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QUEERING THE STRAIGHT: ALTERNATE SEXUALITIES IN DATTANI'S  
"ON A MUGGY NIGHT IN MUMBAI"

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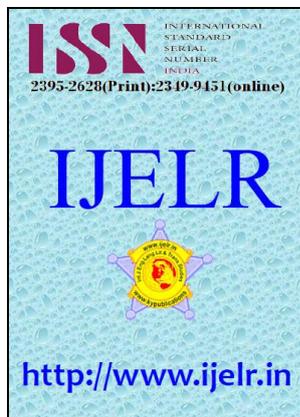
ABSTRACT

Homosexuality is mostly considered as a taboo in the Indian society. Homosexuals are infact considered to be a major problem that threatens the fabric of our society. The social exclusion faced by these sexually marginalized community gives rise to their identity crisis. The affliction of these homosexuals often remain invisible to the public. Mahesh Dattani in his play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* projects a vivid picture of the lives of the homosexuals. The play is set in the backdrop of the Mumbai city where these homosexuals can live together as a community.

The play is set in one locale: the living room of Kamlesh, a homosexual and a fashion designer in Mumbai. Kamlesh the hero of the play convenes a meeting in his flat of his friends, whose help he needed in order to come out of the problematic situation which he faces. The guests in Kamlesh's living room are all gays like Kamlesh himself and Dipali, the lesbian. The only heterosexual seen is Kiran, Kamlesh's sister. The physical affair of Kamlesh with Ed comes to light when he strongly supports the marriage proposal between Kiran and Ed. The discussion of the proposal throws light on the grey areas of the lives of the homosexuals. The aim of this paper is to examine the identity crisis, the alienation and the conflicts faced by this sexually marginalized group of the society.

**Keywords:** Homosexuals, identity crisis, alienation, conflicts

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INTRODUCTION

Drama in Indian writing in English is an art form which has not been able to soar to the great heights of popularity. It is mostly due to the fact that drama itself is a complex form involving stage craft. Moreover Indian dramatists faced many linguistic problems to communicate their thoughts in English. During the pre-independence era, the playwrights though tried their best to channelize their talents in producing effective English plays yet success was very negligible. Krishna Mohan Banerjee was the first playwright who wrote an English play titled *The Persecuted* in 1813. Most of the Indian English dramatists of Pre-Independence period

seem to follow the tradition of Elizabethan drama in general and Shakespeare in particular. The pioneering figures in whose hands the Indian English Drama got its nourishment were Rabindra Nath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, T. P. Kailasam, Lobo Prabhu, Bharati Sarabhai and so on. Apart from experimenting different forms of drama, these dramatists were keen on following the poetic drama tradition of contemporary British literature. In the post-independence era, the concern of the playwrights shifted from poetic to prosaic drama. Though it was a promising beginning, yet the trend didn't follow for long. A sudden downfall was noticed which ultimately led to a total death of English plays. In 1970s, a new trend was witnessed in English plays which involved the translations of contemporary notable regional playwrights into English which were later staged. It witnessed great success instantly due to its bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of both thematic concerns and technical virtuosity. The notable playwrights of the contemporary Indian drama are Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircare, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahasweta Devi. They dominated the Indian Theater for a long stretch of time. Recently two playwrights have given a marked fillip to Indian English drama. They are Manjula Padmanabhan and Mahesh Dattani. Manjula Padmanabhan is a playwright who is honoured with the prestigious *Onassis Award* for her play *Harvest*. Although her plays are intellectually rich, yet they are not suited for stage. But Mahesh Dattani has revolutionized both Indian English plays and Theater. His plays emerged as 'fresh arrival' in the domain of Indian English drama in the last decade of the twentieth century. Indian English Drama gets a new identity with the plays of Mahesh Dattani who originally writes in English. His plays are based on contemporary urban India and they are topical dramas. Dattani addresses sensational and compelling issues rooted in his milieu in his plays. He has dealt with themes like gender, sex, religion, communal tension, homosexuality, transgender, complicated modern urban family, etc. Dattani considers theater to be a powerful visual medium to highlight issues relating to our lives. Through this medium of drama, Dattani expresses the untold and invisible realities of the marginalized communities of the society.

*On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is the first play in Indian Theatre to deal with the theme of homosexuality. Homosexuality is a taboo in Indian society. At different times and in different cultures, different treatment has been meted out to the subject of homosexuality. At times homosexuality has been approved of whereas at other times it has been punished and banned. Homosexuality was not uncommon in ancient Greece and Rome and the relationship between adult and adolescent males in particular have become a chief focus of Western Classicists in recent years. Judeo Christian as well as Muslim cultures have generally perceived homosexual behaviour as sinful. Many Jewish and Christian leaders, however have declared that it is the acts and not the individuals or even their 'inclinations' or 'orientation' that their faiths prescribe.

In the modern times, attitudes towards homosexuality are generally in flux-partially as a result of increased political activism and efforts by homosexuals to be seen not as aberrant personalities, but as differing from 'normal' individuals only in their sexual orientation. The conflicting views on homosexuality- as a variant but normal human sexual on the other- remain present in most societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but they have been largely resolved in most developed countries. In most of Africa, Asia and Latin America, both the subject of homosexuality and homosexual behavior are considered taboo, with some slight exception made in urban areas. In Western Countries, however attitudes are somewhat more liberal. It is mostly a taboo in Indian Civil Society for the government Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code makes sex with persons of the same gender punishable by law. As per the law, whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years or liable to fine.

As homosexuality is still a huge taboo in India, writers generally ignore the theme in their writings or make indirect references only. Dattani in this respect is a trendsetter. John Mac Rao, in the introduction to the play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* writes:

And the themes of *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* deserve to touch the whole society and to be touched by it. It is not simply the first play in Indian Theatre to handle openly gay themes of light, partnership, trust and betrayal. It is a play about how society creates a pattern of behavior and how easy it is for individuals to fall victim to the expectations society creates. (p. 9)

Dattani has made use of multi level stage to represent the different spaces of household representing the mental spaces of the character and the different realities they live in. The dark expensive area represents the mental strife and conflicts of the characters whereas the open space represents the action in the context of external thoughts. As John Mac Rao, in the introduction of the play writes:

Although the setting is basically an interior with different spaces- Kamlesh's flat, mainly the living room and the bedroom- there is also the mental space indicated by the stage directions. Then there is not only the skyline of Mumbai beyond, but there is the real world out there indicated by the niggling presence of the wedding going on at ground level. (p. 9)

#### OBJECTIVE

The objective of the paper is to highlight the mental strife of the homosexual as they are torn between their true self and the apparent self which they try to put up in order to survive respectfully in the society. An attempt is made to examine the hidden fears and feelings of this sexually marginalised community within the framework of dramatic structure and to investigate the identity crisis of the gays. The alienation, the isolation, inter personal conflicts which these people face will be highlighted in the paper. The gays inhabit a world of their own which is distanced from the mainstream society and is very isolated. Such a world defies the norms of the traditional society. This paper examines whether the binaries of heterosexuality are re-enforced through a replaying of sex/gender roles within homosexual (gay and lesbian) relationships.

#### HYPOTHESIS

In the play Dattani attempts to foreground problematics of complex issues of an unacknowledged sexual choice, considered to be a taboo – a sexually marginalised group whose very existence defies the essentialist assumptions of a binary sex- gender framework and 'compulsory heterosexuality' as termed by Judith Butler. The present study attempts to examine Dattani's representation of an alienated group of homosexuals in his play, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*. The paper attempts to locate the play in the context of the reigning debate of "gender trouble".

#### ANALYSIS

In the play, we get an insight into this world of the gays represented by the characters Prakash, Kamlesh, Sharad, Bunny, Dipali and others. Prakash and Kamlesh were deeply in love with each other but their relationship couldn't survive for long, and they got separated. Kamlesh was deeply inflicted with the pangs of separation. Thereafter, he comes in terms with Sharad and develops gay relationship with him. However, Kamlesh can't adjust himself with Sharad, as he is not able to erase out the memories of Prakash from his mind. To Kamlesh's great surprise, Prakash changes his name to Ed and intends to marry Kiran, the divorcee sister of Kamlesh. Finding himself at the critical juncture Kamlesh invites his friends (all homosexuals) in order to find a solution for his problem. It is from the discussion of these gay people in the meeting that take place in Kamlesh's flat that Dattani helps us probe the mental conflicts of these people.

Prakash and Kamlesh were very happy together but their relationship suffered on the face of societal pressure. It suddenly dawned upon Prakash or Ed that he was wrong in maintaining a homosexual relationship. He had the feeling that he was a sinner according to religious values. As Kamlesh says: " he (Prakash) goes to church every week now. They put him on to a Psychiatrist. He believes his love for me was the work of the devil. Now the devil has left him" (Act II, p. 20)

Prakash alleges the devil to be responsible for his perversion of being a homosexual. But in reality homosexuality is rooted to biological and psychological factors.

Psychologists in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, most of whom classified homosexuality as a form of mental illness, developed a variety of theories on its origin. The 19<sup>th</sup> century psychologist Richard von Kraft-Ebing, whose *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) included masturbation, sado-masochism and lust-murder in its list of sexual perversions, saw it as originating in heredity. His contemporary Sigmund Freud characterized it as a result of conflicts of psychosexual development, including identification with the parent of the opposite sex. Others have looked at social influence and psychological events in fetal development as possible origins. It is likely that many instances of homosexuality result from a combination of inborn or constitutional factors and environmental or social influences.

Kamlesh had a different nature from that of Prakash. Unlike Prakash, Kamlesh was not ashamed of being a homosexual and was very honest about his relationship. He was so deeply involved with Prakash that he could never forget him. Even while living with Sharad, another gay man Kamlesh couldn't be true to him. Kamlesh felt guilty of his relationship with Sharad, to which he was never honest. He had just used Sharad to forget Prakash. As Kamlesh says:

KAMLESH: I did a cruel thing...Sharad. I hope you will forgive me... I did a cruel thing by loving Sharad to forget Prakash. I have not succeeded. And I have hurt someone as wonderful as Sharad. I made Sharad go through the same pain and suffering that I was trying to get over. (Act I, p. 15)

The intensity of love and affection between the homosexuals is highlighted by Dattani through the characters of Kamlesh and Prakash. They share a strong bond like that of the heterosexuals. It is not always that their relationship is limited to satisfying carnal pleasures only.

In our society, the homosexuals are not able to maintain their relationships for long in the face of societal pressure. Most of them have to go through the pangs of separation. But their cries of affliction remain unheard by the public. They remain as an invisible community in the society.

As Kamlesh says, "We have all been through the pain of separation. As gay men and women, we have all been through, I suppose .... some of us several times." (Act I, p16)

Sigmund Freud's views on homosexuality have been described as deterministic, whereas he would ascribe biological and psychological factors in explaining the principal causes of homosexuality. He believed that humans are born with unfocused sexual libidinal drives and therefore argued that homosexuality might be a deviation from this. Nevertheless, he also felt that certain deeply rooted forms of homosexuality were difficult or impossible to change. Freud's most important articles on homosexuality were written between 1905 and 1922 when he published *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Freud believed that all humans were bisexuals, by which he primarily meant that everyone is sexually attracted to both sexes. In his view, this was true anatomically and therefore also mentally and psychologically. Heterosexuality and homosexuality both developed from the original bisexual disposition. This inhibited self of every man is very adventurously brought out by Dattani in his play. He brings to light the 'invisible' issues which are often pushed to the periphery. As A.K. Chaudhuri comments:

Much of 'mainstream' society, Dattani believes lives in a state of 'forced harmony' out of a sense of helplessness, or out of a lack of alternatives. Simply for lack of choice, they conform to stereotypes like 'homosexuals' that in some sense leads to a kind of ghettoisation within the society, little spaces to which the marginalized are pushed'. (p. 47)

Dattani in the play reveals the predicament of the homosexuals, surviving in an apathetic society. For the sake of the society these people have to bear the pangs of identity crisis. Our society does not accept the gays and the lesbians as they are. They have to live under guises which often leads to disastrous results. It brings about their self alienation.

Homosexuals in their attempt to either justify or flaunt their deviant/different sexuality or to repress it for fear of social censor. They in most cases fail to achieve psychological balance and poised acceptance of their own sexuality.

In the play we see that Bunny Singh and Ed are leading hypocritical existences. They are performing the roles of normal heterosexual men to gain acceptance in the society. Bunny Singh is a TV actor who gained immense popularity by acting in 'Yeh Hai Hamara Parivaar'. As Kiran remarks about Bunny:

KIRAN: You are the ideal husband and father I cant imagine anyone else in that part. (Act I, p. 18)

Under the apparent ideal husband and father lies the real Bunny Singh who secretly carries his gay relationship. He is always haunted with the fear that if his reality is exposed he will be rejected in the professional family and social circle. This is reflected when he tells Sharad:

"Do you think I will be accepted by the millions if I screamed from the rooftops that I am gay?" (Act I, p. 16)

Bunny Singh and others like him who try to survive in two worlds have to suffer severe mental conflicts. Playing the role of a hypocrite.

Bunny Singh is not true to himself. But his pain can't be realized by others. The vast gulf existing between Bunny Singh's real and apparent self can be realized when he candidly admits before his friends:

BUNNY: Just as the man whom my wife loves does not exist, I have denied a lot of things. The only people who know me- the real me- are present here in this room, And you all hate me for such a hypocrite. I have tried to survive. In both worlds. And it seems I do not exist in either. ... Everyone believes me to be the model middle-class Indian man. I was chosen for the part in the serial because I fit into common perceptions of what a family man ought to look like. I believe in it myself. I lied – to myself first. And I continue to lie to millions of people every week on Thursday nights. There is no such person. (Act III, p.26)

Dattani shows that some gay men instead of maintaining a double standard remain static in their conviction and commitment. They even dare to leave the country in order to keep their gay relation and identity unharmed and safe. The conversation between Ranjit and Deepali reveals this fact:

RANJIT: Call me what you will. My English lover and I have been together for twelve years now. You will never be able to find a lover in this wretched country! (Act I, p.16)

Ranjit's words are a reflection of his aversion towards the social set up of India. It is a tactic verbal rebellion against the wretched customs of the country. In India homosexuality is considered a taboo. So, gay people and the lesbians have to suppress their true selves in order to survive in the society. Another aspect that the playwright brings to light is that our society focuses more on the homosexuality of unmarried men and women. That is why the relationships of Prakash, Ranjit and others couldn't be sustained for long. But the grave fact is that married men and women also engage in homosexuality in large numbers. But most of the time it remains unnoticed. In the garb of their married lives such people are able to dangle between a homosexual and a heterosexual life. In the play Bunny Singh is such a character who is able to deceive the society very adroitly/ skillfully.

The homosexual who are a sexually marginalized community in our society are despised by the society. They are accused of leading perverted lives. But at a few instances in the play we see that their stand against the homosexuals also take their stand against the heterosexuals. According to them, the heterosexuals also lead hypocritical existences.

This fact is revealed from Sharad and Kamlesh's discussion about the marital relationship of a diamond merchant in Zaveri bazaar and his wife. They are considered as normal human beings as they are heterosexuals. But their reality is that only some of them are true to their selves. Sharad and Kamlesh take the opportunity to criticize the diamond merchant's wife.

SHARAD: Are you crazy? Just look at them! Yeech! That guy is just bad news.

KAMLESH (arranging glasses): A diamond merchant in Zaveri Bazaar. If it is her husband with her, that is.

SHARAD: Of course he is her husband! He is too fat and bald to be her lover.

KAMLESH: You should come by some time at about eleven in the morning on a working day. That's when she does it with the doodhwalla. (Act I p.11)

Marriage is a pious institution of our society from which the homosexuals are excluded. The tradition of marriage has been followed in the society for the noble purpose of procreation, which is again another power enjoyed only by the heterosexuals. The homosexuals do not find any logic for getting married. It becomes evident in the words of Ranjit.

RANJIT: Why do people get married?

ED: I beg your pardon? Did you say something?

RANJIT: Oh, nothing at all. Hi, I am Ranjit. (Act III, p23)

When he questions why people get married and that it is "bloody unnatural". When Bunny told Ranjit that it was natural to the majority of the people Ranjit asserted that animals don't do it. It is the margin "talking back". It is their way of striking at the roots of heterosexual normality – a reverse system of moral assumptions.

At another instance Dattani highlights a fact that homosexuals do not carry on their relationships when it becomes bitter. Their relationships are not bound by the social rules of marriage. Whereas in our society it is seen that many married couples drag on their relationship in spite of the lack of love, honesty and faith. The words of Sharad is a revelation of this fact. Sharad who had stayed for a year with Kamlesh feels very frustrated and disappointed because he could not get the true love of Kamlesh. Kamlesh was always haunted by the memories of his former lover Prakash or Ed. Sharad accused Kamlesh for the wastage of one year of his life being his housewife and facing indignation at the end. But Sharad tried to get some solace in his mind by comparing himself to the diamond merchant's wife's condition. Unlike Sharad she could come out if the relationship.

SHARAD: I wasted a year of my life being a housewife for you and all I get is kick in the ass! You beast! (Sorry. That wasn't really funny. Although some people might think it is. Things could be worse. Like (points to the window) that woman. I couldn't take it for a minute when you said you didn't love me, but she ... she can't throw him out. (Act I, p.12)

Dattani in the play has depicted homosexuals who are not all stereotypical. Although they belonged to the same marginalized category on the basis of their sexuality, yet their attitudes to their own sexuality is different from each other. Sharad is the antithesis of Ed. He is vocal of his gay identity. Like him Deepali, the only lesbian in the play is also odd enough to accept her true self. She is faithful and seems content with her lesbian relationship with Tina. When she says, "Tina and I can tell all of you to go jump!" (Act I p.16)

Ranjit has found his own way out by moving to a different country. Kamlesh is seen to suffer in anguish unable to continue his relationship with Prakash. But Kamlesh couldn't think of a hypocritical existence by pretending to be a heterosexual. When Bunny Singh gives him the advice of getting married to come out of his convoluted state of mind, Kamlesh does not approve it. Bunny Singh and Ed on the other hand had a totally different attitude from that of Kamlesh. They supported a hypocritical existence, being a heterosexual to fit to the norms of the society and at the same time satiate their carnal pleasures and urges of being a homosexual secretly. The discussion between Bunny, Sharad, Kamlesh and Ranjit, all the gays in the play is very interesting.

KAMLESH: For the past week, I have been picking up strangers – bringing them over – hoping to connect. Strange men who will call me when they feel the same loneliness, when they grow tired of the pretense. Or when they need more money.

BUNNY: Since you want us to help you – let me give you some advice. You are looking in the wrong places to forget your Prakash. Get married.

RANJIT: Hah!

BUNNY: Find yourself a nice woman. You can always have sex on the side.

SHARAD: And pretend to be straight like you!

BUNNY: What's wrong with that? Huh? Do you think I will be accepted by the millions if I screamed from the rooftops that I am gay.

RANJIT: Yes, but you do scream from the rooftops you are straight.

BUNNY: Camouflage! Even animals do it. Blend with the surroundings. They can't find you. You politically correct gays deny yourself the basic animal instinct of camouflage.

SHARAD: Give me maquillage! Lots of rouge glitters! Let the world know that you exist. Honey, if you flaunt it, you've got it.

KAMLESH: I don't want camouflage and I don't want glitters. I don't want to flaunt or hide anything. (Act I p.16)

The diversity in the nature of the homosexuals is summed up in the introduction to the play given by John Mac Rae:

Of the characters, Sharad and Deepali are comfortable with their sexuality, and have different ways of being gay. Sharad is camp, flaunting; Deepali more restrained, perhaps more stable. Kamlesh is anguished, and Ed the most obvious victim of his own insecurities. Bunny, the T.V. actor, is a rather more traditional Indian gay man – married (he would say happily) while publicly denying his own nature and Ranjit has taken an easy way out by moving to Europe where he can 'be himself more openly'. (p.9)

Dattani in the play examines the unusual relationship among individuals both at psychological and physical level. The coherence between physical and psychological level which society expects of every individual is also a socially and culturally constructed norm. It is not necessary that a woman will always feel an affinity towards a male and vice-versa. The imaginary 'logic' is critically analysed by Judith Butler in her book, *Bodies that Matter*. Butler shows the relationship between gender and sexuality in the following paragraph:

In psychological terms the relationship between gender and sexuality is in part negotiated through the question of the relationship between identification and desire. And here it becomes clear why refusing to draw lines of casual implication between these two domains is as important as keeping open an investigation of their complex inter implication. For, if to identify as a woman is not necessarily to desire of a man, and if to desire a woman does not necessarily signal the constituting presence of a masculine identification, whatever that is, then the heterosexual matrix proves to be an 'imaginary' logic that insistently issues forth its own unmanageability. The heterosexual logic that requires that identification and desire to be mutually exclusive is one of the most reductive of heterosexism's psychological instruments: if one identifies 'as' a given gender, one must desire a different gender. On the one hand, there is no one femininity with which to identify, which is to say that femininity might itself offer as array of identificatory sites, as the proliferation of lesbian feminine possibilities attests. On the other hand, it is hardly descriptive of the complex dynamic exchanges of lesbian and gay relationships to presume that homosexual identifications 'mirror' or replicate one another. The vocabulary for describing the difficult play, crossing and destabilization of masculine and feminine identification within homosexuality has only begun to emerge within theoretical language: the non-academic language historically embedded in gay communities is here much more instructive. The thought of sexual difference 'within' homosexuality has yet to be theorized in its complexity. (Rice and Waugh, p. 249)

Dattani in the play foregrounds the grim reality of the homosexuals. There is always a tussle in the minds of these people as they are torn between desire and recognition. If they fulfill their desire of same-sex love then they are denied the social identity. As they fail to conform to the standards of a binary gender system they are pushed to the fringes of the society. Their predicament is such that they appear to be persons but they are incoherent gendered beings. Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* states:

To what extent do regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person? To what extent is 'identity' a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience?

And how do the regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity? In other words, 'the coherence' and 'continuity' of 'the person' are not logical or analytical features of personhood, but rather socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility. In as much as 'identity' is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of 'the person' is called into question by the cultural emergence of those 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are identified. (p. 23)

Dattani through the play seems to highlight the injustice faced by the homosexuals which remain invisible to the common public. Though indirectly Dattani through the play tries to raise the consciousness of the common people towards the injustice meted out to this marginalized community. As A.K. Chaudhuri comments on the play in her book, *Contemporary Indian Writers in English*:

Dattani, obviously seems to have a point to his audience. But rather than directly preach the playwright dramatizes and peoples the performance stage with characters one begins to identify with, facing genuine, real-life problems. The play, then, in a sense, is a plea for empathy and sensitivity to India's 'queer culture.' (p. 51)

Dattani in the play has very skillfully conceived two contrasting scenarios to offset each other. The inside world is presented as chaotic and tensed where the characters voice their conflicts and disillusionments. Ed is seen to be totally broken down when his gay relationship with Kamlesh is disclosed before his fiancée Kiran through a clandestine photograph. He even tries to commit suicide whereas in the outside world there is an atmosphere of celebration with the sound of bursting fire crackers as a wedding was going on. The playwright juxtaposes the two worlds to show dichotomy. Homosexual relationships are often kept hidden as

our society never accepts it whereas marriage is an institution which sanctifies a heterosexual relationship with the social blessings. The sounds of the fire crackers drown the painful cries of the homosexual souls.

Dattani in the play highlight how in our society power is associated with the man, man who is a heterosexual one. The power play in the society is such that all power is concentrated on the penis. Sharad in the play is seen to suffer this lack of power as he says,

We-ell, let me see how I can put it. You see, being a heterosexual man – a real man-, as Ed put it – I get everything. I get to be accepted – accepted by whom? – well, that marriage let down there for instance. I can have a wife, I can have children who will all adore me simply because I am a hetero- I beg your pardon- a real man. Now why would I want to give it all up?

So what if I change a little? If I can be a real man, I can be king. Look at all the kings around you, look at all the male power they enjoy, trusting themselves on the world, all that penis power! Power with sex, power with muscles, power with size. Firing rockets, exploding nuclear bombs, if you can do it five times, I can do it six times and all that stuff, power, man! Power!! (Act III p.25)

Another crucial observation in the play is the victimization of the women by the gay men. Bunny and Ed translate the oppression they receive at the hands of the society into victimization of their wives. They don't bother to think about the emotional harm they do to the women. Kiran, Kamlesh's sister whom Ed decides to marry questions Ed about the injustice when Ed's reality as a homosexual came to light.

KIRAN: What do you want from me? What did you want from me so badly that you could not care how much you hurt me for it? (Act III p.27)

Dipali, the only lesbian in the play appears to be a very sensible person. She is at times enraged to know about certain opinions and thinkings of her gay friends. Through the character of Dipali, the playwright very subtly reveals that it is the woman who is sensible, even in gay culture. Dipali's though not a heterosexual woman celebrates her womanhood. It is evident from her conversation with Ranjit.

DEEPALI: You are a real dickhead.

RANJIT: Are you jealous?

DEEPALI: Why should I be jealous of you?

RANJIT: Because I have a dick. Would you want one? Of course you would.

DEEPALI(with great dignity): I thank God. Every time I mensurate, I thank God I am a woman. (Act I, p13)

Dattani in the play very subtly highlights the fact that the gender war remains intact even among the homosexuals. Through the words of Dipali while conversing with Sharad this fact becomes evident.

SHARAD: If I had a lover, would I be such a bitch?

DIPALI: Don't use that word. (Clenches her fist at him). You can call yourself a dog, call yourself a pig, but never insult a female. (Act I, p.12)

Even in the conversation between Kiran and Ed after Ed's sexual identity is revealed we get the presence of the undercurrent of gender war. The fact that Ed is a homosexual and Kiran a heterosexual is sidelined.

ED: Sweetheart, that is such a .... Pardon me, but you are behaving like a typical woman again.

KIRAN: Isn't that what you want?

ED: No! Now let's get out of here!

KIRAN: That's why you want to marry me. And that's what I tried to be all the time. Look what it gave me.... Do you know? When my husband beat me up. I truly believed and felt that he loved me. I felt he loved me enough to want to hurt me. Kamlesh helped me get out of that. Bt I continued being the same...woman. I wanted to feel loved by a man. In whichever way he wanted to love me. And I met you. And you did show love. And you continue being the same .... Man .... Typical, you said. You are right. If there are any stereotypes around here, they are you and me. Because we don't know any better, do we? We just don't know what else to be! (Act III p.27)

Dattani in the play portrays the fact that the homosexuals like to maintain a secured distance from the people of the mainstream society. They don't like interference of world outside into their's. in the play

Kamlesh's flat is on the top floor from where the homosexuals look down at the wedding frenzy on homosexuals look down at the wedding frenzy on the outside from a distance which make them feel safe. They try to conceal themselves from the outside world. In the play it is seen that there was the ultimate discovery with the photograph of Kamlesh and Prakash being discovered by the children of the outside world.

The use of the word 'muggy' in the title of the play is very befitting. As A.K. Chaudhuri writes :

The spaces within the home are 'muggy' too hot to be comfortable, the air-conditioning breaking down, even as the interior spaces of the psyche have to be confronted. Meanwhile the exteriors keep exerting pressure, intruding into the 'other' spaces occupied by the characters in the play perpetually reminding them of their isolation. (p.43)

The only heterosexual character in the play is Kiran, Kamlesh's sister. She is a divorcee and is engaged to Prakash/Ed, a gay who had once lived with Kamlesh. Kiran is unaware of this reality. After the painful experience of her first marriage, she felt blessed to get a person like Ed, who was very caring and loving towards her. The deception faced by Kiran seems to be very pathetic. Ed's intention of marrying her was to continue his relationship with Kamlesh secretly. This becomes evident when he says:

KAMLESH: I'll take care of Kiran and you take care of me. (Act III p.26)

Kiran though seems to be victimized and weak but she turns out to be a strong person. She has the strength to recognize diversities as such and not as aberrations.

Dattani portrays the severe mental crisis of homosexual who gets exposed even after trying his best to veil it through the character of Ed. Ed reacts in a frenzied way when his photograph with Kamlesh in an objectionable state is exposed. He goes to extent of hitting Kamlesh and himself trying to commit suicide.

#### CONCLUSION

In the play 'On a Muggy Night in Mumbai' Dattani examines the realities of homosexuality as is prevalent in our society. He shows how the homosexuals are torn between their desires and the expectations of the society. The established norms of the society crush the individual norms of the society crush the individual urge to severe anguish. Dattani questions the marginalization of people in the name of sexuality. He neither approves nor disapproves the marriage between the people of the same sex. Dattani is just unveiling the truth suppressed under the established tradition of compulsory heterosexuality. He has addresses an issue which is always considered derogative in the eyes of the taboo-bound hypocrisies. Dattani gives a voice to this marginalized community which remains socially excluded and invisible. Dattani through his play, tries to make the discrimination against people in our society on the basis of gender and sexuality visible to the public. He does not try to preach the public directly but through the medium of drama, which is a powerful tool. He highlights real life problems with which one begins to identify. Dattani tries to raise the consciousness of the public towards the homosexual community.

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