Chapter 6: On a Muggy Night in Mumbai

Dattani is full of uncompromising initiative spirit and an infinite desire for bold theatrical experiments, which has opened up new directions of presentations of invisible issues on the stage. *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is one of bold theatrical experiments on the theme of homosexuality by Dattani. The created rules of society don’t allow an individual to create his ‘own designs’ and ‘personal space’ unless obeying and following to them. And the themes of *On a Muggy Night* deserve to touch the whole of society and to be touched by it. This is not the first play in Indian theatre to handle openly gay themes of partnership, love, trust and unfaithfulness. It is a play how society creates patterns of behaviour which don’t allow one to enjoy individual space and how easy it is for individuals to fall victim to the anticipations society creates. The current society has undergone alteration. As a result of this, the experiences of human being have become wide and varied. Dattani spends such noble human experiences in theatrical presentation.

Dattani’s exhibition of conflicts and desires of the gay male in his play is an unconventional and bold attempt.

A British audience found it easy to empathize with a gay man being forced to live his life within the norms of heterosexual society or a young woman eager to prove her independence and break free from her parents. ¹

At the Tata Theatre, Mumbai, the play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* was first performed on 23rd November, 1998. The play has succeeded in developing interest and curiosity among the audience. Later on, the play was adopted into a screen play which was produced by Sanjeev Shah. The play narrates the strong passion, betrayal, frustration, conflicts in the lives of the homosexuals. The play is the dramatist’s bold and beautiful attempt to look into the inner intermissions of those who are excluded and forced to live lives with anxiety and insecurities in a solitude environment. There are multi sets on stage. Actually, the stage divided into three acting areas. Beautifully done up ‘ethnic chic’ fashion, the first area is a small flat, located in the up
market area of Marine Drive, though not quite Pali Hill. One is a small flat of Kamlesh with windows overlooking the Mumbai Skyline. The second one is a non-realistic set where the characters confront their inner thoughts. The last one is Kamlesh's bedroom. The second area is completely non-realistic set comprising three levels. This area is black and expansive and characters therein are immediately suspended in a ‘Shoonya’ where they are compelled to confront their inner thoughts and feelings. Introspections are possible in this room. Below this, giving some mystery and secrecy, there is Kamlesh’s bedroom which is realistic but hidden behind a wall. The beginning of the play is a realistic scene between Kamlesh and a security guard following a private pleasure session. Kamlesh watches the guard dress himself in Khaki uniform. Kamlesh even places the guard's foot on his thighs to help him tie his shoelace. The guard speaks in Hindi. This code-mixing throughout the play makes the play quite realistic in the context of metro-sexual role playing. Kamlesh has invited his friends and people enter one after another. Sharad comes, hums a song and urges Kamlesh to sing along:

So many times we have to pay for having fun and being gay..

Mahesh Dattani chooses themes related to sexuality and gender issues. His characters represent people of contemporary world who are frequently set aside as wicked by writers. He challenges the heterosexual normatively considered as central to our culture. This center is a cultural construction based on removal of homoerotic relations from drama and literature. On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, a stage play handles themes and questions conventional standards of social institution of marriage which is traditionally done by orthodox norms but has the touch of modern conceptions. Starting from his first full length play Where There's a Will (written in 1986) to his latest play Thirty Days in September, Dattani has tried to speak about taboo issues, sexuality and gender discrimination. Though he has dealt with varied subjects of gender discrimination, individual space, modernity versus traditionality and orthodoxy, communalism, human relationship, moral conflicts of postcolonial period, and his major focus is the gendered self pitched against the contemporary urbanscape.

The theme of gender discrimination in the garb of homosexuality in On a Muggy Night in Mumbai deserves the feel of the whole of society and to be felt by it. Though they are sailing in
the same boat each one has his own oar to put in, their own flag to hoist. Kamlesh is weak and sensitive, Sharad is his opposite. Ed, assumes a double identity with Prakash as his second Avatar. Bunny is, true to the home and the homedden. He is a good husband at home, while he enjoys himself being a gay. Ranjit solves his dilemma, by going abroad where he feels the will be more readily accepted. Deepali is a lesbian who declares "Every time I menstruate, I thank God I am a woman". Totally free of guilt, she is strong and bold to strike Ed when he gets violent. The wedding music heard constantly in the background; in the final act it is an ironic commentary on the lives of these homosexuals for whom marriage can only be a doubly dirty twice four letter word. As said in note of the play;

It would be banal to see these characters as in any way stereotypical. They are a carefully balanced range of individuals with a depth of experience that exceeds traditional expectations.  

Of the characters Sharad and Deepali are comfortable with their sexuality, and have different ways of being gay. Sharad is flaunting, Deepali more restrained perhaps more stable. Kamlesh is anguished and Ed the victim of his own insecurities. Bunny, TV actor, is rather a more traditional Indian gay married, he would say happily, while publically denying his own nature. Ranjit has taken an easy way out by moving to Europe where he can do himself more openly.

It would be banal to see the characters as in any way stereotyped. They are carefully balanced range of individuals with a depth of experience that exceeds traditional expectations. They are brought together in such a way as to bring out the conflicts, repressions and past secrets which are assailing Kamlesh and Ed/Prakash in particular. The past relationship between Kamlesh and Prakash, the new romance between Ed and Kamlesh's sister Kiran are beautifully counterpoised until the revelation at the climax of the fact that Ed and Prakash are the same person.

Gender is a representation and Dattani’s theatre is a representation of representation. Gender is not a product of different properties of bodies but is a product of social behaviour and practices. The media, the schools, the families, the court, literature and the art all construct the notion of gender and Dattani seems to unearth the excess and repressive forces behind such constructions.
Classification of sex in terms of biology or ascribing connotation to words in terms of logic of grammar as masculine, feminine and neuter that produces the gender system has not categorized homosexuality under another independent gender. The biological and grammatical classifications exclude the real relations in conformity to the ideology that governs the system of relations among human beings in the society.

The asymmetry that is inscribed in the cultural discourse of gender system is the focus of liberalist and conscious artist resulting in proliferation of feminist theories, gay theories and literary works that rise to the fore the conditions of repression, the marginalized, the woman and the gay undergo.

The Indian audience would not have felt comfortable to confront the dramatization of homosexuality, once treated as the infamous crime against nature itself. On a Muggy Night in Mumbai is written for the stage and is different on that count from the radio medium. It dramatizes the conflict, anguish, insecurities and frustration in the isolated society of the gay writes in a note on the play:

“It is not simply the first play in Indian theatre to handle openly gay themes of love, partnership, trust and betrayal. It is a play about how society creates patterns of behaviour and how easy it is for individuals to fall victim to the expectations, society creates.” 4

Unacceptable to the ideas of homogeneous cultural identity, the gay inhabits a world of their own subject to exclusion and isolation. Dattani tracks a group of characters to bring out their conflicts and repressions against the backdrop of a society that denies them their freedom.

They create a world of their own. Sharad asserts that they are all shameless fellows and do not feel inhibited to do or say any taboo thing (in Hindi):
Deepali, who arrives comments:

“I am all for the gay man's cause. Men deserve only men!”

Kamlesh and his friends discuss about the problems of gays taking 'pokoras' and whisky. Kamlesh refers to the psychiatrist he visits for his emotional problems as “only a straight homophobic psychiatrist”. Bunny, a TV serial actor is married and pretends to be a straight. He says:

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

Bunny does not want to be denied acceptance of the society by flaunting his gay identity in public while his friend Ranjit wants to go to Europe and live with his English gay partner freely. He does not like to be metaphorically referred to as a coconut-brown on the outside and white on the inside. Kamlesh's sister Kiran, a divorcee is in love with Ed and is going to marry him. When she announces this to the gathering the heat of the muggy night rises and the past gay relationship of Kamlesh and Ed is revealed. Ed is none other than Prakash, the past gay lover of Kamlesh. The play builds up tension till the final discovery of Ed and Prakash as one person. The same person who is gay has to pretend to be a straight for social acceptability.

The fear, the loneliness and the conflict; of these people arise out of the compulsion of playing the traditional gender roles. Mahesh Dattani, the playwright analyzes this problematic context,
Dattani has written a number of other plays, and his play *Tara* is often discussed from a feminist perspective. But in depiction of gay themes on the Indian stage Dattani seems to be a pioneer. However shocking or outrageous his plays may be to the conventional Indian theatergoer the fact remains that marriage has been the first casualty in the process of urbanization. All the same one wonders why he selects this dark site of human relationship which is socially, medically and legally questionable in the Indian context. What if the quintessential Indian man continues to be retro-sexual by default? The freedom of artist entails freedom of choice. Is Dattani’s choice in favour of the theorem ‘sex sells’ Or is it symptomatic of his deliberate mission of internationalizing Indian drama on a par the upsurge of Queer theory and postmodernist texts? May be he has no choice left since the city based life in India he portrays has opened up in many ways including the gay ways. However it is debatable to conclude in favour of selection of such themes in drama in a time when HIV-AIDS related campaigns prorogates monogamy and safe sex. But Dattani deserves the credit of being a major playwright of the English-speaking Indians in India and abroad. The post-independence Indian English drama has been enriched by works of a number of dramatists from Asif Currimbhoy to Girish Karnard through original and translated versions. Dattani, the youngest of them seems to be a playwright with newer vision and skill.

On Tuesdays nights, a club in an up market Delhi locality imitates a don of decadence. It is the weekly gay night. Unlike other social parties where many people can barely disguise their boredom behind their makeup, not one looks world weary here. Tattoos, burgundy streaked hair, short sleeved shirts, flared striped togs, anklets and flashy chains—there is all that. “I don't want to look macho” says one. “We all know what we want” what they want is love, freedom and acceptance like any other party goes on earths. Anyhow they are finding ways to get it. Homosexuality can enslave as well as liberate. They are skeptical of how their revelations will be interpreted, but break into an animated talk about their quest for acceptance. Denial of affection, family pressure, curiosity and discriminations dominate their conversation. Having been through multiple partners they are HIV positive, varied accounts of sexual abuse at young age, an intense
liking for boys since childhood, and scary encounters with police spill out with infections
candour, they talk about. Their sexual trysts and the strange urge come out.

Gays psychology says, Take our picture, write our stories, we are not ashamed. Repression is the
greatest curse thinks one gay. All these point to a shift in the gay movement in India. The debate
on homosexuality is becoming bolder, bigger and more relevant than ever before.

The gay banners unfurled at the World Social Forum in Mumbai in January 2001; and the rush of
events concerning gay rights has given the movement a new buzz. As historian Saleem Kidwai
says “Gays have faces and voices. They are willing to speak March and be photographed Few
are using marriages to hide”.

The meets are usually followed by forthright reading, performances and discussions on gay,
lesbians, bisexuals and trans-genders. Like it happened in the West, in India the gay movement is
being interpreted through gay parties, cross dressing, sexuality, protest marches and ironically
HIV and AIDS. Everyone concedes that visibility is germane to the acceptance that they seek.

Gay people in India may not be liberated but they are willing more than before to challenge
curiosity, even rejection without allowing it to damage their conscience. They are honest with
their parent; young gay men are turning the tide against homophobia. The Prince of Raj Pipla in
Gujrat by his honest declaration has been the centre of a storm; Manvendra's bold but
controversial step has cost him dear. His stunned parents have disinherited him but he has no
regrets, for

\[ he \ (Manvendra) \ has \ found \ a \ family \ in \ the \ gay \ community. \ 9 \]

When they can pose as man and woman, why and what are they challenging, is something to be
seriously thought of Mahesh Dattani’s drama complement. Girish in that mythology and history
are Karnad's favourite while Dattani’s pre-occupied with social and political realities. His themes
are India's joint family, and its impact on the individual, the plight of women in Indian society
and homosexuality an explosive subject for an Indian writer. Dattani is perhaps the first playwright to deal with this subject:

“Mahesh Dattani does not seek to cut a path through the difficulties, his characters encounter instead he leads his audience to see just how caught up are in the complications and contractions of our values and assumptions and by revealing the complexity he makes the worlds a richer place for all of us.” 10

His special theatrical quality is to build a tension in social context, leading to classic dramatic confrontation which involves not only the characters themselves but which also confronts the audience with its own expectations and attitude. Each acts builds to a climax of revelations and self discoveries. By the end of the play Ed is seen as the most pathetic and self deluding of all characters, but Kamlesh too deceives himself and exploits others. The intrinsic music wedding becomes the accompaniment to a dance of death indoors and the audience must go through the classic cathartic emotions of terror and pity as the characters mask fall, their emotions unravel and their lives disintegrate, for the fault is not just the characters it is everyone’s in a society which not only condones but encourages hypocrisy, which demands deceit and negation rather than allowing self expression, responsibility and dignity as Bunny, the TV star tells.

Bunny: Find yourself a nice woman. You can have sex on the side.
Sharad: And pretend to be straight like you?
Bunny: What’s wrong with their? Huh? Do you think I will be accepted by the millions if I screamed from the housetops that I am a gay.
Sharad: Yes but you do scream from the rooftop that you are straight. 11
If two men want and love one another, what's the harm? The harm now is the oppression symbolized throughout by the muggy heat and the failing air conditioner. “I really wish they allow gay people to marry” says naive Kiran only to get the reply from the cynical Ranjit “They do but only to the same sex.” It is one of the Wittiest barbs in the play but in the human, lays all the truth.

The audience's reaction to the play was, we are all liberal minded people but do we really have to go to the theatre to see gay on stage. Though Dattani has disturbed the world of the theatre by themes dealing so candidly with the gays and lesbians, but a reading of his play clearly show that while the plays reveal the psychology of these people, they are made to feel, realize and express that they too would want to be 'normal' like others and be accepted, and are even ashamed of such relationship.

Kamlesh: ... after Sharad went away - I decided that I didn't really need anyone to live with me. I had my work. That should have been enough. It wasn't I felt this voids. The same feeling when three years ago Prakash left me. I would have understood it if he had left me for another man but he left me because he was ashamed of our relationship ... Sharad, this is something I haven't told you before, because I know, you would disapprove. For the first time in my life I wished I wasn't gay. 12

There is always the fear of not being accepted which makes them put up all shams to cover up their shame.

Ranjit: I am sometimes regretful of being an Indian and gay. But you are simply ashamed. All the sham is to cover up your shame.
Deepali: It's not shame is it? with us... Its fear... of the corners we will be pushed into where we don't want to be. 13

One leads a double life as Bunny confesses.

“The man whom my wife loves, does not exist... I have tried to survive. In both worlds. And it seems do not exist in either. I am sorry Kiran. I lied to you as I lied to the rest of the world. I said to you I am a liberal minded person. I am not them but I accept them. Actually it is they who are liberal minded. They have accepted me, in spite of letting them down so badly. I deny them in public, but I want their love in private. I have never told anyone in so many words, what I am telling you now- I am a gay man. Everyone believes me to be the model middle class Indian man. I was chosen for the part or the serial because, I fit into a common perception of what a family man ought to look like. I believed in it myself. I lied to myself first And I continue to lie to millions of people every week on Thursday nights. There’s no such person.” 14

When the guard comes into the room with the photograph of Ed/ Prakash and Kamlesh in very compromising pose he shouts at them saying,

Guard: Aap log apna kam sari duniya ko batana chahte hai kya? Apka woh photo Baraat wale ke compound me gira. Sab bachhe dekh rahe the. Sab hus rahe the. Aur phir badon ne bhi dekh liya .. Sab
Sharad: They can't do us harm any more than the harm we do each other. 15

The photograph makes Kiran rethink about her decision to marry Ed.

Kiran: Get out of here, Ed. Before you leave Ed. I think you ought to know........ .. The photograph-it was found by the, ...watchman ... The photograph fell into the compound of the bridegroom’s house. The children found it first ......... One of them showed it to their father.. The father showed it to the other men .. ... and women. They were talking about it.. Tomorrow they will complaint to the secretary

Ed: It-it is not my flat. I don’t know anyone in this building.

Kiran: Ah.. But they know you. Just think. Somewhere, sometime you will meet someone at a party who might say- “you look Familiar.” And Every time you hear that your heart will beat little faster, your feet will grow cold. Has this person seen this picture? Does this person know who I really aim? Does he see a side of me I don’t want him to see? 16

They come to realize as Kamlesh feels

“I would never be happy as a gay man. It is impossible to change society, but it may be possible for you to reorient yourself.” 17

They feel that it is possible to become heterosexual from a homo because it has been done before as Sharad decides: ...
“Being a heterosexual man-a real man, as Ed put it- I get everything. I get to be accepted-accepted by whom-well. 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. Then why should I want to give it all up? So what if I have changed a little? If I can be a real man I can be a king. Look at all the kings around you. Look at all the male power they enjoy, thrusting themselves on to the world ... Power with sex. Power with muscle. Power with size. Firing rockets, exploding nuclear bombs. If you can do it in five times. I can do it six times all that stuff Power man Power. 18

The play offers multifarious insight to the life of the gay people. One does not know what the issues Dattani will explore in future, where versions of our world will be pinpointed with his unerring vision, as Naik notes:

”Contemporary in time and spirit alive to the pressures of the present and eminently stage worthy, Dattani’s plays squarely give the lie to the popular notion that indian drama at best are only a hot house plant.”19

This play bears the stamp of great craftsmanship. It deals with the gay themes of love, homosexual vulgarity among the youths in a materialistic world, partnership, trust and betrayal. Almost all the characters of this play are types of certain behavior which remind us of most of the Restoration plays and sentimental comedies specially Sheridan's ‘The Rivals’ and 'The School for Scandal'. The drama also contains some powerful symbols, images and stage direction which cannot help without arousing aestheticism and rich poetry. The enigma of the photograph containing vulgar portraits draws the readers into the vortex of suspense. The past relationship between Kamlesh and Prakash and the new romance between Ed (who is nobody else but Prakash) are masterly and beautifully counterpoised. In Sheridan's The Rivals, the hero, captain Absolute disguised the name as Baverley, similarly here Ed and Prakash are the same person. The disguise creates suspense and draws astonishment from audience. Regarding the dramatic technique and thematic aspects of the play, John McRae observes:
Each act builds to a climax of revelations and self discoveries. By the end of the play, Ed is seen as the most pathetic and self deluding of all the characters, but Kamlesh too deceive; himself and exploits others (The Guard. for example). The photo of Ed and Kamlesh together becomes emblematic (again a typical Dattani touch) of all that was good in their love. But which has now turned, or been turned against that love. 20

If we minutely judge the various layers of the characters of this play, we notice that Sharad and Deepali are very comfortable with their sexuality. Sharad is a camp who behaves and dresses in an exaggerated and affected way. He is a bit flaunting too. On the other hand Deepali is just the otherwise. All the characters are brought together in such a way as to a result;

“the audience must go through the cathartic emotions of terror and pity as the characters’ masks fall, their emotion unravel and their lives disintegrate.” Mc. Rae, John: A Note on the play “On a Muggy Night in Mumbai” 21

The atmosphere is unpleasantly warm, damp anti clammy and it makes feel uncomfortable or tired. As a matter of fact all the characters are feeling ill at ease and they want to set themselves free from suffocation, frustration and isolation. Though they look very nice outwardly, yet inwardly they are hollow and very tired. Ed, in the long run, attains his tragic grandeur introspecting his life and in expressing his desire to live:

Sharad: (runs to the door and yells out). Guard!
Guard! For God's sake somebody help!
Kiran: Somebody save him! He will kill my "brother! No!
Ed: (hints out al Kamlesh. crying with anger).
Faggot! Pansy! Gandu! Gandu!
Sharad: (screaming). guardaard!
Ed: (looks at !Gran). I am.... sorry. I didn't mean to
harm you. I only wanted to live. 22

At another place Ed repeats his desire to live--to live a life of an ideal social being free from to
be corruption of private life. He says:

Where do I begin? How do I begin to live? ... Will
you help me? What makes a man a man? 23

The play ends with the self discovery of Sharad:

I ask myself what have I got and what I am and
what I'm not? 24

Actually this is the mystery, the mystery of man's hidden nature which the author wants to dig
out through characterization. It seems to suggest the 'explosion of one's self.' As the drama runs,
the characters are seen unmasking their hidden selves are one. And their explosion of the self is
beautifully suggested. In the end all characters come out with their true pictures. The nature
accompanied by coloured lights, yells and screams enhance the symbolic effect and suggest
tacitly the fuss and commotion of the inner heart of the characters.

To expand the horizon of theatre by introducing the issues that are deemed to be taboos, has been
a distinctive effort of Dattani in the realm of Indian English drama. He has tried to explore new
possibilities in Indian theatre where each and every human experience beyond the restraints of
principle wants strong dramatic situations. To break sections and to show man's continuous
struggle inner self, confronting with socio-ethical limits make a specific strain in his dramatic art.
In the traditional society of India, the identity of gays, lesbians and homosexuals has not yet been
recognized and they are left to lead a secluded life in their claustrophobic individual spaces.
Dattani dramatizes the crisis of those relationships that are not rigidly demarcated in terms of socially accepted gender constructions. Whether the person is female, or male, or gay or lesbian, the gender is always discriminated. He admits,

“I have found out that sexuality can’t be straitjacketed or compartmentalized. They are varying degrees of love and bonding one feels for another person irrespective of gender.”25

Dattani in On a Muggy Night in Mumbai investigates how the human aspirations are insignificant in contrast of social faiths. Society is traditional when it is in favour of one but becomes modern means vice versa. History is a witness to the fact that the invisible clutches of social forces can never permit an individual to carve his own designs beyond the patterns recommended and accepted by society.

“You love, talk about feminism because in a way that is accepted. But you can’t talk about gay issues because that's not Indian. That doesn't happen here. You can't talk about a middle class housewife fantasizing about having sex with a cook or actually having a sex life-that isn’t Indian either—that’s confrontational even if it is Indian. 26

For Dattani, realization of relationship and reliance on Social norms are two distinctive facets of human an experience. Human psyche sustains its own autonomy of perceptions and reactions and subsequently the matrix of them cannot be calculated in terms of pre-organized and pre-calculated mechanism of human behaviour. The radical changes in life conditions opened new possibilities of human experiences. In one of his interview, he accepted,

“It is to do with perceptions. I don't mean to say that this is a definite view of life. But several of
images that we carry around in our minds are politically generated images and we accept them to be true. However, I don't think so and my characters are simply personifications of perceptions.”

Sexual desire in spite of being related with instinctive behaviour, are controlled by the canons of morality. It is often linked with procreation process and therefore, heterosexuality is the only possible mode of the acceptance of man and woman relationship. Heterosexuality has been treated as the 'norm' and homosexuality has been shunned as 'deviant', perversion and even criminal. Politically, the community of gay and Lesbians is marginalized. Marginalization, victimization, self torture, guilt and resistance against the social traditions constitute the spectrum of the existence of gays. They suffer under the pressure of the loss of identity along with external sense of guilt. Judith Butler in her famous studies Gender Trouble (1990) and Bodies That Matter (1993), has interrogated on the question of identity. He has focused on the modes of representation of gay/lesbians, identity and the identity of difference. Butlger, the theorist of gays suggests that

“the issue is not of avowing or disavowing the category of gays.”

He advises to specify the true determinant of the meaning of sexuality itself whether it means anatomy, the actual at of sex, the phantasy structure or the gender. He asserts that gay/lesbian theory seeks to elucidate the specificity of lesbian experience and Lesbian sexuality. He further argues that lesbian sexuality is a process that rein scribe the power domain it resists.

“Homosexuality is always present within the construction of heterosexuality itself and unless the notion of self is.”
There can be no 'heterosexual' at all. Homosexuality is a state of mind where individual asserts to protest against sex-binary existing in the social order. This reminds the poem of T. S. Eliot’s *The Westland* in which a greek mythology character is a bisexual who is cursed for enjoying both the gender sex. In heterosexual relations, on several occasions, there is a tendency towards the domination, torture and empowerment of 'other'. Adrienne Rich argues "Compulsory heterosexuality" is “political institution” that only ensures a woman's continued subordination because it privileges man’s needs and choices.

The concept of homosexuality involves the four 'dimensions of thought-biological, social, moral and psychological. It has been explained,

“on a more personal level, however, the term 'gay'
also brought with it an increasingly wide spread
reference to sexuality as a quality or property of the
'self'. A person has a sexuality, gay or otherwise,
which can be reflexibly grasped, interrogated and
developed” 30

The basic idea of homosexuality is against the nature instinctive behaviour. It is deemed unethical. Homosexuality is guilt and heterosexuality is ideal. It results in terrible anguish and suffering. It represents conflict between internal creative principle and social compulsive forces and it subsequently results in the strong upheaval of human emotions, appropriate to move the theatre with extreme flow of human energy. To represent the idea of 'gay culture' in theatre according to traditional stage mechanism are not suitable. There is a quick succession of shifting in external and internal zones, between logical and illogical behaviour, between social taboo and psychological compulsions.

The play on *a Muggy Night* in a Mumbai, that was later on transcripted into a screen play, produced by Sanjeev Shah, is the voice of Dattani on the prohibited issue of homosexuality and alternate sexuality. The concern for the 'gays' is a radical issue and to bring it to the stage in the value oriented society of India came as a challenge both to the director and the producer. The
play is targeted at urban audience since it is all about urban life gay/lesbian relationship is the luxury of higher society of metropolitans. Dattani admits that he has no avert agenda/message in the movie- only an exploration of relationships that is necessarily suspected by social givens.

“I am not sure whether audience acceptance of movie should be a form of censorship on creativity. In any case, being gay or lesbian is not right or wrong. It is reality and we have learnt to accept alternate relationship and live with them.”

Dattani proceeds with the faith that in changing social conditions, same sex love and bonding need not necessarily be sexual alone.

‘There are grey areas in people's relationship with other's too, and through my film, I have brought then to notice.”

In such a view of radical relationship lies the relevance of the film Mango Souffle, the screen version of On a Muggy Night in Mumbai. It is the first celebrated Indian film to address homosexuality, addressing gay issues within the territorially distinct identity of its subject. The play "A Muggy Night in Mumbai begins with a shocking start where a middle aged security guard is being paid for sex. The action takes place in the living room of Kamlesh, a fashion designer living in Mumbai. In the company of some of his friends, he confesses that he is still in love with Prakash, who was also a gay. By now Prakash has got rid of his obsession of homosexuality and is planning his marriage with Kiran, the sister of Kamlesh. The patty arranged by Kamlesh exposes the varied experiences of homosexual community. Sharad, an enthusiastic type of fellow does not care how world reacts to his being gay. His companion Bunny the antithesis of Sharad, plays a double role. Their friend Deepali, in spite of being a lesbian, is sensitive enough to sustain her female identity. In the very beginning, the desperate attempt of Kamlesh to try out different clothes on Kiran and changing her hair style is suggestive how unconsciously he tries to search out something that is beyond external bonding. As soon as Prakash who is also known as 'Ed', gets involve with Kiran in dance, Kamlesh finds himself
restless and to avoid the situation he drives through the busy streets of Bangalore till he comes to a silent road and finally to a family Farm House. He finally comes to a Mango Groove. The three situations—the party, the solitary family farm house and mango groove prepare a compact but tense background to expose the mental condition of Kamlesh. 'Party' is the manifestation of social life, 'Family Farm House' stands for private spaces and 'Mango groove' represents the power of passion. Mango, a fruit of passion, in the season of summer, becomes a symbol of the psycho-biological conditions of Kamlesh. His act of watching 'Mango groove' is an erratic behaviour, broken sentences, uncertain comments vivify the emotional crisis of Kamlesh. He is struggling against something beyond his control. Sharad is gay but is helpless to have an insight into the agony of Kamlesh. In order to catch his conscience, Sharad quotes the name of Prakash and Kamlesh immediately excites and becomes aggressive,

"How dare you bring that up." Simultaneously, Sharad also clarifies his own position, "you know I still love you." Kamlesh out of the considerations of the sentiments of her sister, makes desperate efforts to suppress his love for Prakash but Sharad makes an open confession, "you could never love anyone because you are still in love with Prakash." In this process of suppression, Kamlesh terribly suffers and reduces to the position of a miserable creature, weak and helpless. For him the only possible remedy to get rid of his obsession is to seek shelter in the company of Sharad. To resist his passion of Prakash, is beyond his control. “I still need you to help him.” Both Kamlesh and Sharad, are susceptible to homosexuality but Sharad is more sane and rational. He has a perfect realization of the fact that Kamlesh has lost control over his decisions and he can never be a substitute of Prakash. He has no conscious choices and the entire self is governed by the 'pleasure principle', and is at a perpetual war with the social forces. Sharad tries to make him realize his own position; I don't think you will ever succeed. He will keep cropping up in your life-like herpes.

Dattani makes a suggestive experiment with his dramatic art to explore the hidden recesses of human consciousness and here he has achieved the target of universality. Time and conditions may change but the realization of life beyond consciousness is comprehensive, hence, it is external and timeless. Dattani maintains an exceptional dexterity in unfolding the layers of human consciousness on the issues that are buried in perpetual silence. Kamlesh on the
instigation of Sharad gets confidence to admit that his relationship with Prakash has been without sexual desires. He makes all heterosexual.

Kamlesh is caught in the web of self guilt and self desires. He adopts the mechanism of 'escape' to avoid the horrors of the situation. As soon as Deepali asks, "What is bothering you", he makes no response. In spite of his personal desires, he has no power to spoil the life of her own sister Kiran. In contrast of him, Deepali also, in spite of being a lesbian acknowledges the importance of marriage and sexual relationship in man and woman relationship. She looks at him, *If we were both heterosexual we would be married.*

Dattani confirms that gays/lesbians have their concept of sexual relationship but they can't escape the need of sexual differences determined by nature. The pivot of drama *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* moves between bisexual and socio-cultural dilemma of the life of homosexuals. Deepali is procured of her feminity and accepts with dignity, *I thank God. Every time I menstruate, I thank God, I am a woman*

Sharad also expresses the identical sentiments, "Every time I menstruate I thank God, I am not pregnant. The reactions of Shard and Deepali in contrast of all absorbing passion of Kamlesh, evinces that homosexuality is a passion beyond the natural scheme of things. In the life of Kamlesh, it is an all absorbing passion but he has no confidence to admit the secret of his relationship openly.

In *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, Dattani traces the concept of homosexuality and also tries to explore how far it modifies the personality of an individual. Sharad wants to help Kamlesh by destroying all photographs and letters; related with the memory of Prakash. However, he snatches one of the photographs and enjoys the sexual warmth in the relationship of Kamlesh and Prakash, *It is an interesting picture, cheek to cheek, pelvis to pelvis. Naked ....*

He directs this photograph to Kamlesh. It is his unconscious device to make him sexually excited to judge how far Kamlesh can balance himself. Sharad and his friends, suggest Kamlesh to perform symbolic funeral by burning photographs. The scene, in which they perform it, becomes a bit absurd after this scene, the entry of Kiran in all her enthusiasm for the companionship of
Prakash, again makes Kamlesh restless. Her anxiety to introduce Prakash to Kamlesh as her lover is a highly sensational situation. To explore the possibility of such situation that involve the upheaval of the entire emotional balance of character brings Dattani in the range of the celebrated world dramatists like Shakespeare, Webster, Osborn and O'Neill. As soon as Kiran formerly introduces Prakash, "meet my fiance", Kamlesh is frozen. Such sensational situation in drama fills the stage with force. Dattani intends to establish that the subjects like homosexuality, an, rooted in human psyche. In the life of Kamlesh, it as an irresistible passion; that drags him to all erroneous judgments. There are several situations in the play that can illustrate the emotional crisis of Kamlesh. In the first place, the pain is intense when Sharad arranges the rituals burn all photographs and associated memories but secretly, he holds one of the photograph. Similarly, when Prakash and Kiran are busy in dance, Kamlesh desperately chasses Prakash. When Prakash was sitting on the park bench looking around, a shadow moved around him, Prakash identified him as Kamlesh.

Dattani takes uncompromising pains, to establish appropriate bonds between audience and actors, text and performance. The script is the basic element of the play but the dramatic masterpiece remains incomplete without performance. Even the semiotics of drama reconciles itself to the text/performance inter-textuality. Anne Ubserfield refers to the written text as one that

"has 'holes' to be later filled by the performance

text."33

In On a Muggy Night in Mumbai the dramatist to keep with the flux of consciousness, the past and present, social and personal, self desire and social commitments has projected through inadequate responses of Prakash and Kamlesh. The consciousness of Kamlesh flashes back, Kamlesh and Prakash swimming, Prakash drops his cross in the pool and Kamlesh follows. Him and rationalizes his instinctive infatuation for Kamlesh, Kamlesh: I can never forget what you did for me. You were there for me when I needed someone But ... Kamlesh I am "not gay

He avoids Kamlesh to come out of that filth. But Kamlesh is almost broken and distorted, Ed, you led me on! You made me believe you were gay! I need you, Ed I love you".
Bunny, another friend of Kamlesh, advises him to balance himself with having a nice wife and sex relations with her. Kiran is every lime anxious for the happiness of Kamlesh. She requests Prakash,  
*I wish we could help him, somehow, I wish he would be as happy as we are.*  
In the meanwhile tile single photograph preserved by Kamlesh comes in the hands of Kiran. She is almost frozen. Kiran turns out Prakash with the contemptuous remark, “*you tried but not thank you.*” She throws the challenge; can Ed face the society, the parents and family after the revelation of his identity as gay? Though he outwardly says, “*It does not matter what they think of me.*” However, such a confession is easy to admit but difficult to face. It was radical on the part of dramatist to introduce an issue in theatre that is usually treated as 'taboo' in Indian theatre. Besides, the unconventional language experiment with the reactions and responses of the audience; makes the play exceptional in theme and technique. The whole presentation is arranged in such a manner that homosexuality instead of being recognized as taboo has become a natural human experience.

Dattani’s concern for homosexuals with the hidden agenda for getting the social approval for taboo relationship has further been a motif in the play *Do the Needful*. In both these plays dramatist while expressing his sympathy for gays who are not morally degraded but mentally sick, exposes their struggle with, their own selves. The possibility of the shared spaces common to women and homosexuals, is put common oppressor is the patriarchal structure not to allow any space for the growth of individual beyond a set pattern of gender determined roles.

The play begins with conversation between Kamlesh and the guard. Kamlesh has invited his friends to treat his depression without informing the reason. So he sends the guard for purchasing refreshment. Instead of using English version, Dattani resorts to transliteration of Hindi utterances.

*Kamlesh: (Takes out some more money from his wallet) Mere kuch dost ane wale hain. Tum unko aane dena. Tum to pechante ho sub ko.*
Prakash and Kamlesh were deeply in love with each other. The separation between Prakash and Kamlesh causes great pain and distress in the heart and mind of Kamlesh more. Thereafter, he comes in contact with Sharad and develops Homeric relationship with him. However, Kamlesh can’t fiddle with himself with Sharad as he is hunted by the memories of Prakash who is now known as Ed and intends to marry divorcee sister of Kamlesh, Kiran. Bunny is doing role of husband/ father in Yeh Hai Hamara Parivaar.

The play is full of suspense and confessions. Every act functions as the climax which shows individual text with rising action. At the end of the play, all the characters are focused as per their right psychological characteristics and dilemma. The dramatic technique of Dattani helps them in their self-evolutions, self discoveries, self-expression, self-assertion, of their personalities wrapped in various garbs and garments with different masks. Unity in diversity is the eye catching characteristic of Indian culture. Despite its diversity, there is oneness that binds them in a single group. Unity in diversity is the main train to Indian culture. Dattani observes: I am certain that my plays are true reflection of my time, place and socio economic background. I am hugely excited and curious to know what the future holds for me and my art in the new millennium in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally.

The play appears as the challenge to the accepted and established rules of love and marriage of our society. If sex is associated with biological insight, love is connected with the chemistry of human mind. Society has developed its mechanism for controlling sexual expression of human beings aiming at production. One can satisfy his / her sexual desires with the person belong to the opposite sex. But one can’t do the same with the person belonging to the same sex. But every person his / her individual self to do things in his/her own way. So, they deviate from the path paved by the society and take recourse to unconventional way. Dattani, being keen observer of this, depicts individual’s choice of fulfilling the desire of love and sex in his/her own way. Much of ‘mainstream’ society, Dattani believes, lives in a state of ‘forced harmony’, out of 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 society, little spaces to which the marginalized are pushed.
Dattani’s plays foreground such characters and implant them with courage to speak before the public. By doing so, he wants to negotiate the issue with the society. 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 TV 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.

Dattani dramatizes dynamics of individuals’ ways of gratifying carnival desire with a little humourist approach. Dattani provides free air of expressions to the homosexuals.

*Kamlesh: I wanted to love you, I tried for a whole year.*

Sharad: But you couldn’t

Kamlesh: I do love you.

Sharad: Oh! Spare me the lies!

You could never love anyone because you are still in love with Prakash! 35

Thus, Kamlesh’s love for Prakash is quite strong and unceasing. It shocks us that gays also have strong bond of love and affection like heterosexuals. Prakash has deserted Kamlesh and decided to be heterosexual. Now he is known as Ed. Arrival of Kiran adds more tension in the atmosphere. She doesn’t know past relationship between his brother, Kamlesh and her fiancé, Prakash. She feels sorry for her brother’s conflicts and suffering. Nobody knows that Ed and Prakash is the same person barring Kamlesh. When Kiran speaks his full name as Edwin Prakash Methew, everybody is taken aback to know that Prakash is now flirting with Kiran. So they feel that they should inform Kiran about the past affiliation between Prakash and Kamlesh. However Kamlesh denies revealing this secret before her. The first act ends exposing real identity of Ed/Prakash. It sets forth actions of the play in new directions. One can say that play passes from one climax to another.
It should be noted that gay/lesbian relationship is also possessive and demanding. They also demand dedication and faithfulness to their relationship and can’t bear breach of trust and confidence. Kamlesh undergoes acute pain and suffering because of Prakash’s betrayal. He doesn’t want to come into the way of happiness of his sister Kiran. Therefore, he doesn’t want to reveal truth before her sister. Moreover, his sister has past bad experience of her first marriage. She barely survives out of that pain and suffering. The play maps the gray areas of society which forbids love and sex relationship between two people of same genders. The play focuses on conflicts and desires of the gay/lesbian relationship in our country. It is revealed that this soil is not comfortable with gay/lesbian relationship. So there are two ways before them- either they can hide themselves into heterosexual garb or they leave the county for the west. Bunny and Ranjit are the fine example of this.

Kamlesh has become nostalgic regarding his erstwhile love affair with Prakash and has plunged into sorrow and misery. He told a lie to Sharad that he has torn all photographs. Actually, he has kept one secretly. All the photographs were not torn but sent to Prakash keeping one with him. Now he brings out that photograph contains images of Kamlesh and Prakash holding each other tightly. He wants to overcome from this sadness. Therefore, he requested his friends to show him the proper remedy of his illness. Kamlesh is caught up into the frustration and anger resulting from the separation from Prakash. He is forlorn and frightened. He had also approached the psychiatrist to cope up with illness and anguish. But nothing could help him coming out of it. He ventilates his feelings in the following way.

_Kamlesh: I knew I needed medication. I chose the psychiatrist out of the yellow pages. He pretended to understand. Until he began to tell me about aversion therapy. For a while, I believed him. Because the medication helped me cope with my depression better. Until he said I would never be happy as a gay man. It is impossible to change_
society, he said, but it may be possible for you to reorient yourself. 36

On the contrary, Bunny is a gay in disguise. He is married and well set. He thinks that Kamlesh is unnecessarily bothering all these. Therefore, he advises Kamlesh to get married with a woman and continue to his feeling as a gay.

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. 37

What is very fascinating about the play is bold and frank treatment to gay theme given by Dattani. Depiction of gay theme calls for guts and courage on the part of the dramatist. Dattani handles this post modernistic issue in a very daring way. He puts the whole issue in a very dynamic way. He has instilled courage and the spirit into the minds of his characters that they can openly reveal their gay identity. They don’t bother for the society’s aversion and reaction. He has put a outstanding recipe of a social disorder in a small pot.

Kamlesh: Let them talk! If two men want to love one another, what’s the harm? 38

They are so absorbed with their conviction and commitment that they even dare to leave county or keeping their gay relation and identity intact and safe.

Ranjit: Call me what you will. My English lover and I have been together for twelve years now. You lot will never be able to find a lover in this wretched country! 39

Deepali is the most beautifully drawn character in the play. She asserts, “I am all for the gay men’s cause. Men deserve only men!” 40
She is also very bold and enticing lesbian person. She is quite faithful and content with her lesbian relationship. She is enraged to know various moods and opinions of homosexuals. Therefore she says “Tina and I can tell all of you to go jump!”

Actions of the play are energized with the process of exorcising Kamlesh’s mind from the Prakash’s thoughts. Everybody suggests his/her opinion regarding freeing Kamlesh from depression. Sharad shows the photograph. Everybody is eager to have a look. Sharad describes the picture as, “Cheek to cheek, pelvis to pelvis naked”

Kamlesh forbids him of showing it to other. Ultimately all have had a look at it. Kamlesh gets hold of portrait and stands by the window. Sharad suggests having a little ritual. Ranjit also supports his view of doing ritual.

Sharad: Why not? The whole heterosexual world is run by rituals? That wedding down stair will go on for days!

The dramatist tries to show how gay people behave and act under the pressure of traditional culture consciousness which forbids them indulging in it. The scene in which Kamlesh performs rituals to get rid of Kamlesh’s memory by destroying photograph is highly dramatic and amusing too. The scene also lay bares the internal and psychological vacillation of Kamlesh’s mind. He is greatly encouraged by his friends to destroy the portrait- the last sign of his past relationship with Prakash. However, he hesitates to do it. As this juncture of action, the arrival of Kiran aggravates his mental conflicts and diverts the action. Now Prakash is a lover of his sister Kiran. So he feels acute pain and dilemma. Kiran is eager to introduce her fiancé Ed and her desire to share her views with others is exceedingly thrilling and sensational. Very few dramatists like Dattani can invest and explore such scene which creates emotional tension and turmoil in the mind of the character. Dattani has both dramatic guts and ability to handle such complex situation which places him in the row of playwrights of international repute like Shakespeare, Osborn and so on. It shocks every one that Kamlesh has approved and encouraged the relationship between Kiran
and Prakash. He has sacrificed his feelings for his sister. Everybody is puzzled as how to reveal truth before Kiran. Deepali is very keen to disclose the truth to Kiran by showing the photograph of Kamlesh and Prakash. Bunny objects her idea saying that she is creating trouble where there is no trouble. Deepali is firm in her view.

*Deepali: She must know the truth! She thinks she is marrying someone who loves her very much.*

Bunny pleads that he loves his wife and cares for her very much. She is quite content and boasts about his work to all their neighbours. He is giving much more happiness than another heterosexual man. His children and his wife love him very much. But Deepali thinks that he cannot love his wife with the same intensity with which he can love a man. Kamlesh is also unwilling to disclose the truth. He says that Prakash has changed to become heterosexual.

*Kamlesh: He 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.*

*Sharad: Now the devil has put him on to your sister. I'll tell you what. Show her the photograph. Let her know who the devil is.*

The third act begins with the lights fade in on the living room of Kamlesh. The homosexuals express their displeasure to the raucous tunes and lusty cries of the *Baraat*. Ranjit shuts the window to faint the hooting and whistling of the wedding party. The dramatist depicts the twin issues of gender and alternate sexuality in this play. *The gay matter in On a Muggy Night in Mumbai is most pervasive, and while the treatment is radical the denouement is abrasive. Two contrastive scenarios are conceived to offset each other. In one, Ed, the gay man breaks down after assaulting his male partner Kamlesh following the disclosure of their relation from a just recovered tell tale clandestine photograph and in the other the air of celebration prevails sound*
of bursting fire crackers and lusty yells is heard from the wedding below. This contrastive juxtaposition is a clever dramatic device of Dattani to focus on the in fructuous

The dramatist discusses the issue of conversion of homosexual to heterosexual with socio-psychological ground. The play raises a question. Can a gay be a ‘strait’? The play also discusses on the issue of marriage – both conventional and unconventional between the gays. Through the character of Kiran, the dramatist presents bad consequences of conventional marriage. Then the question arises is who is happy? Bunny is a gay. He has married a woman and has children. He thinks that his wife and children are quite happy and love him. Moreover, all the characters present over there are gays. So they don’t understand the importance and necessity of conventional marriage. Of course, Ed has changed from gay to straight. So he sees the wedding in the different way.

Ed: Look around you. Look outside. (Goes to the window and flings it open.) Look at that wedding crowd! There are real men and women out there! You have to see them to know what I mean. But you don’t want to. You don’t want to look at the world own little bubble. 46

While mapping the space for the homosexual, Dattani also throws some light on the heterosexuals especially who undergo bitter experience of marriage. Kiran is tortured and troubled by her earlier husband and how she falls into the scheme of her lover Ed. She is subjected to mental anguish and pain after knowing past relationship between her lover and brother. Her future course of action is quite uncertain and unpredictable. The homosexuals of the play can also be compartmentalized into three categories. Some homo/lesbians are trying to be straight and some of them are bi-sexual, T.S.Eliot whereas some others are content with their present identity as a ‘pure gay’. Deepali is one such character who is quite satisfied as a gay person. The dramatist problematizes the whole issue of gay relationship and analyzes the world of gay people expecting public participation on the problem under discussion. The play presents the deception and betrayal prevailing in the world of the gays. The dramatist unveils deceptions and trick covered into hypocrisy. For the fault is not just the characters’ – it is everyone’s, in a society which not only condones but encourages hypocrisy, which demands deceit and negation, rather than allowing self-expression, responsibility and dignity.
It is pertinent to note that despite gays, they are bold and self-expressive. They also realize the importance of heterosexual man and the power they exercise. They consider them real man-woman. The homosexual wants to be powerful and commanding like the man-real man of society. They want to belong to the world of real man and woman. That is why Sharad wants to be straight. Different characters have different views about the world of real man-woman. At the end of the play, all the characters have made themselves very clear. Each act builds to a climax of revelations and self discoveries. By the end of the play, Ed is seen as the most pathetic and self deluding of all the characters but Kamlesh too deceives himself and exploits others. (For example, the guard.) The photo of Ed and Kamlesh together becomes emblematic (again a typical Dattani touch) of all that was good in their love, but which has now turned or been turned against that love. The instructive wedding music becomes the accompaniment to a dance of death indoors – and the audience must go through the classic cathartic emotions of terror and pity as the characters’ masks full, their emotions unravel and their lives.

The secret of Kamlesh-Prakash gay love is exposed providing a great shock to Kiran. Once again, Kiran’s life is filled with misery and malady. She is compelled to leave Ed forever. She is infuriated and anguished upon her brother Kamlesh who deceives her by not telling the truth. All the same, she is to repose trust in him. The end of the play is self revelatory and self expressive as well as self evaluative facilitating the process of self-discovery. They have to know what they have achieved and where they have failed in life.

In this play, Dattani examines the psychology of persons who are by nature, ‘gays’ or ‘bi-sexual’ and the desire on the part of some of them to turn heterosexual. This may seem to be an unusual theme in the Indian context. But in real life such characters do exist. Dattani takes a plunge into the inner recesses of the characters, who desire to be the gay. It appears that the gays are puzzled about their identity in society. If they fulfil longing of being a gay, it will damage their identities and recognition in society which disapprove gay relationship and promotes marriage between heterosexual. Their sexuality is endangered and engulfed by the rules and regulation of the society. They know tow before the unwritten laws of society. Torn between longing and identity, characters try to find out other alternatives. The clash results from their contradictory nature with
culture of society in which they belong to. *There is a binary opposition between their nature and the culture of their society. This dichotomy between nature and culture obstructs their love and poisons their minds. The note of revolt against the society is unmistakable. In the page of globalization, nature triumphs over culture.*

Dattani is very dexterous in symbolic presentation. There are two worlds in the play- the world of heterosexual and world of homosexuals. They are separated by the window of the Kamlesh’s room. The opening and shutting down of window is very symbolic. The heterosexual are enjoying in light where as homos are forced to confine in the darkness. They see the world of heterosexuals through the window. Mrs. Merchant’s affair and ‘barat’ are visible when window is opened. It means that they are sharing light where as the homos are sharing the darkness. That’s why Kamlesh doesn’t like to keep window open. He also doesn’t like Sharad’s looking out through window. Being asked homosexualism or lesbianism, Dattani replies: *It is natural although it is not the norm in any of the species. It is like being left-handed in a predominantly right-handed world.*

In this way, Dattani is convinced that gay relationship is not something that is called abnormal or disgusting. It occupies little space, but it does exist in a normal way. It is common knowledge to put that there are so many people in our society who are pursuing sexual pleasure with the partners of their same sex. It doesn’t create much hustle and bustle in society. But here, the play depicts the issue of love marriage between same sex persons and breach of the relationship. So it generates turbulence and tension. Is our society is ready to go through such literature or ready to share the knowledge.

The play also provides fine platform for the discussion on general belief or concept of ‘man’. The play ends with Sharad singing a song

*“What makes A Man A Man?”* 47.

This is the stroke of Dattani’s dramatic technique. He dramatically mingle the issue of self-identity with the issue of gay love and same sex-marriage. It lends an extra load and pressure to
the play and also philosophizes the whole discussion. Dattani is true dramatic genius who voids the variation between the paper script and performance creating the voice of the subordinate colonized sections of our society. He has an awareness and also ability to look into the invisible or taboo issue wrapped in web of hypocrisy and tradition. The gay are torn between social tradition and individual’s choice of sexual pleasure. He has prepared stage considering mental spaces of the characters of the play. His innovative stage technique is so effective that his encoded text message ceases to be self-reflective. *His use of stage craft is extremely intricate and it makes the text echoing multiple connotations. For dramatic representation is neither a matter of the description nor of presentation but it is a matter of evocation. It is only with appropriate performance that the experience becomes vital.*

Our society has exclusively promoted heterosexual relationship as the prime mode of sexual expression, as it is only means of survival human race on the earth. So gay relationship has been greatly discouraged and looked upon as an act of contempt and disgust since time immemorial. Dattani’s plays come as a challenge to our conservative Indian society. It strikes at the root of concept of continuity of civilization through the promotion of idea of centrality of heterosexual relationship in society, where the gays are subjected to exclusion and contempt. The play presents struggle and repulsions of the gays against the backdrop of the culture which bans on gay relationship. Longing for social approval and freedom is lurking in the hearts of the most of the characters. Non corresponding nature of the character with society is the under prevailing heat of the muggy night. The dramatist shows societal self and individual self at conflict. Here heat signifies the conflict prevailing in the minds of the characters. It is observed: *For the Indian male, fear of losing his identity could be the prime reason for clinging onto regressive role-playing.*

Refusal of social approval and conversion into a strait is at the centre of their discussion and deliberation. While commenting on the *Mango Soufflé*, film adaption of the play Muggy Night in Mumbai, Dattani puts: *There are grey areas in people’s relationship with others too, and through my film, I have brought them to notice.*

The characters are sick and depressed but they are not crippled ethically. They are struggling to cater their own needs and necessity. The social rules and regulations are in their way of
fulfilment of their desires. It is observed: In both these plays, *(On a Muggy Night in Mumbai and Do Needful)*, the dramatist while expressing his sympathy for gays who are not morally degraded but mentally sick, expose their struggle with their own inner selves. The possibility of the shared spaces common to women and homosexual is put to active use here with the identities of its protagonists. The common oppressor is the patriarchal structure that refuses to allow any space for the growth of individual beyond a set pattern of gender determine.

The characters suffer due to accepted norms of sexual expression. Heterosexuality is a rule and homosexuality is deemed to be an act of trespassing or ethical pervasion. The resistance against this value generates conflicts leading to emotional crisis in the lives of characters. It is explained, on a more personal level, however, the term ‘gay’ also brought with it and in creakingly wide spread reference to sexuality as a quality or property of the self: A person ‘has’ a sexuality, gay or otherwise, which can be reflexibly grasped, interrogated and developed.

Dattani’s dramatic genius is so innovative and radical that he can depict excluded and forbidden issues very successfully. He observes that there are certain issues which die in the minds of the persons. The gay desire is lying in the human psyche and is very essential to deal with in a proper way.

The theme of homosexuality usually Indian literature has ignored. It has been almost a taboo. Often writers have shown guts to suggest male homosexuality indirectly. About lesbian relationship they are less covert. But probably none has been forthright in perceiving the reality of it clear-sightedly and taking it up for literary treatment except Dattani. The dramatist views the phenomenon from all possible angles of vision in this play. Can such love be regarded as sufficient in itself? Or has it to be an additional luxury for a heterosexually married person? Should partners of it live together in full view of society or they should they love stealthily only? Should such relationship be recognized as legally valid? Could it be turned into a regular marriage? These are a few questions Dattani asks and finds the answers.

The dramatist starts the action which is embarking on the journey of the contributorship regarding gay psychology. The dramatist sees clearly that the homosexually inclined people
often hate themselves and live in chunk of shamed secrecy. Often they commit suicide as their passion cannot be satisfied openly or because they cannot bear other people's attitude of hate towards them. Their families frequently react with disgust born of ignorance and blame themselves as failures. The pain of their deviant sexuality has been completely ignored by most political parties and social activists. That is why: Dattani who regards literature *On A Muggy Night in Mumbai* as a form of action, as a means of realizing existential 'engagement' with the problems of the times, is determined to articulate and assuage it. Dattani has problematized traditionally received view of genders. The questions like, what constitutes "man" and "woman"? What is their social construct? What is their interrelationship?

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The dramatist sees clearly that the homosexually prejudiced people often abhorrence themselves and live in shamed secrecy. Often they commit suicide as their passion cannot be satisfied openly or because they cannot bear other people's attitude of hate towards them. Their families frequently react with disgust born of ignorance and blame themselves as failures.

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received view of genders. The questions like, what constitutes "man" and "woman" and what is their social construct, what is their interrelationship, why are they separate from each other are very simple questions. But they need not be answered with disinterested spirit of scientific inquiry. There is nothing new about them. But the way they are faced and answered by Dattani is radically different from weak and rather slippery ways of others. Dattani does not simply try to shock in all these he has a sound argument to present.

A reader would feel that he is in a strange world here. It is the world of the gay. Everyone looks for a mate here from his/her own own gender. The following conversation illustrates the motif of the play:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Deepali: If you were a woman, we would be in love.} \\
\text{Kamlesh: If you were-a man, we would be in love.} \\
\text{Deepali: If we were heterosexual, we would be married. 48}
\end{align*}
\]

What Dattani suggests is that love between man and man or between woman and woman is as natural as love persons identical gender happens less frequently than between the persons of opposite sexes, does not make it less natural. In fact, what is unnatural would never happen in natureBut male homosexuality and lesbian relationship; have always happened in nature. Then how could it be called unnatural? What it all boils down to is that lesbians and homosexuals have been always minorities. This does not mean that they are less healthy and wholesome than heterosexuals. Then why should they not be permitted to marry? Mating with social sanction with suitable partner is a basic human right.

It is granted to heterosexuals. Why should it be denied to homosexuals and lesbians? This precisely seems to be the central idea of the play. Modern drama has no heroes. It has no exceptional human beings. It is peopled with average men and women with their ordinary peculiarities. Kamlesh in On A Muggy Night in Mumbai is one such person. He is under authorial microscope. That is, he is the central character in this play. In this limited sense he is the
protagonist: By vocation he is a 'designer'. He is a confirmed homosexual. Act I begins .With this stage direction:

There are two men in the bedroom. : .. Kamlesh is in his dressing gown, smoking a cigarette. Watching the other man dress in a khaki uniform. It is apparent that this man is a security guard. After he is fully dressed; he turns and looks at Kamlesh who is still blowing cigarette smoke and watching with great enjoyment. ... Kamlesh gets up, walks to where his trousers are on the floor. Takes out his wallet and offers a few hundred rupees to the guard. The guard pockets the money, makes a salaam to Kamlesh and steps out of the bedroom into the living room.

It is clearly suggested that the two men had sex in the bedroom. Then the dialogue follows:

Tum, kya ... yeh sab ... paiae ke liye karte ho? 49

To this question of Kamlesh, the Guard replies:

. ... Hahn! Hahn, main paise ke liye hi to karta
hoon sab kuch! . 50

It is clear that the Guard is not telling the whole truth. His words are ironical in tone. No one would do it for money alone. Money might be just an incidental advantage. But it cannot be the principal end. The fact is that the Guard-does it because he likes it. The Secretary of the society is also Kamlesh's partner in homosexuality. Kamlesh tells the Guard:

.He is no different from you. ; . No. He was worse!

51

The scene moves from Kamlesh's house to another place which probably is the airport loaf. Kiran, Kamlesh’s sister arrives. She is "in her mid- or late thirties and is carrying a small travel bag." 52
Her manners suggest that she is a little nervous. She appears to be waiting for Ed with whom she is engaged to be married. Presently Ed arrives. He is

*in his early forties but looks younger 53*

Ed is more assertive. He tries to make Kiran comfortable in every possible way. He assures

*Kiran: Relax, I can take care of you. 54*

Ed's former name is Prakash. He had been Kamlesh's partner in homosexuality. But he is a unwilling gay. He sincerely decides to get rid of his homosexual inclination. He sincerely tries to be straight and so leaves Kamlesh. That is the only reason why Kamlesh shifts from Bangalore to Bombay. Prakash / Ed says:

*“I am not happy with being who I am. And I want to try to be like the rest.” 55*

Kiran knows nothing about Ed's past. She loves him and wants to marry him. Ed, too, at this point looks committed to her. Kamlesh knows this. That is another reason why he tries to forget Prakash.

The scene again shifts to Kamlesh's flat. Kamlesh's torment is just similar of a deserted lover or beloved in heterosexual relationship. He has invited his homosexual friends to help him as to have to get rid of his obsession of Prakash. Sharad arrives first. He is a playful character and provides humour in the play. He loves Kamlesh. But Kamlesh is unable to reciprocate his love:

*Sharad: I knew it within a month of moving in with you ...*
*Kamlesh: I wanted to love you, I tried for a whole year. 56*
Kamlesh, in fact, has used Sharad to fill the vacuum created by Prakash's absence. But unfortunately for Kamlesh, Sharad is incapable of replacing Prakash in an emotional sense. Sharad knows this and cries out in pain:

*Oh! Spare me the lies! You could never love anyone because you are still in love with Prakash!* 57

Sharad says further:

“I wasted a year of my life being a housewife for you and all I get is a kick in the ass! You beast!” 58

Kamlesh, too, knows this. He later confesses in front of his friends:

“I did a cruel thing by loving Sharad to forget Prakash ... 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.” 59

Sharad believes that Kamlesh is not sincere in his efforts to forget Prakash. Kamlesh has carefully preserved his photograph with Prakash. Why does he not part with it? Why does he not throw it away? The fact is that he wants to cherish Prakash's memory instead of effacing it from his mind. His wish to forget Prakash is not genuine in utter despair, Sharad says:

*I don't think you will ever succeed. He will crop up painfully in your life -like herpes.* 60

He is right. Kamlesh's love for Prakash is like an incurable disease. It might temporarily subside. But its eruptions cannot be stopped.

Deepali is one of the invitees. She is friendly to every character. She knows everything of Kamlesh-Prakash-Sharad story. She represents lesbians. Sharad refers to her female sex-partner as “significant other” 61 Her name is Tina. She never appears on the stage. Deepali declares:
I am all for the gay men’s cause. Men deserve only men! 62

While Kamlesh is in the kitchen, Sharad and Deepali find out that Kamlesh has used the Guard also to satisfy his sexual hunger. Deepali does not approve of this kind of promiscuity. She says:

It is a terrible thing you are doing - to yourself. 63

For her, it seems sex must be the climax of love. Kamlesh, on the other hand, loves Prakash who has deserted him, but needs an outlet for the surge of his sexual desire. He can have sex with the man he does not love also. The impression we get is that there is a variety of the gay. For some of them sex can abide only with love. For others there may be sexual commerce even without an emotional tie. Some may be tied emotionally with certain persons and may yet need physical relations with others in the absence of the loved ones.

Then enter Ranjit and Bunny Singh. Ranjit is settled in England, “working with HIV counselors.” 64 The plight of homosexuals in England is much better than that of Indian homosexuals. He says:

My English lover and I have been together for twelve years now. You lot will never be able to find a lover in this wretched country! 65

Bunny Singh is a famous TV actor. When he is entering Kamlesh’s house, people gathered downstairs recognize him and ask for his autograph. They adore him as an ideal Indian hero. His work in the TV serial has projected him as a social reformer. A sort of ‘Shaktiman aura’ seems to surround him in people's view of him. Kiran says:

We need more men like Bunny to make this a better world. 66
But the fact is that Bunny has no courage to spell out his convictions and to plead for his practice. His image is popular, not his real self. The image is acceptable mask. His reality, if known to the world, would cause revulsion in response. Had he been a true reformer, he would have come out with the truth about him, and argued persuasively that the nature of the sexuality had nothing immoral about it. It was just a-moral Kiran does not know that she is praising his mask, but the audience does. That is why there is a sort of dramatic irony in her utterance. But, at the same time, it must be admitted that Bunny Singh is not a complete hypocrite. His mind is torn by a conflict between the desire to be truthful and the need to hide the truth for the fear of social disapprobation. This is clearly expressed when he say's:

Do you think I will be accepted by the millions if I screamed from the rooftops that I am gay. 67

But the truth prevails at last, as we shall see later, when he courageously decides to throw off his mask. Kamlesh has invited all his friends to help him come out of his situation:

You are the only friends I have .... Three years ago, I moved to Bombay not to make it big in the fashion world- although I did, that wasn't my intention. I came here to get over a relationship. A, relationship ... I suppose it was. In Bangalore. We have all been through the pain of separation.... As gay men and women, we have all been through that, I suppose .... Some of us several times. 68

Nobody present here has seen Prakash. Kamlesh left Bangalore because he wanted to forget Prakash. But he could not. Kamlesh thought that he would now live a lonely life:

After Sharad went away - I decided that I didn't really need anyone to live with me. I had my work.
That should have been enough. It wasn't. I felt this void. 69

He was unable to endure loneliness. Only a beloved man could fill his void. But to come out openly as a homosexual would invite social hate, a sort of social ostracisation. That is why, says Kamlesh,

For the first time in my life, I wished I wasn't gay. 70

It is not enough for anyone to live in the company of his wife or husband or lover. The two as one also want to live in a sympathetic social order. This is provided to heterosexual unions and unjustly denied to homosexuals. This is Kamesh's pain. This is everybody’s pain in this drama. The whole play articulates the gay-pain of this kind into a powerful plea addressed to the society for sympathetic understanding.

Kamlesh then decides to consult a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist is a sane and reasonable person. He does not approve of social scorn the homosexuals have to suffer:

It is impossible to change society, he said, but it may be possible for you to reorient yourself. 71

This is one way out from the predicament of Indian homosexuals. Change yourself if you cannot change society. This is a prudent maxim. For all homosexuals, it must be noted, it is not impossible to reorient themselves.

Another way is to hide the reality. Appear straight to the straight-appearing crooked world. Maintain deviant sexuality in secrecy and conform superficially to the standards of society. This is the way followed by most men and Bunny Singh is one of them. Their duplicity is normally not harmful to other people. Bunny Singh advises Kamlesh to “blend with the surroundings” and “camouflage” himself, so that no one can recognize his real identity.
One more way is to come out in the open and brave up the scorn that society may shower. This is the most difficult way. But is there any wisdom in becoming a martyr to the cause such as this? The question is difficult. But any instance of sincerity, a bold acceptance and declaration of truth is admirable indeed. The advice of the psychiatrist does not help Kamlesh. His homosexuality is inborn and irremediable. His love of Prakash is unforgettable:

I-I feel I cannot live without him. 72

His condition is indeed pitiable. What should he do now? Should he commit suicide? Or should he go back to Prakash? "Get married." "Find yourself a nice woman. You can always have sex on the side".73

But isn't this immoral? Should one marry the person one does not love? Would such marriage make anyone of the two emotionally happy? Bunny Singh's suggestion is not acceptable to Kamlesh. Suicide is no option, but Kamlesh contemplates that also. Sharad advises Kamlesh to exercise will-power and efface Prakash from his mind. That, according to him, is the only way. He asks Kamlesh to climb on the window and shout loudly:

As my friends, this city and God are witness to my vow, I break all ties with Prakash.' Then you will tear up that picture and throw it out of the window. 74

Kamlesh follows the instructions. He wants to tear it up but he can't. 75

At that very moment, Kiran, Kamlesh's sister, enters the house. Everyone gets upset as she is unknown to them. She feels that she is “an intruder” 76. Kamlesh “hides the photograph behind his back.” 77 Kiran and Ed plan to settle in Mumbai after their marriage. They have “just seen a flat in Andheri”. 78 Kamlesh introduces her to everyone. She is astonished to see Bunny Singh. She considers him as “the ideal husband and father!” 79 Kiran is surprised to see him in the company of all the gay people. On asking whether he, too, is gay, Bunny answers evasively:
Oh no! I am not! I am not .. : like him. They are such intelligent people and good company: I am a very liberal-minded person. 80

Very cleverly, he neither agrees nor disagrees that he is a gay, occasional or absolute. Most people might tell a clear lie, say that they are not gay even when they really are. Bunny tells no lie and no truth. He speaks the words that clearly speak nothing. Only he knows or perhaps even he does not know what he means by calling himself a liberal statement that he tolerates the gay. Or that he does not regard them as abnormal or unhealthy. Almost a fence-sitter throughout the play, he decides, as we shall see later, to come out in the open at the end with Kamlesh and Sharad. That is how, this character grows. Kiran's first marriage was an unhappy. Her husband used to severely beat her every day. At last, Kamlesh helps her in taking divorce. Her days of agony are over since she met Ed. Happily she announces her marriage schedule:

We are having a Hindu wedding in Bangalore for my parents next month on the 7th. And a Tamil Christian wedding on the 12th for Ed and his family here in Juhu Church.81

Kiran feels that Kamlesh is "hiding something" 82 from her. Therefore, as Kamlesh goes out, Kiran asks: “What is the matter with Kamlesh?”

Nobody could give her the correct answer. Deepali tells her that Kamlesh is “being treated for depression.” 83 She doesn't speak about the cause of depression.

Kamlesh re-enters. He doesn't want Kiran to know about his earlier relationship with Prakash Ed. Very tactfully he sends her into another room. Act I is over here.

The scene drifts into past in the Act II: Ed is sitting on a park bench looking around. He spots someone walking by. His eyes follow him. The person walking by, whom we don’t see, turns around and walks past Ed again. Ed smiles at him, again following him with his eyes as he walks by. Now the person walks by again and this time Ed gestures to him to sit next to him. The person sits down next to Ed. 84
Ed is fantasizing. He is talking to himself loudly. The park mentioned here appears to be a place for the gay to search for partners to his conversation. This establishes the fact that Ed / Prakash is a homosexual. But he does not like to be identified as one. Kamlesh, too, has been moving around in search of a partner. By chance he finds Prakash and recognizes him as a person of his kind. This is how their relationship begins. From the past, -the scene shifts to the present, into Kamlesh's flat. Kiran is in bathroom. Deepali wants Kamlesh to tell Kiran everything about his and Prakash's story as:

She doesn't know what she is getting into. At least tell her about him. 85

She is a well-wisher of both, the brother and the sister. Therefore, she wants that both should choose the option of being happier by facing the truth than the option of constant torture and fear about being exposed. She recommends everyone present there to:

Show the photograph to Ed and tell him that if he doesn't tell Kiran, we will show her the photograph. 86

Sharad accuses Kamlesh:

“You are selfish. You want to rid yourself of his memories, but you are ruining her life! Do you, you selfish pig!” 87

However, Bunny Singh feels that Deepali and Sharad are unnecessarily “creating trouble”. Deepali is sharp and out-smarts Bunny when she asks:

Can you love' your wife?

“Bunny : Of course I can!

Deepal: With the same intensity with which you can love a man?” 88

In a way, Deepali is correct. A homosexual may pretend as he loves his wife. She, too, might be, by and large, satisfied with his show of affection. But the show may not, cannot last. The moment of exposure may come sooner or later and then it may prove to be very bitter. Bunny Singh has to accept this and say:
You know I would be lying if I said I could. Not to cheat anyone. 89

But Kamlesh appeals to believe firmly that Prakash has become ‘straight’:

He has changed. He says he is heterosexual now. 90

But this proves to be unconvincing to all. Therefore, Kamlesh adds:

He 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. 91 This has been the attitude of the Christian Church. Hindus have no church. But their attitude nevertheless is not different. It is worse, in fact. Muslims have practiced homosexuality since the inception of Muslim rule in India. But they have offered no rationale of their practice. Dattani, for the first time, deals with the fact of homosexuality most scientifically and criticizes irrational and inhuman social scorn towards it.

Kamlesh protects Prakash simply because of Kiran. He says:

“Kiran cannot do without him. I don't want her to suffer the way I have.” 92

But if Kiran found out the truth about Prakash, she probably would break down completely. In fact, according to Kamlesh, Kiran finds in Prakash a considerate husband. With Prakash, she

“Began to find herself again. And I would pray that she would not fall apart again. I was thankful also for Prakash for making her happy again. I don't think it ever occurred to her in her wildest dreams that we were lovers. She never even asked me whether Prakash was gay. She just assumed he wasn't.” 93
Kamlesh's intention appears to be pure here. But what is to be done now? Should he tell Kiran the truth about Prakash? Or should she pass her life in ignorance?

Kiran comes out in the drawing room at moment. She realizes that they are discussing some serious issue. Kamlesh doesn't want any discussion on Prakash. Sharad starts telling something to Kiran. Kamlesh gets angry and asks Sharad to get out of his house. The atmosphere becomes tense. Sharad goes out and Kiran goes after him to bring him back. Bunny Singh says:

“We don't want to believe that we can never love one another!” 94

This is their heart-felt need. Why should they not be allowed to love one another freely? He further says:

All I am saying is that we should all forget about categorizing people as gay and straight or bi or whatever, and let them do what they want to do! 95

But that they are not allowed is a social fact. Unwritten laws of behaviour do not permit non-conformism. However, in this kind of freedom, too, there must be certain rules and norms. This would help in maintaining order in society. Every aspect of it has to be understood unambiguously. That all kinds of sexuality should be freely permitted does not mean that sexual or any other kind of exploitation or any kind of inhumanity in the name of sexual freedom should be permitted or tolerated. Freedom certainly does not mean chaos.

In many cases, homosexuality may exist side by side with heterosexuality. We have little, reason to assume that a homosexual does not love his wife because he loves his friend of his own sex. The tendencies may exist in varying proportions and degrees in different men. What is important is that it is conspicuous in some people, and that it should not be regarded as an abnormality when it strikingly appears in some cases.
Bunny Singh probably describes an ideal situation. But Deepali knows the reality: “It's fear ... Of the corners we will be pushed into where we don't want to be.” Prakash on that account only might not have told Kiran about his earlier life.

The scene again goes back into the past. Ed, Prakash and Kiran talk to one another simultaneously. The scene describes Kiran's meeting with Ed, her feeling comfortable in Ed's company Kamlesh's efforts in making Kiran happy after her divorce, Kamlesh's approval to Kiran to marry Ed, Kamlesh's dilemma of his place in the triangle, his decision to go to Bombay, Ed's resolution to be like the rest etc. At the end of this scene, it becomes clear that both Kamlesh and Kiran love Prakash. While the above scene is going on, Ed enters in Kamlesh's flat and greets everyone. Two different scenes are staged at two different levels of the stage. Act II is over here.

Ed is introduced to everyone in the beginning of Act III. Kamlesh and Ed consciously try to avoid each other. Kiran asks them: Why are you two behaving as if you have never met before?

Kiran is an affectionate sister. She tries to find out the reason for Kamlesh's and Sharad's separation. She requests Kamlesh and Sharad to start living together. She requests:

“I understand that what you want to do with your
life is your business, but ... please do reconsider. I
am sure Kamlesh loves you very much.” 96

Sharad and Deepali want to tell the truth about Ed / Prakash to Kiran. They decide to play a game. Deepali asks Sharad:

“The reason why you broke up with Kamlesh is
because you want to be straight, isn't it?” 97

They argue this transformation is not possible. Ed and Bunny Singh try to convince Sharad about its possibility. Kamlesh is clever enough to understand the hidden design of Sharad and Deepali. Sharad brings in the point of living a heterosexual life and at the same time continue homosexuality secretly. Listening to Sharad's long speech Kamlesh says:
“Sharad, you are wonderful. I don't know why I didn't see it before. I love you.”

Kiran grabs this opportunity:

He loves you, Sharad. What more do you want? You will never be happier than this. You will end up being lonelier if you tried to be anything else other than who you are. And think of the poor woman you may end up marrying just as a cover-up for your shame. I know how it feels to be unloved.

Kiran is right. There is a dramatic irony in her speech. She doesn't, but those around her and the audience, know that she is narrating her own story. Kamlesh is first to be disillusioned:

It took me just this moment to realize it. (Looks at Ed.) I know now that I have been chasing an illusion. Perhaps the man I loved does not exist. (To Sharad.) But you do. And I love you.

This appears to be psychological victory. Pakash's memories will not be able to torment him now. He can love Sharad genuinely now. Bunny Singh is next in the line:

I know. 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 being such a hypocrite. The people who know me are the people who hate me. That is not such a nice feeling. I have tried to survive. In both worlds. And it seems I do not exist in either. I am sorry, Kiran, I lied to you as I have lied to the rest of the world. I said to you that I am a double-minded person. I am not them but I accept them. Actually, it is they who are liberal-minded. They have accepted me in spite of them want their love private. I have never told anyone in so many words
what I am telling you now - I am a gay man. Everyone believes me to be the model middle-class Indian man. I was chosen for the part in the serial because I fit to common perception of what a family man ought to look like. I believed in it myself. I lied - to myself first. And I continue to lie to millions of people every week on Thursday nights. 101

Such a bold declaration requires courage! From a television hero, Bunny Singh now turns into a real hero. However, Prakash / Ed starts feeling uncomfortable. He has a headache and wants to go to the bathroom. Kamlesh leads him inside. The action of the play now is performed at two places simultaneously, viz., in the drawing room and in the bedroom. Bedroom dialogue:

Ed: My marriage with Kiran is a start.
Kamlesh: What do you mean?
Ed: Once we are married, I could see you more often without causing any suspicion. 102

This is hypocrisy. First he gives up Kamlesh to become straight. Now, he is ready to marry the sister with the ulterior motive of being near the brother. Ed, in fact, wanted a guise to hide his true identity, because he is not courageous enough to face himself and face the world. He now does not want to cheat himself. But he is determined to cheat the world. Under deceptive conformity, he wants to conceal his deviant impulses.

Drawing room action:
Kiran says to everyone present that she feels like a “Complete woman” 103. The dramatic irony is evident in her utterance.

However, Sharad and Deepali are determined to convey the truth to Kiran, Therefore as the Guard comes and gives the photograph to Sharad.

Sharad looks at Deepali. Deepali nods. Sharad offers the photograph to Kiran. Kiran takes the photograph and looks at it.
Bedroom action:
Ed kisses Kamlesh.

Drawing room action:
Kiran continues to looks at the photograph, almost frozen.

Bedroom action:
*Kamlesh grabs Ed by the throat.*

Drawing room action:
as Kiran moves to the window. 104

Kamlesh does not want to have anything to do with Prakash now. He leaves him entirely to Kiran out of his affection for her. Simultaneous happenings at two places are now over.

When Ed comes out,

*Kiran puts the photograph on the table and sits down, looking away. Ed goes to the table, picks up the photograph and looks at it. Kamlesh moves to Kiran and hold! her. Ed lets out a cry. 105*

The schemer is exposed. Kamlesh also tries in vain to explain Kiran the reason for his not telling the truth about Ed's real self. Kiran is the real loser in all this:

*I don't .... know what to do. I-I have lost the two people whom I love .... 106.*

Any person in Kiran's place would feel the same.

None however can doubt Kamlesh's intention. Therefore, Deepali takes his side by saying that he "*cared for you (Kiran) enough to let you marry Ed.*" 107 Sharad tells !Gran that Kamlesh needs "*you (Kiran) now. "*108
Ranjit also feels that Kiran is "being hard" on Kamlesh. All of them are sympathetic to Kamlesh because he did the wrong thing with right and approvable motive.

Kiran comes around gradually. Her love of her brother remains the same. But she asks Ed to get out of Kamlesh's fiat.

Shame, at being exposed, and repentance overwhelms Ed now. He does not know what to do. He drinks "large rum". He rushes and climbs on the window to commit suicide. But he does not have courage to jump off. He hesitates momentarily. Kamlesh, Bunny, Sharad and Ranjit "run and grab him." He cries and says, "I only wanted to live". This is his plan of comfortable living. Obviously the plan is entirely selfish, as it wants to realize helplessness at the expense of two other individuals. Before leaving, he asks Kamlesh: Where do I begin? How do I begin to live?

After reading the plays included in the anthology Collected Plays by Mahesh Dattani, readers are filled with admiration for the man as he had the far sight of focusing on such issues which are sidled by the prominent writers of today. Mostly the writers are concentrated on the feministic issues of today - feminism being a hot topic of the century. Whereas Mahesh Dattani makes himself, conspicuous by picking up such sensational issues of the society which we know and read, now and then but refuse to acknowledge their existence amidst us.

Besides being the most controversial issues, their discussion at times becomes very embarrassing and is likely to be refuted by the society. In order to critically judge and of course give an unprejudiced verdict, one has to face reality and look into one's face straight without hiding behind the false curtain of social dogmas. Mahesh Dattani's attitude towards society and its loopholes is surely commendable and has impressed me a lot. Such playwrights and their deep study of the false ego of our society will definitely o something to sieve the dirt out of our society and make it a better place for one and all. All the eight plays are different from each other in substance. Each of them deals with different hurdles in the path of a progressive society.
On a Muggy Night in Mumbai is a tragicomedy which deals with homosexuals. In the play, Sharad and Deepali though comfortable with each other have different way of being gay. More stress is laid on the character of Kamlesh and Prakash who is also Ed and romances with Kamlesh's sister Kiran. Initially Kamlesh and Prakash were ardent lovers when Prakash suddenly turncoats and changes into Ed, wearing the garb of a handsome guy, head over heels in love with Kiran, who unfortunately happens to be Kamlesh's sister. Kamlesh playing the role of a humble lover resigns himself to the changed situation without complaining. Nevertheless, his sexual needs are fulfilled by Sharad, his friend. He Shocks us a bit by stopping down to mating with a guard for which he is ashamed of himself. Prakash who had now changed to Ed suddenly emerges into the room and the scene to meet Kamlesh's Sister and bumping into Kamlesh is revived of his earlier crush on Kamlesh. Nonetheless Prakash / Ed is ashamed of being a homosexual and tries to leave the place with Kiran as soon as possible. To escape the cynical eyes of the others who knew about his relationship with Kamlesh. Kiran is shown to having all compassion for the gay people and wishes they could marry for happiness of her brother who she knew was a homosexual. The irony of the whole story is that the poor girl did not know that the man to whom she was going get married was a homosexual and an ex-lover of her brother. The revelation in the end comes as a shock to her. The whole story throws light on the growing homosexuality and its non-acceptance by the Indian society. At one stage, Kiran innocently remarks: 'I really wish they would allow gay people to marry' to which Ranjit cynically replies 'They do. Only not to the same sex.' This again is an upcoming burning issue of today which is dealt in an adept way by Mahesh Dattani. Every second person may be a homosexual but fear of ostracism restrains him from exposing himself. Through this Play, Mahesh Dattani has tried to soften the society towards the gay and subtly tried to stir up compassion for this class.

The society accepts a hijra for gracing the ceremonies of marriage and births but would not allow them to partake of such ceremonies. The author has ironically portrayed this aspect which would not have been given any heed, for any matter related to them is of no importance to anyone. The heart-rending story about a hijra murdered simply because she fell in love with Subbu in Seven Steps around the Fire, a young man having a status of importance in society, fills
us with horror and sense of injustice. But do you think we would do anything to help the hijra community and allow them a place of recognition in society and deal with them with compassion. No, that cannot be done. People would stand aside like mute spectators and look down our nose at them who are considered lower than the low.

Do the Needful is another play which deals with another phase of complex relationship. In this play, the dual problem of love and homosexuality is deftly handled. Lata, the Female character, loves Salim a Muslim belonging to a separate community and above all is a terrorist. Their marriage being an impossible event, Lata resorts to an incompatible marriage with Alpesh, a homosexual, whose homosexuality proves to be a feasible cover-up for meeting their respectable lovers - Lata and Salim; Alpesh and Trilok. We being Indians hold the institution of marriage with great esteem. Treatment of this great institution as a Trifle contract to facilitate their selfish ends fills us with great distaste. But the path which both of them choose is a default and desecrates the sanctity of marriage and never be acceptable to our society. This play stirs the feeling of misgiving for the characters - Lata and Alpesh. Though such characters may be exists in our midst but such blatant disregard for a ceremony fills us with horror. Not sooner Lata and Alpesh marry than they decide how to deceive their family and go and meet their respective lovers.

Final Solutions is a play outwardly focused on Hindu - Muslim incompatibility but inwardly full of mutual disagreements amongst the family members. The clash between fanaticism of Hindus versus fanaticism of Muslims is highlighted. Lack of accommodation between the two communities and unacceptability gives rise to acrimony resulting in terrorism and anarchy.

Bravely Fought the Queen is a play which deals with women from rich families who enjoy recreating themselves with beautifying themselves and indulging in vigorous shopping sprees, parties, balls etc. Basically they are highly disappointed and distraught ladies who try to find solace in such activities. Alka and Dolly are two such ladies who make untiring and useless efforts to drown their sorrows in booze and sex. Alka who is a perfect alcoholic pours out her
venom towards her husband and brother-in-law in a drunken state. Her thirst for freedom and mobility from constant confinement in the house is seen when she goes out into the rain and dances in the mud regardless of spoiling her expensive sari. Nitin is a homosexual and consequently is unable to satiate his wife's desire which is also a source of pain for Alka.

Nitin and Praful had sexual relationship between them and we learn at the latter half of the Play from Nitin's conversation with his mother that Praful tricked him into marrying his sister, Alka, No wonder he had no attraction or concern for Alka which becomes obvious from the same piece of conversation where he further says that he did not care if Alka stayed there or left or drank herself to death. He is over awed by the lengthening impact of Praful over his life. He is portrayed as a man of weak will who neither wanted to disappoint his brother Jiten by refusing to divorce his wife nor Praful by divorcing his Sister. To add to this turmoil there was the property which Baaa was not ready to give him because of her annoyance on his marrying Alka against her will.

Tara is again a play in which Mahesh Dattani picks up an issue which is glaring in our society and itches an Indian female in every walk of life. The preference of a boy child over a girl child forms the infrastructure of the play. The girl may be more enterprising than the boy but what is the great deal in it, she nevertheless fails in the race of favour. Both the twins revel in their love for each other and adoration of their parents. Everything shatters into irretrievable pieces when they come to know about the manipulation of their separation by their mother and grandfather, Tara eventually dies and Chandan escapes to London to hide his guilt which he feels strangely over his sister's death. This issue is quite prevalent in India and whether it is an educated or uneducated family, inclination towards a male-child is blithering and consequently the rising graph of female infanticide is mind boggling.

The various plays written by Mahesh Dattani and enacted in different theatres of the country and felicitated world-wide, gives us a glimpse into such hidden issues that have been
existing and unconsciously accepted by us. But such issues have never been given so much importance as to find their way into print. To pull them out from under the rug and display them threadbare is an uphill task and requires grit and forbearance which Dattani has proved that he has.

The producers of Dattani's plays praise him highly because his plays are great in performance and also for his treatment of contemporary themes. India has had a rich tradition in drama. Dattani's contribution has to be placed against this tradition in order to assess its value. It is also to be borne in mind that judging a contemporary is not a simple job. The detachment that is required in judging someone comes from distance in time. Only then can things be seen in a proper perspective. Moreover, there are also chances of the artist outgrowing himself. However, while no final judgments can be passed, the trends can always be gauged and an assessment made.

This is significant end of the drama. The end is the beginning. The problem play does not solve the problem. It presents the problem in the most glaring light. The concerned in it must bravely face it. The drama ends with the question. And they must find the answer for themselves.

In the final analysis, what we find is that On a Muggy Night in Mumbai is not strictly a problem play. It looks rather like a powerful plea for the human rights of homosexuals. There is no conflict of equally viable views here. There is instead a passionately spun but essentially sane and rational argument that no human being should suffer from inhuman social attitudes, just because the nature of his sexuality is different from that of the majority of mankind. The message of the play is that the minority should struggle to establish itself against the majority who seek to suppress them. The struggle is not likely to achieve shining success all at once. But it does realize a measure of success. In the Western world, they have been struggling for at least a couple of centuries. Each generation that struggled and died in the struggle, did succeed in changing social attitudes a bit. That is how they have reached where they stand today. Their present situation is a far cry from that in the 19th Century, which condemned in Britain Oscar Wilde, a talented artist and a brilliant conversationalist, to rigorous imprisonment. Poor fellow was made to feel guilty for what was only a harmless peculiarity of his.
But the 20th Century has proved to be vastly different. Look at a galaxy of brilliant men who were self-confessedly gay -- Auden, Isherwood, Andre Jide, Jean Genet, to name a few. The 21st Century is still unfolding itself. By the end of it, perhaps the success of the struggling gay to establish them will be completed. The West will lead in this has led, in fact, so far. And India will follow. Dattani's drama is the evidence that India is following the Western lead.

The Indian society has more or less accepted the existence of lesbian relationship. But we are still to come to terms with the existence of homosexuals. Of course movements like The Rainbow have started creating atmosphere where homosexuals have gathered under one umbrella and have become vocal about their existence and problems. The society, gradually, has started accepting the fact of their existence. But this movement and subsequent change is limited to metropolises only.

Certain intellectual Indians' led by prominent writer Vikram Seth have come forward to support Indian homosexuals. They ask for the repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code according to which homosexual relationship is a punishable crime: is an article by Shohini Ghosh which appeared in "Indian Express", dated 20 September, 2006:

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