

Exploring Third Gender Presuppositions in the play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* by Mahesh Dattani

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to find out the dialogues from the play *Seven Steps around the Fire* where the cisgenders have expressed their biased presuppositions about transgenders. The factive presupposition admits the presence of transgenders in India. On the other hand, the prejudiced presupposition is not to treat transgenders as humans. The assumptions about the transgender are discriminating like transgenders are useful only on the occasions like childbirth and marriage. Transgender individuals are often forced into begging, particularly at traffic signals and on the streets, where they are commonly seen wearing sarees. They are unfairly stereotyped as filthy, homeless, and worthless. They are not considered males or females. Thus, the assumptions about the transgenders have become part of the study. Hijra marrying a male in Indian society is considered taboo. The play exploits the same theme of a hijra marrying a male. The playwright Mahesh Dattani calls the hijra community an invisible minority. Transgenders are not respected like cisgenders. Mahesh Dattani is the writer who speaks for such dejected, poor common folks in his plays. In line with the theme, this study is an effort to find out the presuppositions of contemporary Indian society about the transgenders. The study has been undertaken to see if the assumptions are always derogatory, insulting and full of disgust. The researchers have studied the utterances of male and female characters in light of the pragmatic assumptions. Whenever they express themselves about transgenders, the assumptions are full of contempt. The study finds that the majority of the characters are having a biased, discriminating attitude towards the hijra community people. The only occasion the cisgenders expect transgenders to be part of their life is seeking their blessings at the time of wedding, if a baby is born, if a new purchase like a car is done. This study has analyzed and concluded the crisis of identity as experienced by the hijra community in Indian society.

Keywords: *Hijra, Presupposition, Pragmatic, transgender, Identity crisis.*

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Introduction

The study is about the biased assumptions of cisgenders about transgenders. The analysis of the utterances has been made by applying the theory of pragmatic presupposition to prove that the cisgenders have disgust in their minds about the hijra community. Presupposition is an assumption. It is a key concept of Pragmatics. Pragmatics emphasizes that the meaning of an utterance is in context. Similarly, presupposition is a pragmatic term that is based on context. It is an assumption which is taken for granted by the speaker before he utters a sentence. It is assumed by the speaker that the listener knows the assumption and may understand what he/she means by the utterance. In this regard, Souad Hemit in his paper concludes that “the speaker creates the speech on the basis that the listener has certain knowledge of some information specific to that speech.” Therefore, it may be stated that presupposition is common knowledge shared by speaker as well as listener. If either of them lacks this assumption, the communication process may fail. To quote one example

A: Do you want to borrow money again?

B: Yes! Will you lend me the same amount?

Speaker A assumes that B has borrowed money from him in the past. B too understands the assumption correctly and responds accordingly. The words ‘again’ and ‘same amount’ are important to understand the meaning. They invoke the assumptions shared by A and B.

Thus, presupposition is an assumption that serves as the background for understanding an utterance. The present study exploits the same phenomenon of presuppositions or assumptions of contemporary Indian society about the transgenders as highlighted in *Seven steps around the fire*, the play written by Mahesh Dattani.

It is common to see transgender individuals at traffic signals, dressed in sarees, clapping and begging. A few vehicle drivers give them a penny or two. Sometimes, these hijras or transgender people are looked at with doubt. Most of the time people try to get rid of them as early as possible by giving them money. A few people often advise them to work. Most of them simply shoo them away. This is a scenario of the 21st century about the third gender. These transgenders were given a voice by Mr. Dattani in his play *Seven Steps around the Fire* in 1998. The situation is pessimistic about the third gender even today. Hence, it would be detrimental

to imagine the situation of third gender before 1998. That is why Mahesh Dattani might have attempted to put forward the predicament of transgenders in the Indian context.

In his plays, Mahesh Dattani highlights the issues of common and marginal people of India. One of his favorite issues is the issue of gender discrimination. In *Tara* he talks about a female being underprivileged as compared to male. In ‘Seven Steps around the Fire’ he has touched a theme of transgender, Kamala, who loves Subbu and wants to marry him. But, it is not a usual marriage where a male marries a female. Hence, the marriage is not accepted. Kamla’s desire to marry a male leads to her tragic fate, as she is brutally burned alive by an upper-class politician.

Hypothesis

The presuppositions of cisgender individuals about the third gender are often derogatory, discriminatory, dehumanizing, need-based, insulting, preferential and full of disgust.

Significance of The Study

Any piece of literature is a part and reflection of the society and its culture. The social evils are often reflected in literature. Hence, its prerequisite for a literature reader to understand any form of literature inside out. In order to understand a piece of literature, the reader has to peep into the history, culture, society norms, rituals, politics etc. of the literature in which it is written. The study too is based on such influences. The assumptions or presuppositions that are found in the dialogues of the cisgender characters have the references of the society in which the transgenders were treated with disgust. Hence, if a reader understands the presuppositions based on the history, culture, society norms, rituals, politics, opinions of cisgenders about the hijra community people of the piece of literature, he or she may enjoy the true essence of the literature. The readers may get the exact emotion that the writer wants to convey through his art and be empathetic towards the transgenders. The reader may be made aware about the plight of transgenders and the hate they have to receive. After knowing the assumptions of cisgenders about the transgenders given in the play, readers may be respectful towards the hijra community. Readers may start accepting the transgenders as a part of society.

Scope of the study: In his research paper, Liping Ge concludes that “presupposition implies certain conditions that exist before the utterance.” It means a dialogue may have a background and foreground meaning. The study of exploring third gender presuppositions is related to the

background meaning of the dialogues that are uttered by cisgenders about hijra. Thus, the study may take readers in the area of Pragmatics, to understand the meaning of the dialogues uttered by the characters in the play. Pragmatics emphasizes context to interpret the meaning of any dialogue. The meaning need not always be in the sentence. It can also be in the assumptions of the dialogue. So, there is much scope to study any piece of literature by applying the theory of pragmatic presupposition. The theory of presupposition assumes a thread of meaning which is not obviously seen in the dialogue. The meaning is implicit and embedded in the background knowledge of the dialogue. Thus, the study may direct readers, literature lovers and researchers to explore not only the dialogue for its meaning but the antecedents or something that logically precedes the dialogue. The study can also be applied to speeches, novels, podcasts, comedy shows, drama, even poetry. Thus, the presuppositions about the third gender may pave the way for literature researchers to explore presuppositions of any society about other genders, marginalized people, minor as well as major communities.

Limitations of The Study

The presuppositions about transgenders are culture specific. Hence, the assumptions of Indian cisgenders about transgenders given in this study may not be applied to other cultures or society. The other culture may have recognized transgender as normal. So, the readers of such a society may not relate with the assumptions made by Indian cisgenders about the transgenders. Besides this, the assumptions of the same Indian society may change in the course of the time. Therefore, one may not say that the general presuppositions about transgenders are perpetual. All Indians may not relate with the assumptions. So, the study may be limited to the presuppositions of a few Indians who do not accept transgender. The play was broadcast in 1999. The assumptions might have changed in 2024. Therefore, the assumptions studied and put forward in this study may be time bound. They might change with the changing lifestyles, constitutional acceptance of transgenders as humans and advancement of the medical field.

Research Methodology

This study has adopted a qualitative way to search the utterances of the cisgender characters wherein assumptions about transgenders are made. This is an analysis of such dialogues from the play where the presuppositions about the transgenders are ingrained in them. The drama has been read carefully and the dialogues have been analyzed by applying the theory of pragmatic presupposition.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the dialogues from the play ‘Seven Steps around the Fire’ wherein the presuppositions about the transgenders are embedded in
2. To interpret the meaning of an utterance that depends on the assumptions about the transgenders
3. To find out, if the assumptions about the third gender are mostly preferential
4. To seek the deep-rooted disgust shown by cisgender for towards the hijra community people
5. To find out the biased treatment given to transgenders

Theme of the Play

Mahesh Dattani founded ‘Playpen’ to give voice to the pains of the poor, marginalized, voiceless, minority citizens of India. Seven Steps around the Fire, is a masterpiece of the dramatist in this regard. This drama is an embodiment of gender bias, the tragic love story of a beautiful hijra named Kamala and Subbu. The play is a mouthpiece for the underprivileged hijra community and talks about the preferential treatment given to the hijra community in the land of lord Ram for whom they sacrificed their femininity and masculinity. The play has showcased the bias of contemporary Indian society towards transgenders. They are not given human rights. They are treated like animals because of their gender. The hijras like Kamala, Anarkali and Champa represent the hijra community and the cisgenders are represented by Uma Rao, Suresh Rao, Munswamy, Mr. Sharma, Subbu and Salim. Mahesh Dattani highlights the way the hijra community has to face the indifference, violence, sexual abuse and discrimination from the male and female genders in his play.

The drama was broadcast by BBC radio. The storyline revolves around the murder of Kamala. The lecturer, Uma Rao teaches Sociology. She is doing research on the hijra community. She is the one who exposes the murder mystery of Kamala. In order to collect information from one of the hijras named Anarkali, Uma Rao visits the jail where Anarkali has been put behind bars. She was accused of killing Kamala. Uma comes to know that the police have planned everything to convict Anarkali as the murderer of Kalama. In the conversation with Anarkali, Uma comes to know about the brutality of police and sexual exploitation of Anarkali by the inmates. It is because she is kept in the cell of male prisoners. Uma meets the chief of the hijra

community Champa and arranges for the bail of Anarkali. Uma comes to know that Anarkali is being framed by police to protect the real murderer Mr. Sharma. So, Uma Rao decides to visit Mr. Sharma, the politician on the occasion of his son Subbu's marriage. She deliberately takes all eunuchs with her. Mr. Sharma doesn't like the arrival of the hijras in his house. He wants them to leave his house. But Uma convinces him that the transgenders would leave after blessing the groom and bride. When Subbu comes down the floor, he is not in good condition. Suddenly, he snatches a gun from Suresh Rao and shouts at his father and all other people. He feels that Kamala has been killed by them. He shouts that there is no point in living. So, he shoots himself. The murder mystery is solved. Actually, it was Subbu who loved Kamala and wanted to marry her. On the other hand, Mr. Sharma never liked the idea of his son getting married to a hijra. Therefore, he gets Kamala killed by Salim.

Presupposition Meaning and types of Presupposition: George Yule says "presupposition is anything that the speaker thinks to be the case before uttering an utterance." It is supposed that the listener knows the assumption made by the speaker about the present dialogue. It is important from the point of view of listeners that they should understand the assumptions in order to interpret the current dialogue of a speaker. There are different presuppositions.

1. **Existential Presupposition:** It means something or someone exists. For example, 1. My mobile phone is not working. (It presupposes that I have a mobile phone) 2. Mr. Ram respects honest people. (It presupposes that Mr. Ram exists.).

2. **Factive presupposition:** It means something is believed to be true without any doubt. A few words like know, realize, glad make it possible. For example, I don't understand the teaching of chemistry teachers. (It presupposes that there is a chemistry teacher, the student and the school or college) I am glad that I qualified for the SET exam. (It presupposes that I qualified the exam)

3. **Non factive presupposition:** The assumptions that are not factual or true. The words like dream, imagine and pretend make the listeners or readers understand that what follows after the words is not true. For example, i. I dreamt that I became prime minister. ii. I imagined that the roads have become crater free. iii. Sometimes my students pretend to be attentive in my class.

4. Lexical presupposition: It is the assumption which is interpreted after the use of a particular word or phrase. For example, Ram called the plumber again. (Here, the meaning of the word ‘again’ triggers the lexical presupposition. It presupposes that Ram had called the plumber before) Ram has stopped visiting the gym. (It presupposes that Ram would visit the gym) The words that make the listener assume something about the current sentence are ‘again’ and ‘stopped’.

5. Structural presupposition: This type of presupposition is associated with certain sentence structures. Mostly the ‘wh’ questions like When did Ram go to his native place? (It presupposes that Ram went to his native place) Where did Ram spend his Diwali vacation? (It presupposes that Ram spent his Diwali vacation)

6. Counterfactual presupposition: When the assumptions are untrue as well as opposite of contradictory to reality. For example, If I were prime minister of a country, I would not allow the polluting industry. (It presupposes that I am not the prime minister) I wish I could be rich enough to end poverty in my country. (I am not rich)

Results and Discussion

Effective communication occurs when both the speaker and listener share the same assumptions about the dialogue. Therefore, the scholars have tried to find dialogues wherein, there are such presuppositions made by the cisgenders about the hijra community. After locating the dialogues of cisgenders with presuppositions about third gender, the scholars have tried to analyze the type of presupposition and the meaning behind the assumptions. By this, the scholars have tried to show the kind of mindset cisgender people have about the transgenders.

In the course of the development of this story, readers come to know about perceptions of males and females about the hijra community. One can also make out the kind of treatment hijra community received in those days. Majority of the assumptions made about the third gender are derogatory, exploiting and filled with violence. The discussion of the dialogues wherein the presuppositions about the third genders are seen is given below.

Munswamy: “You may see the hijra now if you wish, Madam.”

Munswamy: (Chuckling) “She! Of course it will talk to you. We will beat it up if it doesn't.” (Dattani 7)

Above dialogue has factive presuppositions. It means, it is presupposed that there is one hijra that exists. The word may indicate a lexical presupposition that states that it is not compulsory for Uma to see and meet the hijra. It is not suitable for a noble lady to meet the unworthy hijra. Uma presupposes (lexical presupposition) that the hijra has female gender. Whereas, Munswamy presupposes that the hijra does not have any gender. That is why Munswamy uses the personal pronoun 'It' for Anarkali. He assumes that hijra is neither male nor female. In a way this dialogue of Munswamy is a non factive presupposition of Indian society. He assumes that the hijra has no choice of his/her own. Hijra has to talk. If not, it is easy for him to beat the hijra. It shows that the hijra community may be beaten for no fault. The assumptions made by Munswamy and Uma, the main characters of the play, make readers understand the way the third gender is treated by cisgenderers. Munswamy denies the very identity of the third gender by referring to the hijra as the personal pronoun 'it'. The personal pronoun 'it' is used for animals or inanimate things as per the rule of grammar. Munswamy cannot tolerate the hijra being referred to as 'she'. He is not even ready to give the hijra its constitutional right to speak with someone or not to speak? He cannot digest the idea seeking the permission of the hijra Anarkali. Every human has a right to privacy and right to deny. But, Munswamy rejects the very identity of Anarkali because she is neither male nor female for him. He represents the contemporary people who are ready to hit the hijras for no reason and without considering them as humans. Anarkali was just an accused. Even the criminals are not allowed to be beaten by police. But, Munswamy has the audacity to tell Uma that he would beat the hijra, If the hijra denies talking to her. The opinion and permission of the hijra do not matter for people like Munswamy. Thus, the very opening of the play serves as a proof and an embodiment of the predicament that the third gender has to tolerate in those days. But, Uma represents the people who treat the third gender with dignity and respect.

In the following dialogue of Munswamy, as a reader, it is understood that there is a structural presupposition and the assumptions made about third gender are the clear-cut indication that the third gender had no dignity at all.

Munswamy: "Madam, if you don't mind me saying. Why is a lady from a respectable family like yourself? There are so many other cases." (Dattani 7)

Above dialogue has structural presupposition. It conveys that Uma, who is a lecturer and from a family of upper social status. So, she should not talk with a hijra like Anarkali. It shows that the people like Munswamy feel that it was against the dignity of the noble people like Uma to

talk to the worthless hijra. It shows that the hijra community was outcast by cisgender people like Munswamy.

Munswamy: "I will come inside and beat you up, you worthless pig."

Munswamy: "Why do you want to bring this shame on your family, Madam? I beg of you, go home."

Anarkali: "Go away. After servicing all these sons of ***** My mouth is too tired to talk." (Dattani 8)

Above dialogues have non factive presuppositions. The hijras are easily available to be beaten as no one cares about them. The second assumption is that they are exploited sexually. Munswamy says that he would go inside and beat Anarkali up. He calls her a worthless pig. It's a structural presupposition. It presupposes that Munswamy has not gone inside and has not beaten Anarkali but he has the intentions to do so. A hijra cannot deny the orders given by a cisgender. A hijra may be beaten black and blue, if she does not follow the orders. There is no empathy for the third gender. There is no consideration towards the state of mind of the transgender. People like Munswamy feel that it is a shame for a cisgender person like Uma to talk with the hijra. Every police station has a separate cell for male and female. But, there is no provision of the third cell for the transgenders. It shows that transgenders don't even exist for police. Though the transgenders are mostly feminine, they are not kept in female cells. The transgender like Anarkali are kept in the jail which is made for males. She is sexually exploited. Had any female been kept in the jail, which is made for males, it would have brought suspension to the jailer and the authorities. But, the transgender is kept in the jail of males and she is sexually abused by the male accused and nobody is bothered about it. This is apathetic. The law and police have assumed that the transgenders are not molested and raped. Even if, they are molested and raped there is no provision for them to file a case against their tormentors. Nobody is ready to understand what Anarkali has to face. She is in such agony that she can't even talk, but she is forced to answer the questions of Uma. When she refuses to meet and talk, she is threatened that she would be beaten. Thus, the assumptions made about the third gender make it very clear that they were prone to discrimination, violence and physical and sexual exploitation. They were denied human rights and human treatment.

The structural and non factive presuppositions in the following dialogue reiterates the inhuman treatments the third gender receives from people.

Munswamy: "Go away. Madam is no longer interested in your filthy lies."

Anarkali: "I didn't kill her. She was my sister."

Munswamy: “(Hits the bar with his stick.) Ai Go back (hits harder) Back!”

Anarkali: “Would you kill your sister?”

Munswamy: “(Hits the bar again.) Back! beat it! kick the hijra! (The other inmates begin to beat Anarkali up.)”

Anarkali: (hitting back at first.) “Ai, don't touch me.” (The other inmates scream with pleasure as they beat up Anarkali.) (Dattani 9)

In the above dialogue, there is a reference of another hijra ‘Kamla’ for the first time. She is the main protagonist of this play. When Anarkali said that she did not kill Kamla, she presumed that Kamla was dead. It is a lexical presupposition. The non-factive assumption about the transgenders compels Munswamy to call Anarkali filthy and liar. One more assumption is a factive presupposition. The listener Uma may not kill her own sister the way Anarkali did not kill Kamla. Anarkali declares her innocence through the factive assumption. However, nobody pays attention to what she says. It is because cisgenders never care about the third gender. Everybody has the assumption that the third gender is always involved in crime. They are habitual criminals. Moreover, the police, common people, and the media do not take any initiative for the betterment of the third gender. That is why Anarkali is made a scapegoat and is arrested by the police for assuming that she murdered Kamla. She is easily put behind bars. She is mercilessly beaten by the police as well as her inmates. It is because they know that nobody would do any harm to them even if they beat the life out of Anarkali. When Anarkali is crying in agony, every inmate is enjoying her helplessness. It shows the antipathy of cisgenders towards transgenders. It is not the gender, but the stupid misconception about transgenders that makes the police keep Anarkali in the male ward of the prison. The misconception is that they all are castrated male.

Even the educated people having high social status have the same misunderstanding or bias about transgenders. The following dialogue is the testimony of it. One non factive presupposition about the transgenders is that they are neither male nor female. They are effeminate. But the hypocrisy of such cisgenders is seen when Anarkali is kept in the cell which is made for males. Hijras are assumed to be as strong as a horse.

Suresh: “That is just the sort of name a hijra would fancy. (Chuckles.) Anarkali!”

Uma: “Why do they put her in a male prison?”

Suresh: “They are as strong as horses, wear the purple one?” (Dattani 9)

The female name Anarkali is accepted by cisgenders like Suresh. But, she is not kept in the cell made for females. As per the rule, the prisoners are kept in separate prisons as per the gender. The hypocrisy of people is seen in the above dialogue. People deny the third gender. On the other hand, they keep any hijra like Anarkali, in the prison made for males. It shows complete anarchy in the behavior of people. Suresh, the superintendent of police, says that the transgenders are as strong as horses and that is why they are kept in male prison. This non factive presupposition about the third gender makes it very clear that even some educated people like Mr. Suresh are also biased about transgenders. The person who should observe law and order and treat every citizen equally is discriminating.

Some people are really chauvinist, like Mr. Suresh. He is supposed to find out the reason why Kamala is murdered and the real murderer. Instead of doing his duty, he arrests Anarkali on the basis of his bias towards transgenders. His opinion in the following dialogue about transgenders makes it clear. The chauvinist attitude of Suresh towards the third gender is seen in the following dialogues.

Uma: “Yes. Why did you arrest her?”

Suresh: (off) “didn’t you go through the file?” (Sound of gargling)

Uma: “Yes, I know she is arrested for the murder of her sister, but ...”

(Suresh chokes with laughter as he is gargling and coughs.)

Suresh: (off) “What’s that you said, sister? (Re-enter) There is no such thing for them. More lies. They are all just castrated degenerate men. They fought like dogs every day that Anarkali and....”

Uma: “Kamla.” (Dattani 10)

The Non factive presuppositions about the third gender are visible in above dialogue. The assumptions like they are just worthless liars, they are of no use as they have been castrated, transgenders always fight with one another. So, Anarkali is also assumed to be a quarrelsome hijra. The cisgenders like Suresh are not ready to accept the fact that the transgenders too have relations like the cisgenders. The non factive assumptions about the hijra community make Suresh not accept the fact that Anarkali and Kamala are sisters.

One factive presupposition about the hijra community is seen in the following dialogue.

Anarkali: “We make our relations with our eyes with our love. I look at him, he looks at me and he is my brother. I look at you, you look at me, and we are mother and daughter. Oh! brother, give me a cigarette. Na.”

Munswamy: "Shut up. And don't call me brother." (Dattani 11)

There is a non factive assumption about the transgender people that they don't have any relationships among themselves. They are beggars and filthy people. But, the hijra Anarkali expresses her opinion that their hijra community has normal relations not only among themselves, but they can have good relations with cisgenders too. They establish good relationships only by judging the people by their eyes. On the other hand, people like Munswamy feel that it is against their dignity to have relations with transgenders like Anarkali. That is why, very arrogantly and with contempt he prohibits Anarkali from calling him her brother.

Because of excessive atrocities the non factive presuppositions about the hijra community are ingrained in the psychology of the Hijra Anarkali. She too accepts that they are made to just dance and beg at the time of auspicious ceremonies. Wherein, they are supposed to give blessings to the people, entertain and dance for audiences. It is visible in the following dialogue.

Uma: "I am doing my paper on class and gender related violence."

Anarkali: "What do you want me to do? Shall I come to sing and dance when you pass the exam?"

Uma: "I have told you a little bit about myself. Now tell me something about you."

Anarkali: "What is there to tell? I sing with other hijras at weddings and when a child is born. People give us money, otherwise I will put a curse on them. (Laughs.) As if God is on our side. (Smokes) I did not do anything to Kamla. She was my sister." (Dattani 12)

One more non factive presupposition is visible in the following dialogue about the kind of relationships the hijra community has among themselves and with other people like Uma.

Anarkali: (Sympathetically.) oh (Smokes.) "If you were a hijra I would have made you, my sister."

Uma: "oh. Thank you."

Anarkali: "But you are not a hijra, no?"

Uma: 'No.'

Anarkali: "Where are you and where I am?" (Dattani 13)

The structural presupposition made by Anarkali talks about the difference between an educated person from Indian society and a hijra. The factive presupposition about the transgender is also revealed in the above-mentioned dialogue. Anarkali makes it clear that she would definitely make Uma her sister had Uma be a hijra. The hijra community has good relationships among themselves. But, they are denied any relations with cisgenders by contemporary Indian society.

The atrocities of upper-class politicians are seen in the following dialogue through the lexical presupposition.

Anarkali: “They will kill me also if I tell the truth. If I don't tell the truth, I will die in jail.” (Dattani 14)

In the above dialogue, the word ‘also’ is full of presuppositions. Anarkali makes it clear that like Kamla, she too may be killed by the politician. The lexical presupposition makes it clear that Kamla has already been killed. Anarkali indirectly reveals in the structural presupposition that she has two options, either to tell the truth of Kamala’s murder and get killed, or not to tell the truth and remain in jail throughout her life and die there. It shows that there is no law and order available for transgenders in contemporary Indian society.

The hijra community is so helpless that they have to use violence to protect themselves or to do self-harm in order to save themselves as they have nowhere to go to protect themselves from the atrocities of the upper-class politicians like Mr. Sharma. The following dialogue of structural presupposition makes it very clear.

Uma: “Anarkali! (Pause) If you loved your sister Kamala, why did you scar her face with a butcher's knife?” (Pause)

Anarkali: “I would do it to you also. If it will save your life.” (Dattani 15)

Kamla is a transgender. She is very beautiful and that is why Subbu loves her. Anarkali knows about it. Anarkali is practical in thinking that Kamala is a hijra and Subbu is a cisgender. That is why it is a mismatch. Besides, Subbu is from the upper class. His father is a politician. That is the reason Anarkali senses that there is no future of their relationship and it may end up in a disaster. It shows that Anarkali is quite practical who understands that the Indian community may not accept a hijra marrying a cisgender. So, in order to save Kamla, she defaces Kamala's face with the help of a knife. Anarkali’s intention is make Kamala lose her beauty and Subbu get deviated from her. As a reader, one may feel that Anarkali does a wrong thing by injuring Kamla. But, she wants to save her.

Suresh represents the contemporary Indian society male who thinks that transgenders are all just castrated degenerated men. He assumes that transgenders scare people. Suresh refers to transgenders as the personal pronoun ‘it’. The pronoun ‘It’ is used for animals and inanimate things as per the rule of grammar. It shows that Suresh too does not accept transgenders as male or female and traits them as animals

Suresh: “Why not? It has been a long time. I hope that bud of pomegranate didn't frighten you. What did it tell you?”

Uma: “She is a real liar, as you said. The usual stuff. Hard luck stories.”

Suresh: “That is the sort of crap that finds its way into your academic paper.” (Dattani 16)

The image of the bud of pomegranate has relevance with the genitals of transgenders. It is believed that the genitals of the transgenders are not fully developed. Suresh wants to convey the same meaning by referring Anarkali as bud of pomegranate. It shows the contemptuous, disgusting feeling of people towards transgenders. The non-factive presupposition above transgender is also revealed in the above dialogue wherein both Suresh and Uma feel that all the transgenders are liars, filthy and they are useless crap.

Uma, the main character of the play, summarizes the identity dilemma of transgenders in her single dialogue.

Uma. (Thought.) “Nobody seems to know anything about them. Neither do they. Did they come to this country with Islam or are they a part of our glorious Hindu tradition? Why are they so obsessed with weddings and ceremonies of childbirth? How do they come to know of these weddings? Why do they just show up without being invited? Are they just extortionists? And why do they not take singing lessons? (Pause.) Is it true? Could it be true what my mother used to say about them? Did they really put a curse on her because they didn't allow them to sing and dance at their wedding? Or was that their explanation for not being able to have children of their own? Or a reason to give to people wanting to adopt me?” (Dattani 17)

There is one factive presupposition about the transgenders in India. Nobody knows anything about transgenders. Even, they themselves don't know who they are and what they are. People don't know why transgenders are really crazy about marriage ceremonies and childbirth. Nobody knows how these transgenders appear at marriage ceremonies and childbirth out of nowhere. Nobody has ever predicted how these transgenders come to know about a marriage ceremony and a childbirth. Nobody invites them, but they make sure to attend marriages and childbirth of people. There are many non factive presuppositions about these transgenders. They are all extortionists, they simply want money, they simply sing very coarse songs, they never bother to take singing lessons, they simply curse the people who don't give them money or don't allow them to dance at weddings and childbirth. Cisgenders are really scared of them because they assume that if people are cursed by these transgenders, there may be problems in their life. Out of fear, most people simply give them money and make sure that they get rid of these transgenders as early as possible.

The counterfactual presupposition in the following dialogue of Champa reveals the poverty of transgenders.

Champa: “If I had the money, I would throw it on that superintendent's face and get her back. Son of horse, all of them.” (Dattani 23)

The counterfactual presupposition in the above dialogue makes it clear that Champa did not have money to pay for the bail of Anarkali. It shows that there are so many innocent transgenders who are in jail because they do not have adequate money to pay for their bail. The use of bad words for all police also reveals that these transgenders are frustrated. They have anguish in their mind, they are sullen and they are helpless. That is why to vent out their frustration, they use bad words to get relief.

One more non factive presuppositions about the hijra community is revealed in the following dialogue.

Uma: “But she will report to the police.”

Suresh: “Maybe. Who knows? If she runs away to another town, who can trace these people? Anyway, we only arrested her because there was no one else. There is no real proof against her. It could be any one of them.” (Dattani 31)

Cisgenders assume that the hijra community people keep on shifting their places. They do not have a permanent residence. Suresh clarifies on his own that transgenders are soft targets for them. He himself admits that Anarkali is not the murderer of Kamla and there is no proof against her. In spite of that, she is arrested and kept in jail. It shows the atrocities transgenders have to tolerate because of their gender.

The structural presupposition and non factive presuppositions shown in the following dialogue will make all readers understand the atrocities that the transgenders have to tolerate.

Anarkali: “Why did you not tell him?”

Uma: (after a while) “he wouldn't allow me to visit you.”

Anarkali: “Then what will you do knowing who killed Kamla?”

Uma: “Tell my husband to make an arrest.”

Anarkali: “One hijra less in this world does not matter to your husband.” (Dattani 35)

The abhorrence of Suresh towards transgenders is seen in the dialogue of Uma when she says that had she told her husband about the reason and the person she would meet; he would not

have allowed her to meet a hijra like Anarkali. The structural presupposition in the utterance of Anarkali makes it clear that Uma cannot do anything even if she knows who has killed Kamala. It is because she has no right to go or to stand against her own husband. She is also a poor female. The non factive presupposition about the transgender is also reflected in the helpless utterance of Anarkali when she says that if one hijra is killed or dies, it does not make any difference to the people like Suresh; the husband of Uma.

One more non factive presupposition is visible in the following dialogue of Uma.

Uma: "No, it is bad luck to turn away a hijra on a wedding or a birth." (Dattani 38)

It's a common belief and assumption among the Indians that they should not turn away a hijra on auspicious ceremonies like weddings and births. And if they do so, it will bring bad luck or evil to the family and the people from the family. And that's why all the transgenders are welcomed. Their blessings are sought and once their blessings are sought, they are simply given some amount of money so that they should go quietly.

Conclusion: Thus, the play is full of different presuppositions about the transgenders. The structural presuppositions about transgender suggest that transgenders are isolated. They are not in the mainstream of society. Transgenders have their own society and relationships. They have their own world, which is completely different from the world of common people. The transgenders are deprived of marriages. Their life is a kind of secret. Nobody bothers to know about their living standards. Hijra community people are denied their rights. They do not have the dignified life, the life that the cisgenders enjoy. The factive presuppositions about the transgenders are: even if people deny them the status of being human, they are part and parcel of Indian society. The transgenders have their own anatomy. Though they are very much ridiculed on the basis of their anatomy. The transgenders have been made helpless. But they have accepted their own identity and they are not ashamed of it. The transgenders are neither male nor female and they have accepted it. They have been marginalized by the cisgender people as well as they are the invisible minority about whom Mahesh Dattani has talked about in this play. They are simply made to dance and beg and entertain people at some auspicious ceremonies. They have been put in these stereotypes by people. One strong reason behind their marginalization is; they are denied a main role in the mainstream of society. The lexical presuppositions about the transgenders have given the words like hijra, transgenders, eunuchs, effeminate, bud of pomegranate. All these terms are used to refer to the transgenders. These

terms do not have dignity in Indian society. There is no love and affection in these words, but there is just the mockery of their gender. There are many non factive presuppositions about transgenders. Though they are feminine. They are treated like male. They are assumed as nuances. They are just meant to beg, dance, clap and bless people on their auspicious ceremonies like marriage and birth of a child. They are easily available to be exploited sexually. They are the beggars. They are selfish and thieves. They are filthy, worthless and so they should be denied any right. They are uneducated and homeless people. Even if the Constitution has accepted the third gender, the mentality of the Indians may not be changed very soon and these transgenders may not see themselves as a part of the mainstream society. That is a strong message that Mahesh Dattani wanted to convey in this play.

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