

MAHESH DATTANI: THE MENDING WALL BETWEEN THE SOCIETAL NORMS AND THE UNSPOKEN CONCEPT OF TABOO

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Abstract:

This paper is proposed to represent the reality of the society of the modern era through the works of Mahesh Dattani who has been a voice to the unvoiced. The main idea of the paper is to throw light on the tabooed concept of society which is beautifully well written and staged by the great dramatist Mahesh Dattani. The dramatist throughout his career has never been hesitant in opening up the naked truths of Indian society. This paper aims in highlighting the social tribulations that triumph in society as a result of which a specific group has been a sufferer of the social norms. The dramatist Dattani makes a very bold attempt at staging the suffering and oppression of the particular group and he stands to be the mending wall between the societal norms and the unspoken concept of taboo. This paper is presented to explore the unspoken concept of the society and highlight the latent issues which show the plight of these particular groups of people who are marginalized. 'Do the needful', 'Seven Steps around the Fire' and 'On a muggy night in Mumbai' are few of his plays that highlights the latent issues will be covered in this paper.

Keywords: Homosexuality, Gay marriage, eunuchs, social tribulations taboo.

Introduction

Mahesh Dattani is a well-known Indian dramatist and playwright exclusively known for his performs which address the social troubles which might be very deep-seated problems and prejudices that our society is conditioned to stroll away from. Dattani was very much particular to focus on the issues that one hesitates to talk about or much like a tabooed concept of the society in his plays. Dattani in his plays frequently offers with sensational issues like unusual courting, incest, toddler sexual abuse, girl's exploitation, communal disharmony, gender discrimination, homosexuality, and the oppression of the eunuchs. The themes of his plays usually cope with marginal troubles as a way to unmask the society of its hypocrisy. These themes remained latent and suppressed to this point that have been introduced forth by way of Dattani via his performs. Dattani tries to deliver consciousness most of the humans and points out that lesbians and gays are part of our society but then their social repute and rights are denied and society puts them under margin. This paper is presented to explore the unspoken concept of the society and highlight the latent issues which show the plight of these particular groups of people who are marginalized. 'Do

the needful’, ‘Seven Steps Around the Fire’ and ‘On a muggy night in Mumbai’ are few of his plays that highlights the latent issues will be covered in this paper.

Tabooed relationship or homosexuality: Do the needful

This play deals with the theme gender and alternate sexuality. Dattani has incorporated the same hackneyed idea to sabotage the existing structures. This play is originally a radio play set around the theme of the Indian arranged marriage system. The major characters are of two sets of families, the Patels, who are Gujrati and Gowdas the kannadigas. They may be negotiating a healthy among their offspring. Lata Gowda is twenty-4 and notorious, Alpesh Patel is thirty-plus and divorced. Alpesh is a gay man and isn't always capable of live a harmonious existence with a girl that's why his former wife gave him divorce. Lata has an aspiration for Salim, a terrorist; therefore their households are desperate to lead them to ‘directly’. Through the gist of the play we can understand that these families belong to two different communities and are highly skeptical of each other but then are ready for inter caste marriage of their children because of the social pressure.

Dattani has given a very remarkable solution for this problem. When Lata decided to run away from home as she become no longer was getting any possibility to meet her preference. However whilst she finds Alpesh with Mali in a cowshed making love, she quits her decision of walking away. First of all she suggests her aversion but then realizes that it is not best the answer of her problem but also of Alpesh's. If they both get married to each other if she would not have to make sexual relationship with him because he's homosexual. Each of them will give each different sufficient area and liberty to do the things as they want. In this way along with their happiness, they'll also maintain the happiness in their society and families.

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai

The play starts with the homophile scene, because the play opens, we are able to see the moment of love. In the dim light the face of Kamallesh is visible and when the lights are gradually lit up the other person becomes visible and the other person is a middle class man who is the security guard and being paid for sex. Kamlesh is a widely recognized style clothier residing in Mumbai invitations his buddies to type his issues. He confesses that he's nonetheless in love with Prakash (ED) who betrayed him and has become “straight”.

Kamallesh's friends were mostly gays and they represent the different types of homosexual community. Sharad and Deepali are frank and comfortable with their sexuality and actual to their companions. Ranjit flew abroad as he thinks Indian society does not entertain such things. Though happily married Bunny loves the gay relationship but pretends to be a heterosexual for the sake of the society. All his friends have found different solutions for their issues and have employed many survival tactics. But Kamallesh is different from the other ones; he is not ashamed of being an homosexual whereas Ed is not bold enough to accept it publicly. Later Kamallesh comes to know that Ed is in love with Kiran who happens to be his sister. When Kiran learns the relationship

between Ed and Kamalesh she is shocked. Unable to face these issues Ed commits suicide is the climax of the play, which says that the gay community faces a lot more than the real couples who struggle to get married with various instances.

Dattani's message through the play is that the gay community is oppressed and pushed to a situation where suicide is far better than accepting being a homosexual.

Oppression of the eunuchs: Seven Steps Around the Fire

This play presents the theme of oppression of queer community. One of the topics which, has not been touched by any other Indian writer, except Mahesh Dattani. In this play Dattani covers the social and psychological crisis of the eunuchs and have throwed the lime light of the conflicts, fear, anguish, insecurities dilemmas and frustration of the queer community.

The play goes like the police arrests a hijra named Anarkali who was accused for murder of Kamala another hijra. Anarkali is abused sexually, mentally, verbally and physically in the jail by the police officers and also abused by the journalist. Few other journalists and social workers approached Anarkali not out of humanity, rather to collect fanciful and saucy news for their newspaper and journals. Kamala, a beautiful eunuch and Subbu the son of a minister has been in love and thus the minister executes a plan to kill her as she cannot marry his son legally. The play progresses to the murder investigation of a hijra named Kamala and focuses on the psychological and social struggling and the social installation in which a hijra cannot do anything to meet there his desire, emotions and feelings past the societal norms.

Uma a studying student in sociology is the wife of Superintendent of police and daughter of the vice chancellor runs research on the eunuchs' community and observes Kamala's murder case. Uma is demotivated and pointed out by constable Munusamy that being a woman, there are other cases more interesting and this is quite complicated and controversial to work. Dattani also presents that not only the hijra community is suppressed and suffers from being marginalized rather the ones who get on the field to voice against the injustice caused to the community also get marginalized.

Everyone in the play seems to have a pre-established notion and hatred for eunuchs community and they are not ready to adapt and change their notion. One sympathetic character was Uma who did not empathize with them. Out of all the very heart aching things about them is that they got used to this hatred and have compromised and accepted the fact.

Conclusion:

To conclude the paper, it is known that Dattani through these plays have raised many question regarding the identity of the eunuchs, homosexuality and gay marriage. Which in the first place, people would have not been aware of such relationships in the 90's as it is not that popular among

the Indians unlike the western culture. Dattani's play was not written to provoke the unspoken tabooed topics of the Indian society, rather he staged to show the sufferings of eunuchs and the gay community thus people should get used to such things as end of the day all that matters is ones happiness. The core reason for these plays is to bridge the gap between societal norms and the unspoken tabooed topic which is to find its path in the near future and respect and accept them for who they are and what they will be always.

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