I am her father and mother," (82). She is very eager to get Anarkali out of prison and this she does with the help of the ornaments.

Champa revealed to their deplorable state in the society. She tells that nobody cares for them the people do not them and so they have no voice anywhere Champa says, "We cannot speak when we want to speak nobody listens, when we cannot speak. This is why even the police does not come for them and Anarkali has been imprisoned without any investigation and even Suresh has adopted this fact to Uma, still they are happy in their own world as Champa reports. "She should not have been happy in the outside words," (63). And they are proud of their states. Even Uma wonders how they come to know about marriage and child birth and reach there uninvited. She has now increased a secret sympathy for them and when at the wedding of Subbu, Mr. Sharma is determined to turn them out she requests him. "The marriage ceremonies are done. You should be happy just let them dance a

little. Is that asking too much?" (67) The hijras are also showed at the suicide of Subbu.

At the end of the play we find that in spite of their misery and sufferings they have love for good people. Anarkali blesses Uma with a child and gives her a locket and says: "You will be blessed Uma with children.... sister.... may you and your family be happy. This makes them really human in their private and behavior apart from their profession of singing and dancing and getting money on some important celebrations". (96)

The play represents the plight of eunuch in the society. They used to come on two occasions- wedding and child birth but the nature denies them both the things. It is considered if they are denied to dance and sing on these occasions, they curse the family. They are neglected section of the society. The play also presents the idea that the powerful always exploit the weak. The eunuchs are not given any respect in the society. They have no right to get love. If they try to do so their fate will be like Kamala. Not even they, the people who try to give love to them have to suffer like Subbu in the play. (<https://eltweekly.com/2013/12/book-review-seven-steps-around-the-fire-by-mahesh-dattani/>)

Thus in the play *Seven Steps Around The Fire* Mahesh Dattani has successful thrown light on the lonely and miserable life of the hijaras. They are social outcastes and nobody cares for them or listens to them. This aspect has been repeated many a times during the course of the drama. Champa complains that nobody hears them when they want to say something that Anarkali requests again and again that she has not done anything and that they have no proof against her. Even Suresh says that they have no proof against her. Munswamy asks Uma not to visit the hijras because it is humiliating for her family. They get money only by singing and dancing at the marriages and child births. They have to suffer social insult at every step and that makes them arrogant but their mutual love is beyond suspicion.

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