

Miserable conditions of the Eunuch in Dattani's play Seven Steps Around the Fire

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Abstract: -An 'unheard voice' of civilization is those who experience social, physical, and psychological abuse. The inability of society to categorize them according to any recognized gender is the cause of this abuse. As a result, they experience social exclusion. The play highlights the problems with the eunuchs' low social acceptability. Additionally, he has raised numerous concerns about the effectiveness of the police, politics, and society. One of Mahesh Dattani's plays that are among the most widely read is *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. After meeting Anarkali and Champa, Uma Rao, the daughter of the vice chancellor and wife of chief superintendent of police Suresh Rao, undertakes a study and inquiries into the sad state of neglected and marginalized eunuchs. The eunuchs are humiliated in addition to childbirth and marriage because of their inferior gender. We do not need them here. The play centers on the brutal burning to death of Kamala, a eunuch, by the powerful politician Mr. Sharma simply because she dared to fall in love and marry his son Subbu.

Keywords: -Miserable condition, eunuch, marginalization, Inadaptability, Society, Violence.

Introduction: - Dattani's play depicts societal culture, customs, and gender issues while illuminating the unique behaviors of the characters. The intelligent Indian men and their complex lives in contemporary society, as well as *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (1998), illustrates how gender is marginalized in society and how its members are treated cruelly when they are suffering. His plays allegedly target societal issues, not just the visible ones but also the deeply established prejudices and problems that society is often conditioned to ignore. His plays tackle issues including gender identity, female discrimination, and interpersonal difficulties. The concerns of eunuchs who are overlooked by society are encapsulated in the drama. There are no laws that guarantee their safety and societal acceptance. Nobody feels bad for the horrible situations they are in or the cruel treatment they are receiving.

Even if they are cared for and maintained in homes, animals and other creatures are not welcomed anywhere and these eunuchs suffer from isolation and desertion from their families, friends, and most importantly society. People do not care what they think, feel, or demonstrate through their acts because they simply see them as comedians and dancers who entertain people with their peculiar facial and physical expressions. Concerning societal issues, this ideology aims to give eunuchs a voice. Despite having committed no such crimes, they are treated like criminals and are exempt from political or governmental legislation.

Eunuchs have always existed, but they are more common in China, Asia, and Africa than everywhere else. In Asia, eunuch women who take care of the ladies of the royal families have a long history. As transsexual people who were seen to be sexually benign, they were sheltered by their royal ladies and families. As a result, society rejects the *Seven Steps of a Boy and a Eunuch*, which leads to the tragic death of the beautiful eunuch Kamla and the failure of the love marriage between a eunuch and a boy. The only person who supports these eunuchs and prohibits her husband from treating Unjustly accused of murdering another eunuch named Kamla is Anarkali, according to Uma Rao, the deputy commissioner of police's daughter-in-law and the wife of a police official.

Uma Rao is portrayed by Dattani as a modern Indian lady who uses her education to fight against the restrictions placed on her by outdated norms imposed by society. Due to Uma's tendency to keep most things from her husband Suresh, their relationship is not extraordinarily strong in this play.

Because her husband will not let her, she meets Anarkali without his consent and begs her father for money to give to Champa. He also experiences a tinge of bitterness when he finds out about this. Suresh: What made you seek money from your father? Oh, there was no reason, Uma. This is how he displays his mild rage. I was there to see him, and you ought to have asked me, Suresh. Have I ever turned you down for a loan? (Dattani, 1998: 32).

The author not only describes the issues facing women, but also, and maybe more poignantly the issues facing eunuchs, or members of the third gender, who are entirely ignored by society. Dattani talks about all of this through Uma Rao's persona. Uma Rao's character is described by Jaspal Singh as follows: Dattani praises her for her intelligence, sensitivity, and resolve, which enabled her to complete the assignments.

She then acts as a change agent. An open mind, a daring conscience, a response that goes against social indoctrination, and challenging the validity of established social standards cauterize this social actor. Mahesh Dattani writes on topics that are often overlooked and underappreciated by other writers. Dattani wants to communicate a lot about how marginalized transgender people are in this play, but he acknowledges that he cannot say everything. As a result, he uses his characters as mouthpieces for his ideas and beliefs, allowing them to speak and act through conversation and expressions.

In the introduction to his *Collected Plays*, he recognizes this. writing, "I also know that I have a lot to say and am probably not saying it well enough. But my characters also have a lot to say, and it seems like they are doing very well" (Dattani, 1998: 11). Because Dattani's subjects are entwined with social difficulties, they apply to modern society. Grasp the societal issues that are hidden, Dattani uses a realistic approach in his writings. The playwrights who care so much about the tragic situation of eunuchs, as Dattani does in his drama *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, are found to have extraordinarily little expertise and interest in them. The main theme of most of his articles is gender bias. In their analysis of Dattani's play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* on transgender people, the two Indian researchers Vikas and Poonam write: "*Seven Steps Around the Fire* sheds light on the poor condition of eunuchs in the society and how they are deprived of the basic rights like justice" (Vikas Jaoolkar). The hijra population is a non-conforming gender that is not considered human and even does not deserve the general public's kindness and pity.

For no reason, they are made fun of by all children, men, and women. At many ceremonies, parties, and social events, transgender people are treated as a plaything for the delight of others. The assassination of their self-respect is humorous for a so-called civilized culture that champions catchphrases for the protection of human freedom and protection. These "slogans" are a slap in the face to human activists who create and run organizations to assist such vulnerable and homeless people only ironically to flaunt and brag about their humanitarian appearance to seek admiration and celebrity from the public. Society in no manner accepts transgender persons because they are unable to share social and matrimonial rights with other regular people.

Because of this, their continued existence in the world of binary distinction is in doubt. The existence of uncommon items is unacceptable since it causes annoyance and frustration, and the eunuchs fall under this category. Authors describe the predicament of transgender people Syed Wali Peran and Karthikeyan as follows: "Eunuchs are typically excluded from society. They are frequently mistreated and comprise the poorest socioeconomic echelons of society, according to Syed Wali Peran. Mahesh Dattani observes these pervasive social difficulties and does not choose sensational subjects because of this.

He describes the typical issues that average people face in mundane existence. People are interested in social concerns because they have a strong connection to their everyday lives, particularly those in South Asia. I am sure that my plays accurately reflect my time, area, and social status. the author says of his writing. I am incredibly eager and excited to see what the new millennium holds for me and my art in a nation that faces several political, social, artistic, and cultural challenges (Dattani 1998: XV). The drama investigates the covert circumstances of Kamla's arbitrary murder by a preacher. Dattani emphasizes the issue of the murder of an innocent woman to show that human life, regardless of gender, is not as worthless as it is thought to be by the cold-hearted owners of wealth.

In our society, cases of these murders by aristocratic families are typically downplayed and bought off to preserve the honor and family name of the wealthy. As a result, this drama is crucial for

understanding the problems and difficulties that eunuchs have experienced throughout history. Dr. Beena Agarwal offers the following analysis of this play: "Dattani has tried to articulate the voice of the oppressed sections of society whose identity is shrouded in the cover of myths and social prejudices in the process of engineering the current of Indian drama by bringing it closer to the real-life experiences." Dattani attempts to delve into the identities of those who do not fit into the social order within the constraints of dramatic structure. (Agarwal)

Anarkali, Champa, and Kamla, three actors in this play, are all in terrible situations since no one will give them the roles they deserve. They are made fun of and treated cruelly by others. Society hides behind sarcastic attitudes that expose the unethical and decadent way of life of contemporary people because it does not want to face the truth. "Dattani has done a good job by introducing a new theme to Indian English drama," claims Bijay Kumar Das. Social activists and conservatives should not ignore reality. Even if it may be uncomfortable, we must embrace life's realities (Chapter IV: A Critical Analysis of Mahesh Dattani's Plays).

Dattani's play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* provides a depressing representation of the circumstances of eunuchs, whose problems are hidden and ignored. Uma Rao begins the play by researching the topic of "Class and Gender: Related Violence." Despite having a gender focus for her research, she unintentionally becomes involved in the murder investigation of Kamla and is interested in learning what led to the tragedy. In a different conversation, Munswamy reacts to Uma's inquiry about the case registration for Kamla's murder with a dismissive gesture and tone of voice: Uma: The police were not notified that Kamla was gone by the hijras. Ha, exclaimed Munswamy. as if they are considering it! After finding out that the body was a hijra and belonged to a man, we called them. Jewelry piqued their curiosity more (Dattani, 1998: 17). Munswamy's remark unequivocally demonstrates that jewelry has a higher value than a hijra's life. Because a hijra occurred instead of a man being killed, the police arrive at the crime scene after it has already happened. When Kamla was murdered, she was wearing a lot of jewelry, thus the public and the police were more preoccupied with the jewelry than with the eunuch's passing. No one pays attention to Kamla's horrible and innocent death since her presence or absence has no bearing on people's lives. Everyone, except for Uma, is opposed to the existence of eunuchs, and despite her best efforts to identify these challenges, she grows weary, is unable to draw any firm conclusions, and is ready to give up on her study endeavor.

She asks her supervisor whether she can omit the case study on the hijras from the assignment. Well, it all looks a little too gory, and I am having trouble doing research increasingly. (Dattani, p. Mahesh Dattani considers myths to be true. He grounds his analysis of eunuchs on a period in history when punishing eunuchs was considered wicked because these eunuchs were seen to be close to God. Uma Rao, Dattani's spokesperson in this play, likewise regards eunuchs as God's chosen people. Nature and society deprive them of the two blessed events of marriage and childbirth. Ironically though, it is also thought to be a blessing that they were present in these two instances. They perform dances and songs while making a living. Uma Rao feels reluctant to decline a hijra at the minister's son's wedding. Mr. Sharma corrects Champa and Anarkali, two eunuchs who attend the wedding to sing and solicit alms because he thinks they are dishonored people. When Mr. Sharma asks Champa to refrain from singing, she responds, "Uma: No, wait! No, you cannot. Are you taking their side, Mr. Sharma? Uma: No, Uma Rao responds, "Turning away a hijra at a wedding or birth is unlucky. " In response, Champa expresses her gratitude and bestows her with a blessing by stating, "Champa: Thank you, my daughter. I hope you have one hundred boys! (Dattani, 1998: 38).

Due to the deplorable conditions of the eunuchs, Anarkali is only imprisoned by the police on suspicion of killing Kamla since no one else was available to be detained, despite the absence of any proof. As Uma's husband, Suresh puts it: "We just detained her because there was nobody else. There is not any evidence against her. Any of them could be the case (Dattani, 1998: 33). The author talks about how the eunuchs are aware that they do not exist outside of the area in which they currently reside. When Uma Rao meets Champa to inquire about Kamla's passing, she confronts her in a confrontational manner and accuses her of murdering Kamla by refusing to send her away with Salim, who was trying to save her life.

She alleges that since Champa was concerned about losing Kamla's income, she failed to deport Kamla. Champa says wryly, "That is true, but only because she won't be satisfied in the outer world" (Dattani, 1998: 28). Similarly, Champa asks Uma if she considers them to be members of

society at another location, and Uma responds in the affirmative. Oh, Champa. You work as a social worker, then. Tell that. A: Yes, Uma I work in social services. Champa: Excuse me, sir, please. I was unaware of that. You think of us as a society, right? Uma: Obviously. You are, I mean (Dattani 23). Dattani shows how money is the driving force behind society as Mr. Sharma uses his wealth and status to hide the circumstances surrounding his son's suicide and Kamla's murder.

Rich individuals can manipulate the lives of any poor person for social and domestic goals. However, the situation for a transgender person is much more pitiful because no one saves their transgender companions and claims them as their own. Because Kamla is dead and no one will be interested in this case, Anarkali informs Uma that it is irrelevant if there is an investigation into Kamla's murder. Uma, why didn't you tell me? Anarkali, would you have had faith in me? What good does that do, though? Who killed Kamla does not matter; what does? She has gone (Dattani, 1998: 41–42). The authors depict the abuse of eunuchs by police officers who hold positions of social authority.

They mock them and treat them like animals. They beat and torment them to get them to accept murder or any other social crime they do not care about. Anarkali is placed in a male cell by Suresh Rao, Uma's husband, where she suffers both physical and sexual torture. Only Uma Rao, who confronts her husband about this, is aware of Anarkali's detention. "Uma: Why are they keeping her in a prison for men? They are equally as strong as horses, according to Suresh Rao (Dattani, 1998: 09). This study's assertion that eunuchs are mute people whose existence is seen unfavorably by members of what is referred to as a civilized society is supported by the drama *Seven Steps Around the Fire*'s somber conclusion.

Only in these areas does society recognize morals; otherwise, there would be severe lawlessness and no one to take charge. So, the poor eunuchs are hurt in their quest for increased mortality. In the following lines, Uma Rao very accurately portrays their predicament: Uma: They were aware. Anarkali, Champa, and the other hijra inhabitants were aware of the perpetrators of Kamla's murder. They are voiceless. The incident was kept quiet, and it was not even covered by the newspaper. Champa had a point. The police did not make any arrests... The suicide of Subbu was dismissed as an accident.

The image was obliterated. Two young people's lives were also affected (Dattani, 1998:42). The entire representation of eunuchs' invisible problems can be found in *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. They are viewed as a lesser gender than other people who have no right to participate in social, home, political, or most significantly marriage issues. The public has the misconception that transgender people are damaged individuals who lack substantial productive abilities and are therefore just like other people. Ironically, South Asian families view the presence of transgender people at weddings as vital, even though everyone in society with a social position or status abuses their basic rights. Transgender person experience hatred, disdain, and disparaging remarks because of this peculiar circumstance, which makes people puzzled.

Provide the troubling identification difficulties of the third gender a voice through his writing, Mahesh Dattani's plays achieve good financial success. The drama discusses the eunuchs' hidden issues and stresses their powerlessness, saying that neither life nor death is of any importance to eunuchs and that both are worthless. The plot of the play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* has a similar unfairness. When the play depicts how little the police and the public care about the murder of a eunuch, the injustice is at its most egregious. It addresses the tragic truths of people who violate the human rights of eunuchs.

Because they are denied the benefits and enjoyment of married life, their social rights are prohibited for them. On the surface, the play has numerous additional characters with various moods and demeanors, including police officers, political activists, and educated women, but in truth, it is a lamentation of human external beauty, the callousness of society, and the incapacity of eunuchs to adapt. The eunuchs live in close quarters in certain deserted places because they need to safeguard themselves from the contempt and disrespect of society. These helpless children's predicament is getting worse every day because of the growth in crime in society.

In addition to Kamala, we also encounter Anarkali and Champa, two more hijras. Being a hijra makes Anarkali the target of discrimination. She is only detained for Kamala's murder due to suspicions. Everyone is aware of the murderer, but because he is a strong man, the police decide to capture Anarkali to protect the real killer. Even though Anarkali did not commit the murder, she was

arrested. While the viewers scream with joy, she is beaten by convicts and mistreated by police officers. This is utterly repulsive. Suresh Rao, Munuswamy, and Mr. Sharma are only a few of the characters that the dramatist uses to illustrate the predominating views and preconceptions of Indian society regarding transgender people. Hijras are referred to as "dogs" and "castrated degenerate men." They are addressed with the pronoun it (Dattani, 1998, 10).

Nobody feels sorry for them. Uma is advised by Suresh Rao to not feel sympathy for the Hijra people. "Look, it's one thing that I'm letting you look at these cases for your thesis, but don't feel any sympathy for them," he says. They will profit from it. Keep your sympathetic nature for me (Dattani, 1998, 10). The universe of Hijras is their own. They have sisters and daughters of the same sex. One fewer hijra in the world has no bearing on your husband, according to Anarkali (Dattani, 1998: 35). Kamla was treated like Champa's daughter and Anarkali like her sister. Uma becomes aware of the hijra's shared affection. Due to their isolation from society, the eunuchs exist in their universe.

Similar incidents are reported in newspapers and news headlines, and Dattani has provided an instance in which a transgender person was the victim of a crime, but no effective steps have been taken to protect their rights. It is a satire on liberal thinkers who support human rights in a time when technology is advancing rapidly and robots are taking on increasing social significance, but in South Asian countries, human beings are purposefully ignored, and their rights are suppressed. However, Dattani's endeavor is noteworthy since he has offered a distinct perspective on South Asian modern civilization from a global standpoint. It might be said that Mahesh Dattani's artistic achievements influenced how his modern literary circle perceived his brief but thorough play. We could put it this way as a conclusion: the playwright wants his audience and readers to think about the injustice society has been doing to these marginalized people. He wants the eunuchs to be accepted into society. He asks for birthright citizenship and marital rights for the hijra group. They should also have the right to love, a family, and relationships under humanism. Mahesh Dattani confronts conventional ideas about marriage and childbirth in Indian culture and grows as a radical thinker in this passage.

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