



An examination of the select plays of Mahesh Dattani's through the lenses of Queer

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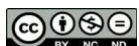
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ABSTRACT

Mahesh Dattani is a leading professional playwright, an artist of multi-dimensional personality for whom the theatre is an art with function. The plays of Dattani are characterized by way of a few theatrical and thematic innovations. Dattani, like Shaw, uses the stage to condemn many of the drawbacks prevailing in society. Most of Dattani's plays are set in contemporary society and reveal the harsh realities of the world. He chooses themes related to sexuality and gender issues and challenges the heterosexuals normatively considered as central to our culture. Dattani's characters are voices for the voiceless and marginalized segments and show how they face social exclusion, separation, and hatred. In the socio-cultural context, a margin is equivalent to 'other', and marginalized individuals or groups in a society do not feel securely incorporated into the societal mainstream, which comprises self-styled 'normal' people. As Michel Foucault said, there are numerous walls of quietening, and they are an indispensable component of the discourse techniques that strengthen and permeate them. Among many of the subjugated voices, the present paper aims to discuss the representation of queer in Dattani's plays and confer that masculine and feminine roles are not biologically fixed but socially constructed. For this purpose two plays by Dattani have been opted, 'On the Muggy Nights In Mumbai,' and 'Do the Needful'.

Keywords: Queer, Marginalization, homosexuality, subjugation, gender

Introduction

Despite the utterances of fallacious logic, patriotic onus, and political biases, the Indian English literature has gone in the course of numerous stages, including Anglo- Indian, Indian inscription in English, and mainly of late Indian English narratives, which manifest contemporary view and current existence, its relics adequate and manifests itself. It makes it effortless to concentrate on the intellectual receptiveness along with comprehension of the readers. Various authors from/ in inclusive India are purely pleased to depict our country in ways that conform to the philologist concept of Indian customs or overly resolute creativity of Indian bigotry. The outcome of literature is a criticism of encompassing korero of edifying validity, which seeks to obscure the variance between people. Tradition, modernity, colonization, and globalization all have a variety of consequences and attitudes that are often at odds with one another in the construction of modern Indian sexual identities.

This study aims to examine the works of Mahesh Dattani in the prospect of Queer to provide a preliminary aim for negotiations about queer sensuality in India. Sexual splinter groups are built objectivism as the antithesis of foremost heterosexuality; that is, the construction of both heterosexuality and homosexuality is predicated on a twofold rapport that maintains a straight person as the bare means of understanding humanity.

The strapping stigma aligned with a few kinds of sexuality that deviates from heterosexuality prevents writers from addressing these issues. Novels about same-sex relationships were previously uncommon in Indian English literature. However, in the last few years, this situation has changed.

Proposition to Queer

Gay and lesbian studies, as well as feminist studies, spawned queer theory in the early 1990s. Queer Theory explores how power is used to allocate and legitimize assured manifestations plus representations of sexuality and sexual category whilst condemning others. Queer conjecture arose from an academic surfacing and prominence of Gay and Lesbian swotting (currently LGBT or Queer). The prime aspect of Queer Theory is that it problematizes and questions unbending characteristics constructs, sexuality and gender parts, as well as the inequality and abuse on which such hegemonic standards validate, whereas LGBT Studies attempt to explore LGBT people as secure identities. Queer studies undermine sexual and gender roles, enabling as well as promoting numerous, unrestricted elucidation of artistic phenomenon. It is also referred to as the "deconstruction" of LGBT studies. . Queer supposition builds on feminism by rejecting the idea that gender and sexual distinctiveness are important classifications defined by natural science and therefore empirically measured by predetermined morality and "reality" criteria. Sexual identities are said to be a product of representations.

A deeper understanding of Queer shows us that it is not that to a large extent an individual identity as it can be said as interpretive deportment influenced through non-normative sexual furthermore social coexistence and commitment. It also casts doubt on conventional sexual binary constructions. They concentrate on the issue of categorizing people based on their gender; as a result, queer is more of a criticism of identity than an identity. . In this analysis, the word "queer" refers to a wide variety of behaviors, personalities, proclivities, affectivities, and the fluidity and incredible plasticity of gendered and sexual identities. The portrayal of queerness in Indian literary texts has developed its own space over time; a "special" space. It is hoped that the term "uniqueness" would draw attention to the marginal position that has been associated with queerness; it is something that exists outside of the already drawn, easily understandable, widely accepted, and intellectually (or morally) permitted territories of the society. In common use "Queer" entrusts folks who are lesbigay, bisexual, transsexed, genderqueer, inter ana asexual else have some any non-hetero-normative sexuality sexual structure or gender identification.

In 1996, an Australian writer Annamarie Jagose English university lecturer published '**Queer Theory: An Introduction**.' Jagose believes that this word queer means, as been used in a variety of ways, often as a blanket expression for a group of ethnically marginalized sexual identification of self and erstwhile epoch to define an embryonic conjectural paradigm that got emerged from further conventional lesbigay studies. Even from this concise and unfinished version of its existing use, it becomes clear that the vicinity of queer is still a developing group. It's not only that queer has however to coagulate and obtain on an added coherent silhouette; it's also with the intention of one of its constituent characteristics is definitional indistinct or flexibility. Jagose goes on to explain a concept whose very meaning defies definition: Queer refers to actions or analytical models that highlight inconsistencies in the ostensibly unwavering relationships flanked by hereditary gender, and sexual longing. The queer's focal point is on contradictions among gender, sex, and yearning... queer ltracks down and draws on the absurdity of those three stipulations the steady heterosexuality, combat that sculpt of permanence that asserts heterosexuality in order of its derivation at a space when it is more accurately its impact.' It brings into question even seemingly unproblematic words like "guy" and "woman," demonstrating the absurdity of any "normal" sexuality.

Primarily influenced by Michel Foucault's writings, Queer theory, is based on feminist critiques of the notion which gives the concept of gender and tells that is an integral element of the vital personality, as well as gay/lesbian discourses in-depth analysis of the publicly built essence of sexual behaves and identity. Unlike gay/lesbian research, which decisive on "normal" as well as "unnatural" homosexual deportment, queer speculation broadens the scope for including every type of sexual action or personality that cascades into the normative and unexpected classification. "The underlying issue in queer theory is whether gender or sexuality is more fundamental in personal identity," writes Peter Barry. It is more likely to support 'experimental' ways of sexuality. The most common and long-lasting definition of the word queer is "anti-normative." This anti-normative discourse rereads previously heteronormative cultural contexts. Donald Hall summarises this consensus in Queer Theories, defining queer theories as "positioned abrasively against conceptions of the normal" and queer. texts as "explicitly or implicitly denaturalize notions of sexual normality and provide proof of the mutability and heterogeneity of human sexual desire and success over the hetero/homo binary."

Queer theory is concerned not only with homosexual experiences in literature but also with sexual as well as gender course. A few bickers and mentions that queer theory is an offshoot of third-surge feminism,

while on parallel few argue, it is a consequence of the value placed on postmodern marginalization or the notion that the state's tiniest constituent must have a say and personality equal to anyone else (mini-narrative). "In 1991, de Lauretis edited "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities," a unique issue of the feminist cultural studies journal *differences*."The conference's project was primarily focused on the exploratory hypothesis that the concept of homosexuality is no more to be viewed minimally as an oppressed type of sexuality concerning a leading, healthy notion of sexuality that is primarily called heterosexuality, alongside which it would be characterized both by antagonism or homology. She wrote that Sexuality-based gender categories, according to Foucault, were invented in nineteenth-century Europe and did not exist before this invention (Foucault, 1990).

Recent scholars have questioned these assumptions, and the Indian archive contains many visible examples of queer sexuality discourses. The celebrated text *Kamasutra* by Vatsayana will be a good place to start learning about Indian sexuality. Vanita and Kidwai (2000), Indian historians and queer academics map these discourses back to ancient India. India's past is troublesome and complicated. It has been a melting pot of many different cultures that have encroached on the country and imposed their cultural idioms. From the beginnings of Vedic culture to the colonial period, India has seen a wide range of laws and attitudes. Gender fluidity and homosexuality have always existed in the Indian subcontinent, as is well established. From the beginnings of Vedic culture to the colonial period, India has seen a wide range of laws and attitudes. Gender fluidity and homosexuality have always existed in the Indian subcontinent, as is well established. Whether it's mythology, *Kamasutra*, or a variety of folkloric tales from various regions, India has a long history of queerness. Whether it's mythology, *Kamasutra*, or a variety of folkloric tales from various regions, India has a long history of queerness. The topic has been treated in Indian mythology as an essential part of the life cycle, where role-playing or sex-change is a normal, routine, and accepted practice.

A Brief overture of Mahesh Dattani

Mahesh Dattani, a Sahitya Akademi Awardee who has always been convincingly celebrated as one among few of India's finest and most solemn modern-day theatre person in English, by Alexander Viets in the intercontinental harbinger *Tribune*. His play addresses the burning socio-political issues and concerns of Indian society such as familial affiliations and discords, marital conflicts, gender discriminations, communal tensions and violence, the role of politics, conflicting demands of traditions and modernity leading to a clash between individual and society and problems of marginalized sections of society. In his plays, he outrightly denounces the complicated dynamics of the Indian urban families. The chief endeavor of Dattani, in almost all his works, is the portrayal of the urban middle class, their desires, hopes, frustrations, fear, and prejudices. Erin. B. Mee writes that Dattani generally picks up the subjects that are complex dynamics of the contemporary metropolitan family unit. The characters in his plays resist some kind of liberty and contentment under the burden of convention, the cultural edifice of gender, as well a reticent voice. In Mahesh Dattani's works, the Queer is indispensably correlated with his staging of the invisible sexualities, and his endeavor to construct the indistinguishable observable, articulation of the devoiced. In our nation, there has constantly been politics behind the concealing of somewhat, predominantly if it is proscribed or digress from communal norms. By merely discarding the existence of sexual deviance by the protuberance of heterosexual and accepted demeanor or heteronormative discourse invisible. And Mahesh Dattani, one of the chief and foremost among the present Indian playwright to treat a so-called tabooed issue with truthfulness and receptivity makes this politics of concluding the queer apparent in his spectacular writings. To explore more or Queer two plays by Dattani have been selected, 'On the Muggy night in Mumbai, 'Do the Needful'.

Queer Reading of Dattani's On the Muggy Night in Mumbai

On the Muggy Night in Mumbai, has intense gay themes, and although the conduct is progressive, the conclusion is coarse. Two contrasting situations are imagined to equilibrium apiece other out. At one side, Ed, who is gay, exhausts behind after spanking his mannish cohort Kamlesh subsequent the confession of their rapport from the recently improved snitch concealed snapshot, while in the other the air of merriment reigns extreme with the sound of spastic firecrackers and vigorous yells from the marriage beneath. Dattani uses the contrastive juxtaposition as a witty theatrical ploy to draw attention to the homosexuals' infructuous effort to get hold of the room, "I didn't intend to hurt you," Ed laments to Kiran during the exposure scene. "All I wanted was to live."

The episteme of space as framed by Foucault shows the acute concern with which the question of space has to be considered. This difficulty of the human being situate or livelihood arena, writes Foucault, is not merely that of eloquent whether there will be adequate breathing space for human in the world, a crisis that is undoubtedly reasonably vital but also that of shrewd what associations of proximity, what type of

storage, motion, smudge, and categorization of individual rudiments should be accepted in a given circumstance to accomplish a given ending. Our eon is one among in which liberty takes for us the form of kindred amid sites. Michael Foucault's multidimensional spatiality may be metaphorically construed to denote socio-psychological spatiality in the context of Ed's lament on his cognitive realization of the duality of his position vis-a-vis Kamlesh and Kiran.

The main focus of the play is on the question of a gay man's conversion to the 'straight state so that he can belong to 'that world'(as Deepali says), the world where weddings take place to accentuate socially accepted stereotypical roles. The success of Ed's romance with Kiran hinges upon this formula of conversion and acceptance given his past relationship with Kamlesh, her brother. Kiran's categorical refusal to accept the fairness of such a deal prepares the ground for the breakdown of their proposed marriage. Societal acceptance is the ultimate end for all whether gay or convert/straight. But the problem with Ed is computed by the profession of the continuance of his relationship with Kamlesh whom he caresses just before the catastrophic discovery of their photograph.

Thus Dattani shows how the problematic relationship-gay relationship in this case which is pursued under wraps engenders deception and chicanery causing incalculable harm to individuals and society. John McRae's comments are relevant in this context, it is not only the character that is at error, it is all in a culture that not only bears but promotes double standards which stipulate ruse and reversal over expressiveness, liability, and veracity. The play's handling of the proscribed theme is exceptionally byroad, poignant on a wide range of gay demeanour. It includes Shrads ostentation, Bunny's duplicity, and double-dealing, and Ranjit's crafty in transitory to the broad-minded west where he can be himself by unreservedly pursuing his homosexual activities. While mapping out the gray areas of society, Dattani shows how it is the naïve heterosexual who suffers from sheer trust, gullibility, and ignorance. Being caught in the double bind of insidious fact- suppression by her brother and deceitful by her lover Ed, the innocent Kiran, the divorced heterosexual is subject to unwarranted fraud.

Queer approach to Dattani's Play Do the Needful

The next play taken Do the Needful, is all about complicated relationships. The twofold issue of love and homosexuality is skilfully treated in this play. What makes it exclusive is that it has a loving concern grafted onto it that cannot show the way to matrimony due to communal perception in Indian society. Lata, the female protagonist, is in love with Salim, a Muslim from a dissimilar commune. Lata settles for an unsuited marriage with Alpesh, a homosexual, whose homosexuality serves as an expedient justification for congregation their reputable partners, which grounds Lata and Salim and Alpesh and Trilok. We are occupied aback by Lata's apathy and mulish stance toward her expectant parents during the play, while Alpesh's placidity and vacillation towards marriage annoy us. An intricate association is depicted in the play that exhibits today's marriages have lost their wisdom and have become zilch more than a negotiation to accomplish individual goals. For Lata and Alpesh marriage is only an expedient mode of coexistence, otherwise, they pursue their extra-marital love liaisons even after they have tied the knot. The hypocrisy of such arranged hotchpotch marriages for "convenience stands exposed. Treatment of this great institution as a trifle contract to facilitate their selfish ends fills us with great distaste. Both Lata and Alpesh could see no way out of the marriage arranged by their parents and were not ready to give up their respective lovers, so they strike upon a halfway through, which were suitable to both of them. The path chosen by both of them is default and desecrates the sanctity of marriage and can never be acceptable to our society. Though such characters may exist in our midst such blatant disregard for a sanctions ceremony fill us with horror.

However, to the foreground, the idiocy of a forced heterosexual marriage to a confirmed gay man, Dattani has adopted three devices of engraving soliloquized hankering of Alpesh for his partner Trilok in the matrix of conversations. Similarly, lata's soliloquized hankering for her terrorist lover Salim to show the uselessness of taming an independent and spirited though recalcitrant. Woman who is irretrievably tied down to a man despite his terrorist background and their respective choices- Alpesh his gay relationship with Trilok and Lata her infatuation for Salim. Here both the homosexual and the feminine share the same platform, finding space and identity vis-à-vis an uncompromising social setup and hegemonic patriarchy respectively, through different agendas. Sally Avens, writing an introductory note to the play comments on the universality of the theme of the play" despite its exclusive Indian Colour, it was easy for British spectators to have compassion in the company of a gay operate strained to exist his existence within the principles of heterosexual culture or a youthful lady resolute to avow her freedom and sever gratis from her parents.

Conclusion

Dattani is a pretentious being and the incorporated memo of the set plays becomes self-reflective with pioneering plans of stage apparatus. His way of handling stagecraft is tremendously obscure which makes the

text resonant manifold connotations. For theatrical representations are neither a subject of explanation nor even presentations rather a theme of suggestion. It is only with an apt presentation that the understanding becomes fundamental and adequate. On the whole, being a contemporary, post-modernistic playwright, Dattani looks at the situation with a dispassionate eye by taking life objectively and in entirety and makes the readers thought-provoking regarding changing the mind-sets to change the system because the laws that have failed to meet the readers thought-provoking regarding changing the mind-sets to change the system because the laws that have failed to meet the requirements of contemporary society and obsolete and are to be ruled out. It makes his tone to be not only revolting but also outrageous at times. As a result, the dialogues spoken by his characters are following the mind style. Being preoccupied with the maladies, they struggle hard to find a remedy; make choices to survive. Another perceptible strategy getting manifested in his limited number of characters and neatly woven plot so that the audience does not lose his focus or digresses from the main plot. Next, no doubt, in the wake of focusing based on society, the satirist in Dattani gets surfaced crystal. But that does not make the audience feel repelled, thanks to his wit, that too comes hand in hand to balance the situation and makes the audience introspective reading the sensitive, insightful portrayal of forbidden subjects, giving the blow to the middle-class morality of compromise or for that matter operating 'within' the system. It is this which underscores his reputation as a creator of the vibrant, restful, insightful theatrical form in keeping with the changed scenario and so a torchbearer for upcoming successors. Due to the homophobia and heterosexism, most of the homosexuals in Dattani's plays lead a double life hiding their inherent homosexuality, and he also presents their struggle and supports their quest for identity and human rights as individuals and as a social group. Their social and psychological problems are elaborated in his plays.

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