

SHAPING TOMORROW: ECHOES OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Editors
Dr R Mercy Latha, Dr P T Selvi Kohila,
Dr Anita Albert, Dr R Ajith,
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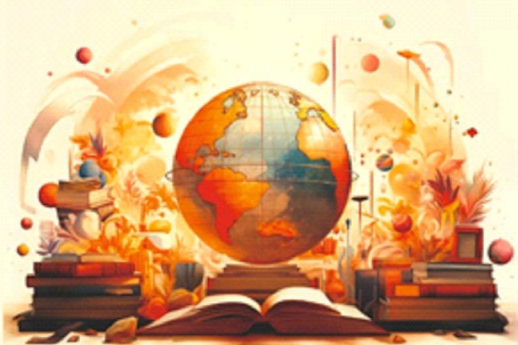


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CHAPTER 19

Patriarchal Conflicts and Shackles Faced by Transgenders

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ABSTRACT

Mahesh Dattani, a multifarious artist of contemporary Indian English drama, is a director, actor, dancer, teacher and writer all rolled into one. This proposed article aims at Dattani's ideas and concerns of transgender in *Seven Steps around the Fire* in order to accept transgender as a human being in the society. Transgender is considered as neither male nor female in the society; rather they are looked down upon and are marginalised and curbed. The society fails to offer equal rights to them. It makes them feel inferior to the other fellow beings in the society mainly because of the sex disparity.

In the play, Kamala who is a transgender, gets married to a politically, culturally, economically wealthy man named Subbu. Subbu's father who is disgusted by the act of their marriage kills Kamala as he thinks that his son shouldn't have married a transgender. In the

great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata transgender is considered equal to others in their courage and valour. Likewise, Dattani also compares these transgender to saints as in Ramayana and reveals his views through his effective writing in his play *Seven Steps around the Fire*. The proposed article will concentrate on changing the views about transgender in order to accept transgender as human beings and to be recognised by the society.

Mahesh Dattani is a man of drama with intelligence. Most of his plays are related to the Indian middle class family. He shows gender issues, problems of transgender community and place of women in Indian society. Dattani concentrates on contemporary society and reality in the fast changing globe. He's a playwright on modern urban India and his plays are topical dramas. The question he addresses in his plays is those of gender, sex, religion, communal tension, feminine identity, same sex marriage and above all gay and lesbian relationship but *Seven Steps around the Fire* concentrates on identity crisis of transgender, male chauvinists and gender bias problems. Transgender is considered as neither male nor female in the society; rather they are looked down upon and are marginalised and curbed. The society fails to offer equal rights to them. It makes them feel inferior to the other fellow beings in the society mainly because of the sex disparity.

Mahesh Dattani's plays often feature characters who are questioning their identity and who feel ostracised in some way (CP 4). Mahesh Dattani frequently takes his subjects as the complicated dynamics of the modern urban family. His characters struggle for some kind of freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender and repressed desire. The most important aspect of Dattani's plays is that they address the "invisible issues" of contemporary Indian society. The second aspect of Dattani's plays is that they

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