

A Study of Gender and Identity in Contemporary India of Mahesh Dattani's Seven Steps Around the Fire and Dance Like a Man

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Abstract:

The country's top court, the Supreme Court of India, handed down its decision on April 15, 2014. In this way, the third gender was officially recognised, thus enlarging the natural pairings of both a male and female. In terms of current Indian culture, this is a critical judgement since, in addition to acknowledging the third sex, it acknowledges the great majority of modern India. The ruling is groundbreaking since it emphasises individual gender identification choices and is based on ongoing hypothetical transformations of gender & identity. It is a turning point in India's contemporary history.

KEYWORDS: Elevated, Legal, Third gender, Contemporary, Revolutionary, Hypothetical

Mahesh Dattani has spent a significant portion of his career composing plays about contemporary perspectives of India and Indians. and the acceptance of minorities. These have been referred to as "invisible" challenges that Dattani exposes in contemporary metropolitan India. In this paper, When I think of Mahesh Dattani's piece *Seven Steps Fully Surrounding the Fire*, and *Dancing Like a Man* in which he explores the societal restriction of minors from one perspective while exploring alternative gender construction suspicions from another. Dattani shows a homicide in a transgender neighbourhood. *Seven Steps Around the Fire*'s inquiry reveals some uncomfortable truths regarding our attitudes in the direction of sexual normativity. Dattani's piece, *Dancing Like a Man*, highlights the extraordinary consequences that occur when expected sexual orientation jobs & expert judgements collide. The play can also be read as a brilliant representation of sex as an exhibition, thanks to Jairaj's delivery. Dattani has effectively taken an interest in a cultural life it is everything but solid through his exceptional scenarios on questions of sex and gender. As a result, The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that the Supreme Court of India's recent ruling on the recognition of the third gender is a viable option in India.

On April 15, 2014, India's Supreme Court issued a significant decision. The highest legal body in India has officially recognised the third gender as a distinct class distinct from the naturally given markers of females and males. The Indian Supreme Court proposed the following: as a fundamental remedy for ensuring civil rights for all:

The Supreme Court's acknowledgment of transgender people as third gender preserves not only the rule of law, but also the rights of transgender people. but also advances rights for just a group of people who have hitherto been denied their natural and fundamental rights. As a

result It is the only correct way that ensures justice for TGs as well as society. (Petition No. 106).

The judgement has been hailed by the transgender community as a significant step toward In modern India, they have come to terms with their identity and citizenship. Anyway, The way that this judgement is written is one of the aspects that makes it unforgettable in addition to the fact that this is an acknowledgement of the third gender an acknowledgement of The majority of modern India is made up of these people. As India's future is envisioned and public personas are established in the twenty-first century, It is apparent that the country has evolved from a solid concept to one that is increasingly multiple. The Indian Supreme Court's decision has dealt a major blow to a heteronormative male-female sexual dichotomy and it is the most significant institutional step toward the acceptance of the majority of sexual identities.

Transsexuals in India are marginalised because of their sexual identity. They're strange people with limited access to governmental departments. It is a mythology and a belief that they have the ability to give gifts (and to revile) at happy gatherings, which appears to be their only social contact with ordinary people. They've been seen striking train compartments with an unmistakable theatrical edge and demanding money at various events. Every one of them has used similar language to build a poor picture of the hijras, and there is no doubt that, despite the Supreme Court's ruling, social acceptance of transgender people remains a long way off. The Supreme Court has received a writ petition from the National Legal Services Authority, which is in charge of transsexuals in this instance.

Our culture rarely acknowledges or cares about the grief, suffering, and sorrow that members of the Transgender community go through, nor does it value Transgender people's innate feelings, particularly those whose body and mind reject their biological sex. The transgender people is frequently mocked and abused in our society and They are considered as untouchables in public spaces including such train stations, bus stops, schools, workplaces, malls, theatres, & hospitals, forgetting that society's refusal to contain as well as welcome multiple gender identities and manifestations is the moral failure, which we must rectify. 1–2 (Petition Numbers)

While hoping for a shift in social and moral attitudes about transgender people, the petition looks for “a legal declaration of their gender identity than the one assigned to them, male or female, at the time of birth” and asserts that “every person of that community has a legal right to decide their sex orientation and to espouse and determine their identity”. According to the petition, in order to identify gender identity,

Gender identity is a word that refers to a person's profoundly felt internal and individual gender experience, which may or may not correlate to their biological sex. and includes a person's personal sense of body, This may include a voluntary medical, surgical, or some other means of modifying one's physical appearance or functions, as well as other gender expressions such as clothing, voice, and mannerisms. As a result, gender identity refers to a person's self-identification as male, female, transgender, or the other recognised category. While this paper does not attempt to address all of the components of the terms of direct, It's worth noting that a few of the above-mentioned expressions place a greater focus on individual choice than on

good developments in sexual direction and gender identity. This is groundbreaking because it disperses fixed sexual identities & emphasises individual organisation when it comes to gender selection.

Hypothetical gender circumstances had been based on the distinction between a socially adaptive gender and a non-set in stone sex, Pioneering work from luminaries including such Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler catalysed the movement. For instance Joan Scott defines gender as "a social name applied to a sexed body," reflecting Simone de Beauvoir's well-known assertion that "one does not become a woman, but rather becomes a woman". If we consider the With the emergence of LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex) rights and studies, the dichotomous concept of a few natural markers, and the above-mentioned justifications for the appeal, Scott's dilemma would be questioned. In this vein, the boundaries of sex have recently been sufficiently broadened, probing suspicions about sex personality.

It is in this setting that I wish to investigate Mahesh Dattani. In the course of the most recent twenty years, Mahesh Dattani has been composing plays that address issues that are frequently ignored in today's society. The status of malignant growth patients and AIDS victims, as well as issues impacting sexual minorities across time, have been explored extensively In works such as *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, which premiered on the BBC in 1999, Dattani examines how hijras, or transsexuals, face societal rejection in modern Indian culture. The drama is about Kamala, the lovely hijra, & Uma, a young hijra. a social scientist, who investigates the homicide. Ia, isn't the perpetrator, but rather another victim in a long line of terrible hatred. Uma discovers that Anarkali, another hijra suspected of Kamala's murder, When she analyzes this incident, she discovers that she is not the killer, but rather another victim in such a long line of awful hatred..

Munswamy : Madam, If you choose, you may now view the hijra.

Uma: Will she speak with me?

Munswamy (with a chuckle): She! Of course, it will communicate with you. If it doesn't, we're going to beat it up. (Dattani, no. 7)

Dattani makes a point in the play's main voice-over, which is performed by Uma. their longing for adoration that the general public can't give to individuals having a place with sexual edges:

Transsexuals can be found all across the world, including India. The goal of this case study is to demonstrate their social status. They desire for family and love, despite their status as the lowest. Marriage and birth are the only two ceremonies in mainstream Hindu tradition where their participation is tolerated - strangely, these are the exact privileges rejected to them by nature and man. (10–11)

Dattani's ability to sensationalise such personality inconsistencies with suitable dramatic language is part of his skill as a writer. The composition's title, *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, is an illustration of an Indian marriage ceremony in which the lady and Seven times, the fortunate man encircles the fire or Agni to purify their marriage. Dattani is using the title to draw attention to the incongruity of the habit, given that, Kamala, As a hijra, you can only

marry in secret, through a fictitious exposition, a non-negotiable aspect of the ritual. As Dattani stated calls attention to, "Not for them the seven rounds witnessed by the fire god eternally binding man and woman in matrimony..."

The fire rites take up a lot of room, & Kamala can't be such a part of them. Along these lines, when the general public distinguishes it out, it is viewed as an infringement of standards and Kamala should follow through on the cost by setting out her life. Given that country's law does not specifically target persecuted individuals, the extent of this social prohibition appears to be significantly more oppressive. This dilemma was observed by Jaspal Singh in a 2012 paper. "Having a recorded history of more than 4000 years, the *hijra* community is deprived of several rights under the civil law because the Indian law recognizes only two sexes. They are isolated and segregated and constitute an 'invisible minority' within the society".

As Singh points out, even in 2012, Indian law was geared on the pair development of the females and males, leaving no room for alternative sexualities. The transsexual people along these lines have had no acknowledgement, regardless of whether as far as sexual orientation character or as residents of India. This is where the new Supreme Court decision's relevance may be found. It has shattered Indian culture's deep-seated belief that sex & sexual identity may be seen separately. In some ways, the judgement acknowledges Dattani's efforts to promote awareness of India's sexual minorities. *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, which debuted fifteen years earlier, is ostensibly first drama to portray hijras as genuine emotional beings. Dattani's fascination in transsexuals stems in part from a desire to perform their character and appearance. They typically travel in groups & sing and cheer in a particular way throughout their social contacts with the greater community and country, despite the fact that a big portion of their gender is performing. When they sing or dance at weddings and other special occasions, they do so in a very distinctive style." ("Exploring").

His reasonableness as a dramatist & his responsibilities as a commander are shaped by this consciousness. His everyday vision of current Indian life is transformed into a full-fledged dramatic encounter. Indeed, the obviously metropolitan space alluded to by Dattani's play probes the relationships between gender, resulting in astonishing and upsetting narratives.

Following my examination of *Along with Dattani's* depiction of transgender individuals in *Seven Stages Around the Fire*, I'd like to propose another of Dattani's pieces that exemplifies the interconnections between gender and appearance most well. *Dance like a Man*, a previous drama written in 1989, is situated in traditional Indian culture, in contrast to *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. The focus is on a metropolitan Indian family unit with well-established customs and an old-fashioned Indian atmosphere. However, when it comes to standing up to sex jobs & expert choices that might fit such sex jobs, moral fractures appear within this evidently safe and acceptable social unit. As a result, despite the fact that cast

Since Dattani cycles through three generations in this drama, *Characters in Dancing Like a Man* are rapidly put, both in terms of appearance & documented sequence. Jairaj appears in the middle, flanked by agents of varying ages, includes Amritlal Parekh, his father, Lata, his tiny daughter. Jairaj & Ratna are traditional painter, & Lata, their young daughter, is also a painter is a blossoming craftswoman who understands her parents' challenging standards. Amritlal, the

leader of an Indian Traditional family, desires that his son accomplish something worthwhile, something that corresponds to a man's social image. Amritlal is naturally enraged by Jairaj's decision to pursue dancing as a profession, as it defies his concept of getting down to work. Jairaj justifies his father's actions. "The craft of a 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".

Amritlal's flawless rationale can't be addressed in light of the fact that inside the clothing of progress, he has never permitted such inquiries to surface. Amritlal represents customary qualities that have helped him to unmistakably separate between universes of people one more protected Indian custom. Amritlal's rebuke and Jairaj's disobedience are further complicated by Dattani's transformation of Jairaj into a straightforward entertainer. Since his defiance has driven him nowhere, Jairaj's portrayal evokes strong emotions. He doesn't even remember what it's like to love. Both Jairaj and Ratna direct their dissatisfied aspirations to their young daughter Lata, who is almost as enthusiastic about Bharatnatyam as Jairaj and Ratna, but has no reservations about marrying the affluent mithai wala's child, Vishwas, To Lata guardians, as long even as intended lucky man exists, the match is immaterial. Let his little darling to continue dancing. Dattani investigates more complicated strands of uncertainty within these relationships within this core thematic framework. According to Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri, "Through the seamless movement in time and space, Dattani weaves in the intricate web of gender relationships and the givens of societal norm spanning three generations".

Jairaj is a key figure in terms of a central character perusing the play. Jairaj's gender is unclear, which means that his gender can be constructed or appropriated in a variety of ways. Amritlal Jairaj does not consider himself a man because he has chosen a profession that is initially associated with women. Since the day he was placed under the care of his father, Ratna Jairaj has stopped taking care of business. In terms of the play, Jairaj's manliness will be tested in a variety of ways, and he will need to play out his gender multiple times in order to develop his own identity. As a result, Jairaj's gender, I argue, is performative, and his frequent messages, real demonstrations, serve as key signifiers in the pre-production of this performance.

Thus, Jairaj's body then, at that point, may be interpreted as a charged place for him to play out his gender, or, as Butler would describe it, "a variable border, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying activity within a cultural field of gender hierarchy & compulsory heterosexuality" (Butler, Gender 189). "They are both in their sixties, but very erect & energetic from years of intense training," Dattani says, without elaborating on the distinctions between the man and the lady, at that point, may be interpreted as a charged place for him to play out his gender, or, as Butler would describe it, "the bells around his ankles clanging as he walks". The viewer can envision a whole different world. "grow up":Jairaj: You said you'd let me keep my hobbies if I wanted to.

Amritlal: Dance was just a pastime for you when you were a kid. Please grow up. Jairaj Jairaj, I despise growing up!... (422)

Later, he asks Ratna to "assist me in making him an adult." Assist me in assisting him in maturing" (427). The performativity of gender, which Amritlal deems genuine & right for the organic man that his child is, can be connected to Amritlal's notion of growing up. The problem is that Jairaj doesn't want to grow up because the presentation modes that experiencing childhood in Amritlal's terms entails aren't the kind of work he wants to do. Amritlal's fear that Jairaj hasn't matured coincides with his horror that his child is feminine and hence won't be able to act out the gender roles that are expected of him. He despises the Guruji's influence, especially when he has long hair.

Amritlal: A man with long hair is something I've never seen before.

Sadhus have long hair, according to Jairaj.

I'm not referring to them, Amritlal. Normal men, that is.

Jairaj: Is it true that he isn't...

Amritlal: I'm also aware of his walking style.

I attempted to explain how Mahesh Dattani strikes at specific commonly conserved traditions, notably as far as gender and concepts about our acknowledgment of gender, by comparing and contrasting *Dancing Like a Man in Seven Stages Around the Fire* is one of Mahesh Dattani's dramas. His beseeching topics reveal concerns that are embarrassing and emotionally upsetting, striking at Indian culture's working-class smugness. *Where a Will Exists, Bravely Fought the Queen*, & *Thirty Days in September* were all released on a muggy night in Mumbai just are a few examples of plays that address issues of gender, abuse, and identity in distinctive ways. Dattani's keen sense of theater, his use of stage space, and his lighting approach all contribute to this.

Dattani has been acknowledged as a prominent voice in Modern Indian dramatization/theatre as well as a Modern Indian writer, regardless of honours and considerable media attention. Fixing Dattani into a sub-sort denies Dattani's dramatic vision & his job as a theatre artisan in modern India, not an English theatre craftsman. Furthermore, such an arrangement ignores the majority of current Indian theatre. Dattani reacts to current events through theatre through his unusual scenarios on sex and gender concerns. This is his bet on a public culture that is far from stable, particularly in recent years. The recent Supreme Court of India judgement on India's formation of a third gender is pertinent and significant.

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