



ENGLISH SPEECHES

WITH BIG
SUBTITLES



AAMIR KHAN

FOR A BETTER INDIA

<https://youtu.be/Hq7a4qvYQqI>

Zainab: Hello everyone. I'm Zainab Salbiand I have the great honor of being on stage with the India's greatest movie star, Aamir Khan. I mean we are talking beyond the actions movies of James Bond and Daniel Craig. We are talking beyond the romances of Richard Gere. We are talking beyond the charms of George Clooney, we are talking, ladies and gentlemen, above and beyond, all of that.

A man who has been acting since the age of nine, a man who has conquered the hearts of six hundred million, yes, six hundred million Indians. This is half of the Indian population. This man has done it. Unbelievable!

And in 2012 he surprises India, he surprises the world, with launching a new TV talk show, Satyamev Jate, Jayate, that tackles social issues, taboos heads-on, I mean you just put yourself out there. What inspired you to do that?"

Aamir: Well, a big good evening to everyone here. I think it started somewhere when I was a very small child and it began with my mother, I think.

Ahh, my mother's been a big influence on me and uh, I'll narrate an incident of my life which stayed with me all along and that's I used to play a lot of tennis when I was a kid and competitive tennis, you know, state level, national level. I was pretty good at that time and she knew how anxious I was about the game, how much I loved the game. And every time I had a match, she'd be waiting for me to come home and when I would come home she'd ask me: "Did you win, did you lose?" Usually I would win, so my answer would be: "I won". And then after about five minutes, the first time she did it, it really shook me.

After about five minutes she'd come to me and say: "You know the boy who lost to you today, he would have reached home about now and his mom would have asked him the same question and he would have said, he lost, so his mother must be feeling really bad right now." And the first time she said that to me, it like really hit me. I mean her ability to think for another, a mother she's never seen, never met, really hit home to me. I don't think she was meaning to tell me or teach me anything, that's just how she is and I think a lot of what I am is, it is a result of her.

Uh, I think the second person who's had been a big influence with me, is my friend Satyajit Bhatkal who happens to be the director of the show. Satyajit and I went to school together. He was a topper in the class, I was the back-bencher and he was brilliant, so he had the world at his feet, he could do what he wanted, but after we passed out, he decided to work for other people. So he didn't become an engineer, or a doctor or a chartered accountant, which he could have been or an MBA or whatever he wanted. He decided to



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spend his life, you know, working for people who are less privileged than he was.

I got into films and gone into acting and my career took off and I was -- So each time I would meet him, I'd feel really guilty. Uh, I mean, I wasn't doing anything wrong. I was doing what I loved doing, but every time I met him, I used to feel: "Man, this guy is living for others" and I'm -- I wish I could do half of what he's doing and that kept troubling me.

So I think a lot of all finally resulted in what happened as SMJ - Satyamev Jayate. Television also grew strong in India at that time and I reached a point in my career, where I had earned a fair amount of goodwill and I kept thinking that, "How can I contribute?"

You know, you wake up in the morning, you read the papers and you read about injustice. You read about poverty, you read about people who are less privileged than you and you want to really do something about it

I think most of us feel that way and we don't know what to do and I felt that for a number of years and then I realized that I should do what I know best and -- which is storytelling and I should use the strength of storytelling to try and change minds in trying, you know, enrich perhaps the discussion on certain issues that we face as a society.

And I've saw that no one's really doing it on that kind of a scale on a public platform, and I thought if I combine the strength of TV with the goodwill that I've earned and we try and actually combine journalism, investigative journalism and storytelling. So we would really research each topic and then bring it to the country of India and share what we have learned with the people, and hope that we can transform minds, hearts.

You know, I've always felt that there are two ways of bringing about change. One is top-down; when you make laws and you tell people to follow them. Now you make policies and you expect people to follow them and the other way. Sometimes it works but sometimes, a lot of times, it doesn't.

I think the other way is a longer route, but I think that is what we have chosen to do and that is to reach out to people's hearts. Not with anger but with love, and you know try and transform minds at young age.

Female Feticide

Zainab: Now that was your first show. That is not an easy topic. What triggered you to choose this one?

Aamir: Well, oh, well I'm not quite sure why we chose this one in particular, but I felt that initially we had researched four topics. One was female feticide and one was public health. The other was child sexual abuse and so for some reason I think we instinctively stuck with female feticide as a first episode.

I also feel it – somewhere it is, it's a huge problem in India first of all, and it also connects with people on a very gut level. We chose to put the show forward, not as a woman's problem, but as a mother's problem.



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You see, what we try to do is, when we get the information that we have, we try and put it to people in a manner that gets them emotionally. So I don't start the show by saying you know:

"Today we gonna talk about female feticide...." I start the show by saying, you know, I've asked people, "who the most important person in their lives is", and usually people say my mother and I feel the same and talk about motherhood and get people into a certain emotional state and then I say: "Let's take a look at how we're treating our mothers today" and we meet our first guest, who is a mother, who's been through eight abortions in six years.

Forced abortions by her mother and in-laws and husband and so when you're looking at her and hearing her story, you're looking at a mother and what a mother goes through and then of course what a woman goes through when she's, you know, forced to go through an abortion.

So I think that kind of, really caught people. You know, the first episode itself, has a very strong emotional connect, is what we felt and that's why we chose female feticide as a first episode,

And you'll be happy to know that, you know, in 2011 was when the episode aired and before that the senses that was carried out, had a certain number, that was the national average was 914 girl child, against 1000 boys born every year and it was sliding. Sliding alarmingly and certain states like Rajasthan and other states, Maharashtra, were very bad.

Eight hundred and ninety, eight hundred and eighty, you know, per thousand boys. You'll be pleased to know that these two state have revealed their numbers today, after three years. Rajasthan and Maharashtra, and in both there states the ratio has gone up by fifty to sixty points. So it's now around 950 to thousand boys.

And I believe it's a combination of the show, which is reaching out to millions of people and talking to them, you know, emotionally and it's also the governments, the Rajasthan government and the state government of Maharashtra really acted very, very dynamically and it's a result of all this, I think, and people actually reacting to it and deciding that they don't want to do this anymore, a lot of them.

Zainab: Now, it is illegal in India?

Aamir: Well, abortion is legal, but sex selective abortion is illegal and that itself is strange. I mean, in the U.S. I don't think there is a law, in which, you can ask your doctor what the sex of the baby is going to be, because in the U.S. the doctor doesn't expect you to go and abort the child if it is a girl. So you don't need a law over here which tells you that.

So in India we have a law where you cannot ask the doctor what the sex of the child is and the doctor is not allowed to tell you, so both the doctor and the parents could be in jail if they ask the question and that question is answered. Now this law is actually -- it tells us what we are. This law is needed for us, unfortunately, otherwise, you know, in other societies you don't need this as a law.



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Zainab: Usually you celebrate: “I have a girl!”

Aamir: Yeah, there’s another law we have in India, where, where, as a criminal you can’t stand for elections. You need a law for that.

I mean, it’s sad. What I’m saying is sad, you know, it’s like black humor. If a criminal stands for elections anywhere in the world he won’t get a single vote, but in India we have to have a law, because as Indians we’ve, in the past, seen that we do end up voting for criminals. So we need to have a law which tells us you, you know, you can’t stand for elections if you are a criminal.

So, you see, these laws actually tell us a lot about what we are.

Dowry Issues

Aamir: Contextualize it for people who live here in the U.S. I would imagine about 90 to 95% of people in India have either given dowry or taken dowry or both. So when you are communicating to the huge majority of the country and telling them that what they have been indulging in, perhaps is not the best thing to do and most probably the TV that they are watching your show on, has also come in dowry. So you, you have to -- which is, which is so important for us to communicate this with love and we had this discussion very early on with the core team

I said: “Why are we – with what driving emotion are we doing this show? Are we doing this show in anger, because then our conversation is different and I’m not doing this with anger, I’m doing this with love, because I really that only with love can you actually, you know, affect a person and bring about change.

There is so many things that we need to and that we have to look inward and I’m included in that. I’m not excluded in that we need to look inward, you know, at ourselves.

Zainab: But did it make people uncomfortable that you touched on these very – I mean how did they respond?

Aamir: Well, you know, by and large the huge majority – the very positive thing that I want to tell you, is that the huge majority of Indians just loved the show and that speaks a lot for what is India is today. It speaks a lot for the fact that India wants to change. India is ready for change. I mean, I would have imagined, none of us had imagined a show which is speaking such heavy topics, would be so popular across the country and the fact that is so popular, really speaks well for us as Indians today.

That we have issues that we have problems but we want to leave them behind, we want to come out of them and we really want to move ahead and improve ourselves. I think that’s what the success of the show tells us.

Zainab: Has there like – how do you come up about choosing the subjects? I mean...



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Aamir: We have a lot of fights.

Zainab: And I mean are there subjects where you say “we’re not going to touch that”?

Aamir: No, so far, that’s never been the case. We’ve picked really difficult topics as well. One of a really difficult topics was untouchability, which is a big issue in India. The constitution of our country says that we are all equal, but in reality that’s not so yet. It’s a journey that we have to – it’s still a journey that we are on the reach there.

Sure equality is an issue in a lot of societies, but I think in India, because of the way the caste system is, it just makes it a lot more complicated.

So – and that’s a very touchy topic as well. It’s a topic that people feel very emotionally about, so, so – and 15% of India, roughly 15% of India is Dalits, which is the untouchable caste and so therefore 85% is not Dalits and we are communicating with 85% of country. Speaking to them about – I mean are we... what are we doing? What we doing is it right, is it, are we comfortable with it, you know, so.

Zainab: So how did you go about that?

Aamir: Well, I, mean in all our shows, in all our topics we’re just honest, but we do it with a lot of love. We do it with a lot of love, so that people... Let me say this much that while the majority of the people have loved our show, there has been a minority, probably in every topic, that doesn’t like us. Like there is a couple of men’s organizations which hate me.

They keep writing to me emails about men’s problems and why don’t you take up men’s problems.

So we did in fact in our last season picked up masculinity. What is, what is it to be male? Because we figured that, unless we, unless we relook at and hopefully redefine what a man is, you know, things are not going to change.

So, woman have, you know, woman have changed, woman are changing, but, but men don’t manage to change by and large. By and large we’ve done a lot. So we thought we’d look at what is a real man. Is a real man someone who goes and beats up people? Is a real man a person who is a protector, is he the guy who’s going to, you know, so what’s a real man? I mean we strongly feel that we have to, from the time that the child is born, you have to treat both children equally, whether it is a boy or a girl and you have to allow the boy child to cry.

You have to allow him to cry, because the first thing they tell a boy when he cries, “Don’t cry. Are you a girl, why are you crying?” So he grows up feeling that I’m not supposed to cry and when you tell a child not to cry, you are actually removing him further and further away from his emotions. He’s feeling something and you are not allowing him to feel that. So you are distancing him from his emotions and then you are surprised why he’s beating up his wife, because he actually, the fact that when you, you tell the child that it is perfectly alright to cry, it’s perfectly alright to feel terrible, it’s perfectly alright to feel scared.



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Most boys are told, “Hey, you can’t feel scares, you’re a boy”, “are you scared of the dark”, “come on, go on, go to the roof alone”, you know. So boys feel scared and we have to tell that small child of four that it’s alright to be scared, you know, and so that boys can grow up more sensitive. Right now we are creating boys, or we mean we are working to creating boys WHO grow up to be insensitive.

When Masculinity Harms Men

Aamir: There’s a portion of the show, which, in which I am told by another man, he says that, you know, in India real men don’t cry and real men don’t hold their wives hands. The wife walks two, three feet behind.

Now, you must understand, India is a large country, so, and I’m saying this, don’t take this literally, this is mostly in rural India and there are, there are a lot of extremely progressive people in India as well, so I don’t want to give you the wrong impression, but this is an issue.

There are villages in India, in rural India, where this is the believe, this is how they’ve grown up. So, on the show, I did say, I said, you know based on all of these definition of what a real man is, I’m completely not a real man, because I hold my wife’s hand all the time, I hug my children. You’re not supposed to hug your children, you not supposed to show affection to your child, as a male – a true male. So, I hug my children all the time, I cry all the time. I was crying just before I entered to the stage.

Zainab: True, it is true, yes. We were both crying actually.

Aamir: I was listening to, what’s her name Ceyda? I was listening to her speak and I was in tears, so I cry all the time.

Zainab: Have you cried on movies, on TV?

Aamir: On TV, on TV every episode of mine, yeah.

Zainab: Excellent.

Aamir: Not a single episode goes by that I don’t cry and it’s not even during the show itself. It is even when I’m researching it. You know, when you are researching these topics, it takes days for us to go through all the material we collect and invariably in every topic that we’ve picked, we go through, we go, we get to a point where me and Satya and Swati and all of us get so disheartened. I’m looking at an interview and I’m weeping and we kind of shut it off and be like, you know, why are we doing this?

Nothing’s going to change. You suddenly feel very disheartened, but then you come across a person who is working in that and has got so much strength and so much resilience, so much grace and such dignity, that it brings you back to your feet. You know. In these five years that I have researched Satyamev Jayate, I’ve seen the worst in mankind, and I’ve seen the best, the most beautiful in mankind.



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I've come across people who are such amazing and inspirational people. You know, I spoke to this lady whose son had been murdered in. His, her son had got married to a girl from a different religion and so it is an honor killing. This lady spoke with such dignity and such grace and with such forgiveness in her heart, I just couldn't get over it, you know. It was such, it was so amazing to listen to her speech.

She's talking about her son being killed and, you know, I don't know where she finds her strength from, to still look for love, you know, in in people. I was speaking to these two women, we often assume in India that woman who are from rural India, are uneducated and therefore not as strong as woman from cities, etcetera, etcetera.

So, these two woman who, in the same episode were of honor killings, the one woman's son and the other woman's brother was killed and they were ostracized from the village. They were targeted, they were not given – they were not sold anything. Nobody spoke to them in the village.

So the ashes are taken in what is called a Kalash, like a pot, that pot was not sold to them. That's the kind of segregation they faced in the village and then they did a police complaint of all of that, so the case was going on. They were threatened, they were offered money, there was political pressure put on them. Every kind of pressure was put on them, but they didn't take the case back and they fought the case and they won the case and those men are now convicted.

Now, what I'm going to say here, is that these two woman are from a small village in India and the kind of courage they show in a city like Mumbai, when a political party announces that tomorrow is Mumbai Bandh, which means, nobody dare go out of the house, we are going to stone every car that goes out. There's some kind of protest that they are doing, nobody leaves the house.

In a city like Mumbai, which is a large city, nobody even knows who I am. We are all strangers in the city, but you are frightened to step out of the house, because someone has announced that we can't.

Here are these two ladies, specifically targeted. They're still staying in the same village and they still have the courage to stand up and say: "No, we don't want money. We want justice" Where did they get this courage from? It's really amazing. I've met such wonderful people in this journey of five years.

Wrestling Movie Dangal

Zainab: It's hard to sort of escape the fact that you lost weight or gained weight and you sort of were thinner in here. I'm saying it because you're in a movie right now. You're in the midst of shooting a movie.

Aamir: I'm actually, I'm actually getting ready for this film that I'm playing of older man, who's an ex-wrestler. So I'm putting on a lot of weight, which is fun.

Zainab: But has it changed your, has it changed your choices of stories as a star, as a movie star?

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Aamir: Not really. I would not say it has changed my choices as an actor, but quite naturally I get attracted to films because of who I am, so this film that I'm doing is called "Dangal", which means wrestling and it's a story about this wrestler, who has a dream to win this gold medal, an international gold for his country. He can't fulfil his dream because he doesn't have money, he has to give up wrestling and so he decides that his son will fulfil his dream and then he proceeds to have four daughters in the next 15 years. So the story is about his daughter fulfils his dream.

Zainab: Exactly. Well Aamir, you could have easily have rested and be in the limelight and yet you took, I mean with courage and integrity and with love and inspiration, you just went ahead and inspired, you know, half of India's population. This is a huge deal and inspiring all of us here in America. So, chapeau to you and good luck, keep going. We are all behind you, thank you so much. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

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