

**Engendered Subjectivities: Construction of Queer Identity
in Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story* and
Mahesh Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai***

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by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation titled "Engendered Subjectivities: Construction of Queer Identity in Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story* and Mahesh Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*" has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Alpna Saini, Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Languages, Literature and Culture, Central University of Punjab. No part of this dissertation has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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ABSTRACT

Engendered Subjectivities: Construction of Queer Identity in Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story* and Mahesh Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*

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The present study deals with comparative analysis of Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story* and Mahesh Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* with respect to treatment of queer issues, their repression and social stigma faced by queer individuals. The focus is to find out how various social, economic and political discourses work towards repression of queer identities and reaffirming the oppressive discourse of heteronormative sexuality. Both Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani have employed the fundamental themes of queer identity, oppressive attitude of society and psychological dilemma of queer individuals in their respective plays. In both the plays under study i.e. *A Friend's Story* by Vijay Tendulkar and *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* by Dattani, there runs the unconventional theme of alternate sexuality which has been dealt with compassion and understanding. This study takes into account various unexplored issues related to queer identity. This study explores how these plays raise the issue of the emancipation of rights of queers and undertakes a comparative analysis of the two plays in order to discover varying attitudes towards this issue in Indian drama corresponding to the periods of the two playwrights.

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Chapter Four

Queer Dilemma: A Study of the Selected Plays

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Social Stigma on Queer Identity in the Selected Plays

Chapter Two

**Repression of Queer Identity in Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story*
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Introduction

The idea of self comes from humanism which believes self to be something which is essentially given. Self is believed to be stable, inherited and specific to human beings. Thus, self becomes an essentialised entity which finds relevance through the use of language. Identity has roots in the modernist concept where core of an individual was seen as stable and composed. It believes in an inner stable core of human beings. The sense of permanence is all pervasive inside the concept of identity. Thus, Identity mainly focuses on the need for continuity and unity. On the other hand subjectivity is based on the postmodern and post structuralist concept and has main focus on the formation of the subject. It takes into account the factors which decide the position occupied by the subject in the society and stresses upon the impulsive dimensions. Subjectivity is constituted of the ephemeral sense of the making of subject.

Subject has emerged in opposition of the concept of self. Self being the humanistic idea stresses on stability and inheritance of certain traits which defines an individual. This idea of self was not complete in itself as the medium through which it is defined i.e. language, itself is not stable. Thus the idea of self being stable and essential becomes unconvincing. So, self began to be defined in context of different discourses operative around it, which have an influence on it. Thus there was the formation of subject, which stresses that there is no centre to self. Thus the subject is free to change and is fluid. Any change in the discourses and power relations bring about a change in the subject.

According to Weedon, "Subjectivity refers to that aspect of an individual's psyche by means of which the person identifies themselves and their place in the world. This entails the person inserting themselves into a particular subject position within a chosen discourse" (17). Subjectivity is therefore liable to change and to change radically in the event of a new discourse becoming available, changes in power relations between rival discourses, or by different subject positions becoming available within one and the same discourse. Thus subjectivity of an individual can neither be taken as fixed as it keeps on changing with the change in the position of the subject in relation to other subject positions in the society. Due to this phenomenon of subjectivity a subject decides his place among

the different discourses playing an important part and laying influence in the society.

Subjectivity is a term used to refer to the condition of being a subject: i.e. the quality of a subject's perspective, experiences, feelings, beliefs, and desires. It is used as an explanation for what influences and informs people's judgments about how they identify truth or reality and comprises of the collection of the perceptions, experiences, expectations, personal or cultural understanding, and beliefs specific to a person. Thus subjectivity influences a person's viewpoint or outlook, particular feelings, beliefs, and desires which are the very essences of the complete personality of an individual. It is often used to refer to the personal opinions which may or may not conform to the existing norms, in contrast to knowledge and fact-based beliefs. Subjectivity is related in some way to the sense of self and is composed of social forces that have an effective influence on individuals. It can also be used to describe the way the sense of self varies with circumstances as it is not static. Thus, subjectivity implies not just the individual's sense of self, but the ways that sense of self is acted on and even made up by outside forces. Our subjectivity is constituted of various other entities such as our identity which is in turn guided by the normative values present in our society. So, in order to understand subjectivity as a whole we need to look at the other factors also which results in its formation.

Language plays a key role in the production and imparting significance as well as meaning to different institutions and activities as language makes it easy for individuals to comprehend anything and everything. Without the use of language it won't be possible for any practice to become meaningful for people. Social performances are incredible without the use of language and conversation and similarly the conversation without any associations with any kind of social activity, is futile. The use of language thus paves a path for the efficient working and reworking of the different discourses which further have a powerful impact on deciding our subject positions.

Another important factor which helps in the creation of subjective positions and acts as a decisive element in construction of subjectivity is gender relation. Gender is rooted so carefully in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs and our desires, that it appears to us to be completely natural. Gender is not an inborn trait

in human beings neither is it the only aspect of social identity that one learns but it interacts with other structures of society such as class, age, race, ethnicity etc. It is just a performance of various acts repeated over time and again in such a way that it becomes naturalized. It is actually taught to us, from the moment we are born. Upbringing, culture, peers, community, media, and religion, are some of the many influences that shape our understanding of this core aspect of identity.

In his book *The History of Sexuality*, the French theorist Michel Foucault considers that the idea that sex has been repressed in earlier periods chiefly in the nineteenth century and moderns have tried to liberate it from its constraints. Foucault writes, "repression has been the fundamental link between power, knowledge and sexuality since the classical age" (9). He further opines that instead of being something natural, sex is a complex idea produced by a series of social practices, investigations, discourses that come together over a period of time. Talking about sex Foucault adds:

The notion of "sex" made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, pleasures; and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere. (28)

Here, Foucault is not contradicting that there are physical acts of sexual intercourse or that humans have a biological sex and sexual organs but he is claiming that new ways of grouping them together under a single category were sought among such a wide range of things. They were quite different from each other such as sexual acts, anatomical distinctions, different parts of bodies, psychological responses and above all, social meanings. The way people dealt with these conducts, perceptions, and biological functions created a completely new and different entity called 'sex', which came to be treated as the basis to the identity of the individual. This process gave sexuality a new importance and a new role, making sexuality the secret of the individual's nature.

Earlier periods had stigmatized acts of sexual intercourse between individuals of the same sex but now it has become a question not of acts but of

identity. In Foucault's view, 'sex' is created by the discourses associated with various social practices and institutions. But these discourses represent sex as something existing earlier than the discourses themselves. These discourses and social practices try to control and repress the sex which they have themselves constructed. Foucault's analysis treats sex as an effect rather than a cause, the product of discourses which try to analyse, describe, and control the activities of human beings.

Power, for Foucault, is not something someone applies but it is the form of knowledge or knowledge as power. Power/knowledge produces the situation where we are defined by our sex. It has produced the situation that defines a woman as someone whose identity is defined on the basis of sexual relationship with a man. The idea that sex lies outside and in opposition to power masks the influence of power/knowledge. Foucault brings out the fact that how the categories such as sex are produced by discursive practices. (qtd. in Culler 8)

Thus, drawing from Foucault we can say that our gender is mistakenly taken to be the defining norm of our identity on the whole. Identities are unstable, dependent and always in need of re-affirmation through the performative work we must do to stabilize them as the true symbols of our existence. Butler, an American post-structuralist philosopher, analysing gender says:

Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. (378).

Thus, from here we can easily draw that gender is not related to material bodily facts but is merely a social construction which keeps on changing and can be challenged. In *Gender Trouble* Butler proposes that we consider gender as performative, in the sense that it is not what one is but what one does. A man is

not what one is but something one does, a condition one enacts. A gender is created by various acts which one performs. A man or a woman is created by repeated acts. The performativity of gender is never a singular act and also it cannot be defined by one particular act. Butler states that "gender proves to be performance—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed" (25). Thus the acts which an individual have to do is not decided by him but they are already decided for him. Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalisation in the context of a body. The view that gender is performative suggests that gender is constructed through a continuous set of acts and suggested through the gendered representation of the body. So, what we take to be real and the accepted understanding of gender is in fact a variable and unstable reality. Judith Butler in her work *Gender Trouble* has analysed the effects of dominant understandings of sex and gender. Butler looks within the cultural work and looks at the representation of gender and the natural expression of the body. She thinks that gender performativity is a "strategy of resistance" (Salih 69). Gender, according to Butler, is by no means tied to material bodily facts but is solely and completely a social construction, a fiction which is open to change and challenge.

Performativity describes the culturally created character of identity, which is generated by power through repeated references of models and their disobedience. Suppressive cultural norms produce dejected subjects whose identity depends upon the marginalisation of excluded, transgressive subjectivities. As our social identities are the result of the repetition of various acts, so the destabilization of the existing social norms remains a permanent prospective of all social relations. Butler has collapsed the sex/gender distinction in order to argue that there is no sex that is not always already gender. All bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence, which means that there is no natural body that pre-exists its cultural inscription. This means that gender is not about whom one is but about the acts one performs or it is a sequence of acts and deals with the performance of various acts instead of being the identity of a person. Thus it becomes quite evident that Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set

of repeated acts within a highly fixed regulatory setting which is formed gradually over time by constant repetition and thus, seems to be natural. A subject is never free to choose the gender or the role he wants to play and has to confide with the already existing gender roles.

The idea of performativity is introduced in *Gender Trouble* when Butler states that “gender proves to be performance that constitutes the identity it is purported to be. She then quotes the claim Nietzsche makes in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, acting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing itself is everything” (29). She further claims that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (25). Thus the concept of gender brings into vogue the idea of a male being masculine and a woman being feminine. Such is the formation of gender roles which is a completely constructed idea. Gender identities are constructed and constituted by language, which means that there is no gender identity that precedes language. It is in this sense that gender identity is performative.

Butler repeatedly negates the idea of a pre-linguistic inner core or essence by claiming that gender acts are not performed by the subject, but they performatively constitute a subject that is the effect of discourse rather than the cause of it: “that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (136). So, here also it becomes very clear that the notion of a doer behind the act as is commonly perceived is completely fictitious and also the gendered body cannot be separated from the actions which create it. So, if the reality of gender is nothing natural and is the created one and if the gender identities are nothing more than the fictional concept then it can be opined that the genders can be neither true nor false but are produced because of the impact of other discourses operating and having a strong hold on the social arena. So, the construction of heterosexual identities that present themselves as essential and natural suggests that all gender is a form of imitation and some gender presentations are more repetitive than others. By highlighting the disorganisation between the body of the performer and

the gender that is being performed, imitative performances such as drag efficiently exposes the imitative nature of all gender identities.

Judith Butler has made an immensely important move of deconstructing all the fixed identities, which included even our personal identities. In this case if we perceive that we have no fixed identities then what we consider to be our identity is, "the effect of a certain repetition, one which produces the semblance of a continuity or coherence" (18). This means that our gender or our sexual orientation is in one way or the other the effect of repetition of certain sexual acts or our repeated presentation of us as gendered in a specific way. In other words, a series of identical or similar performances takes the place of identity. The continuous repetition of a certain set of acts which of course differs from one person to other person creates an identity effect which creates the misconception that we are rational beings and implement our free will in performing various acts which we perform. This means that if our identities are the effect of repetition, then heterosexuality, which is considered to be the only authentic form of sexuality, is nothing more than the repetition of several acts which we perform. Thus heterosexuality can be taken to be a repetition that can only produce the illusion of its own originality. In other words we can say that the heterosexual identities which we categorise as man and woman are produced by the repeated performance of certain acts which in turn becomes the basis or the origins of the normative measure of the real.

Butler talks about heterosexuality as to be normal because the prevalence of heterosexuality seems to be the result of some kind of dominant social pressure. Thus, heterosexual activity and homosexual activity is merely a copy as it is nothing more than the repetition of earlier performances for which there is no original. It can only try to represent itself as the genuine and original form of sexuality by suggesting that other forms of sexuality like lesbianism and homosexuality are inauthentic, immoral and imitative. This is done by setting up a binary opposition in which heterosexuality places itself in the centre by reducing other sexualities to the margins. In other words homosexuality requires the non-heterosexual identities and activities to validate and making itself acceptable in society. Heterosexuality and other perverse forms of sexuality are deeply associated with each other and they are all equally forged. Like gender, sexuality

is a social construction. This means that creation of sexuality is the most fundamental binary opposition of all which involves the division of human beings into males and females on the basis of biological sexuality which itself also seems to be a construction too. Although it is itself an essentially unstable construction. According to Butler, identity is built upon a fundamental base of lack or we can say its essence lies in an absence. For Butler identity is performative and not something natural, it is formed by various tasks we perform and act out. It is something which we gather from different discursive practices. This is the key point as used by the queer theorists in their task of bringing out the true nature of the sexual identities.

The word 'Queer' is meant to denote the whole range of sexualities other than heterosexual i.e Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual etc. The phrase "Queer theory" was coined by Teresa de Lauretis to describe a school of thought that studies sexual distinctiveness, human sexuality, and gender.

During the 1980s, the term 'queer' was reclaimed by a new generation of political activists involved in Queer nation and protest groups such as Act Up and Outrage, though some lesbian and gay cultural activists and critics who adopted the term in the 1950s and 1960s continue to use it to describe their particular sense of marginality to both mainstream and minority cultures. In the 1990s, 'Queer Theory' designated a radical rethinking of the relationship between subjectivity, sexuality and representation. (qtd. in Selden 252)

The queer theorists look for various illustrations regarding the biased treatment faced by some individuals on the basis of gender or we can say their sexual preferences, in texts, history, and society. They often reject binary oppositions such as heterosexual/homosexual, because giving privilege to one against the other results in negation of the other. There is use of the terms lesbian and gay to designate distinct kinds of life-styles, sexualities, sexual practices, communities, issues, publications and discourse. In the process of penetrating, surpassing and problematising heterosexuality, homosexuality and female homosexuality are also incorporated into this single category of queer. They argue that "sex between the two individuals is something other than heterosexual as the

gender of one's choice is no longer the defining factor". Thus, the term queer which was at first used to define the male homosexuality now has become an umbrella term for all sexualities and sexual practices that are considered or asserted to be oppositional to the so called normative sexuality.

Queer theory arises out of the gay and lesbian studies' focus on the social construction of categories of normative and deviant sexual behavior. But there is a thin line of differentiation present between the gay and lesbian studies. While gay and lesbian studies focus specifically on the questions of homosexuality, queer theory expands its realm of investigation. Queer theory takes into account and has a political assessment of, anything that falls into normative and deviant categories, chiefly sexual activities and identities. The word "queer" has a primary meaning of "odd," "peculiar," "out of the ordinary." Queer theory concerns itself with any and all forms of sexuality that are "queer" and thus, with the normative behaviour and identities which define what is "queer" by being their binary opposites. Queer theory insists that all sexual behaviour, all the concepts which link the sexual behaviour to sexual identities, and all the categories of normative and deviant sexualities are nothing more than the social constructs which produce certain types of social meaning. Queer theory is in a way similar to the feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies as it also rejects the notion that sexuality is an essentialist category which is determined by biology and is judged by unending values and ethics of decency and accuracy.

Queer theory is not a singular or organised concept or methodological framework, but a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire. The term describes a diverse range of critical practices and priorities: readings of the representation of same-sex desire in literary texts, films, music, images; explores the social and political power relations of sexuality; analyses the sex-gender system; studies of transsexual and transgender identification, and of prohibited desires. In the work of Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and others, Queer theory has become the site of a dynamic interrogation not just of the cultural construction of sexuality but of culture itself, and is based on the rejection of homoerotic relations.

In her later work *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick deconstructs the heterosexuality and homosexuality opposition which in Western culture usually

takes the form of opposing naturalness, health, and fertility and near about everything that can be considered to be associated with life, for instance artificiality, sickness, sterility, and death etc. This analysis demonstrates that different categories existing in a culture as fixed binary oppositions of heterosexual and homosexual, actually exist in a more troubled and self-motivated implied relation according to which, first is subordinated by the second and hence the question of priority between the supposed central and the supposed marginal category is irresolvably unstable. This instability is caused as one category is constituted as at once internal and external to the other category. Since the formation of heterosexual and homosexual opposition is a matter of unsubstantiated norms it has resulted in all sorts of false assumptions. Mostly it is the commonly held universalising view that sexual desire is an unpredictable powerful determinant of stable identities. This means that seemingly heterosexual persons and objective choices are strongly marked by same-sex influences and desires, and vice versa for apparently homosexual ones. In order to maintain its separate individuality or we can say male heterosexual identity and the prevalent masculinist culture require the separation of the same sex desires as something very crucial for its maintenance. Our basic uncertainties with regard to sexuality which keep on surfacing in our views of same-sex sexuality and in particular our desire to create convenient categories for sexualities and sexual activities, affect many of the binary oppositions that are central to our lives.

The homosexual and heterosexual definition has been a dominant and controlling term that has the same, primary importance for all modern sexual identities and social organisations and not merely for homosexual identities and culture as is done by the more conventionally visible roots of gender, class, and race. The modern long-lasting predicament of homosexual and heterosexual definition has affected our culture through its ineradicable categorisation particularly of the categories as natural and artificial, knowledge and ignorance, private and public, masculine and feminine, majority and minority, secret and public, new and old, discipline and radicalism etc.

In *Epistemology of the Closet* Sedgwick tries to illustrate the formative influence of the homosexual and heterosexual differentiation on these oppositions with detailed analysis of a number of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century

literary texts. The reason behind the reading of these texts as homosexual texts is mostly because of the authors of these texts which include authors like Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust etc. who themselves had some homosexual inclinations. The homosexual and heterosexual concepts clearly interconnect with other oppositions.

The main aim of Queer theory was incitement, and the popularity of carefully constructed semiotic interference intentionally disturbing the binaries of gender and sexuality. The ways in which they created and enfolded subjectivity was of the utmost interest and main target. Queer theory sees sexual power as rooted in different levels of social life and questions the areas of the social world and not just limited to be concerned with sex but it looks upon sexuality not only as a separate area which is only concerned with a range of sexual practices and identities, but also as an important element of social life. Queer theory also aims to examine previously overlooked expressions, repressed descriptions, as well as the development of the discourses that talk about same sex or other perverse desires, practices, and subjectivities which play a significant role in the construction of sexual and political identity formation. These include heterosexual queers, those who go against and also at the same time publicly challenge heterosexual conventions of marriage and reproduction, those who have sex with others much different in age than themselves, or those who try to express prohibited, transgressed desires, or no desire at all. Thus we can say that queerness in this wider sense is fixed in desire rather than in identity.

An important characteristic of Foucault's argument is that sexuality is not a natural feature or fact of human life but a constructed category. It comes out of different types of experiences which have historical, social and cultural origins instead of commonly thought biological origins. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault examines the organisation of sexuality in the West. He begins his analysis with an account of repressive hypothesis (15). Conventional understandings of Western sexuality points towards the repressive nature of Victorian society. Sexuality is a taboo and talking about it in the public was considered to be a sin. In such a society the law of silence and censorship was of the utmost importance. In contrast to this view, Foucault suggests that sexuality is talked about all the time in Victorian society right from the rise of various

institutions; sexuality has been discussed very widely and has been a completely controlled subject. It is something which is produced through discourse, not repressed through censorship.

One of the most significant features of Foucault's inquiry revolves around the construction of the homosexual. The production of discourses related to sexuality gave rise to the category of homosexual. By demonstrating that homosexuals did not exist before the formation of sexual discourses, Foucault points out that social identity is the outcome of the ways in which knowledge is organised. He brings out the reasons behind the discursive formation of the homosexual:

There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and "psychic hermaphroditism" made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of "perversity"; but it also made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturalness" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. (101)

For British queer theorists like Dollimore and Alan Sinfield the non-heterosexual forms of sexuality are the sites where hegemonic power can be challenged. According to Sinfield subcultures which also include sexual subcultures are the powerful backgrounds where the alternative or oppositional ideologies may achieve plausibility. The political context of the British Queer Theory makes use of the assumptions and the interests of cultural materialism into the contemporary debate on sexuality. For Sinfield, sexuality is a point at which the hegemonic power structure may break up and reveal the opposing forces which leads to the formation of the norms of sexuality. Thus, sexuality is an unstable concept which is formed in our societies and also it requires to be endlessly revisited, rejected, rediscovered and admitted. The British queer theorists apply the methods of cultural materialism and thus read the literary texts in a way other than the prevalent forms. "They examine the constructions that a

culture has put upon sexually ambivalent texts in order to expose its ideological repressiveness." (Sinfield, 74). At the formal level they question literature itself, specially the ideologically motivated marginalisations and exclusions that have played a crucial role in the creation of the idea of 'literature'. The queer theory that develops out of cultural materialism draws on Foucault and on the work of Raymond Williams and are quite similar to the British cultural studies. In the United States, however, queer theory has different origins. This queer theory develops out of lesbian feminism and is strongly influenced by Derrida. It relies and uses the elements and concepts from the work of two prominent and highly influential theorists: Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.

Lesbian criticism had split off from feminist criticism because lesbian critics felt that mainstream feminism was in no way concerned with or take any account of lesbianism as a separate identity. They assumed that lesbian identity is just a core identity that all lesbians shared and also it expressed itself in many different ways and forms in the literary texts. They talked about lesbianism as a fixed condition that is determined either biologically or as the result of psychological or social conditioning. However, later on a number of influential lesbian critics ceased to see sexual identities as not just a category of lesbianism or homosexuality. They started viewing sexuality as social constructions that needed to be analysed just like gender and race had been analysed to expose the binary oppositions at work within them. Like gender categories, sexual categories were supposed to be nothing more than a mere cultural construct which serves as an effective instrument of a repressive discourse about sexuality. Any sexual orientation was assumed to be a temporary position in a structure of differences that was of not much benefit to them. The biased social favoring of the heterosexual orientation of the majority at the cost of all other orientations was the work of the sexual discourses working at the centre.

In its most determined manifestations queer theory also claims that sexuality and particularly the exclusions and marginalisation that are at work within the heterosexual and homosexual field serves as the background to the organisation of Western culture. The structure of such a male-dominated society is therefore homosocial societies which usually see homosexuality in a negative light. Homosocial designates the true nature of socialrelationships, not of sexual

ones. Still, sexual classification in fixed categories is central to a homosocially structured society. Thus it becomes very clear that the queer theory's contribution to literary and cultural studies lies in its emphasis on sexuality as a fourth category of analysis following the race, gender, and class and in its assertion that sexuality and gender cannot be separated. In its emphasis on sexuality as an instrument of understanding, queer theory gives a much sharper edge to an earlier lesbian and gay interest in sexuality. It confronts us with the meanings that our culture attaches to the range of sexual identities and sexual activities that we know and to the binary oppositions that it sets up and that serve as outlets of power and instruments of oppression. It was the primary task of the lesbian and gay critics to make sexuality detached from gender. Sexuality need not be taken on the same grounds with and need not to be confused with gender which is a completely different category of analysis in the literary and cultural studies. Lesbian critics have tried to establish a completely new lesbian literary tradition and tried to define the formal characteristics of lesbian writing.

Thus the word 'Queer' provides a vantage point for a fundamental analysis of liberal humanist ideology. Any deconstruction of the homosexual and heterosexual opposition directly affects the self-definition and ideological organisation of the Western culture. Thus 'queer' stands for the open network of possibilities that presents itself when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made or can't be made to indicate or symbolise his identity on the whole. Some queer theorists are of the opinion that sexuality is a matter of performance rather than of identity. They try to challenge heterosexuality's claim of being natural and of homosexuality as something other or not natural on theoretical grounds. In its most wide-ranging form, queer theory tries to explain the reason behind the dominance and centrality of the homosexual and heterosexual axis to the West's cultural matrix and the extent to which it infuses other oppositions that at first sight have nothing to do with sexuality.

Historical Review of Queer Literature

Queer representations in Indian literature form a long history. Indian literature being the representative of the sensibilities and cultures of different times has a huge diversity of themes and different ways of representation.

Representation of queer sexualities is amongst one of these everlasting traditions. The medium and way of representation of queer sexualities has gone through many stages with the change in culture and tradition. Not many of the texts dealing with homoerotic love in ancient Indian literature are available but they do exist. The representation of queer relationships mostly finds a place in ancient Indian literature through the representation of friendship between same sex individuals. In the ancient Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*, the friendship between Krishna and Arjuna is an example of such a friendship. They are referred to as 'the two Krishnas' (Vanita et. al), which reflects how their friendship was much more than marriage for them. Same sex love between two women is also found in the Bengali text *Kritivasa Ramayana*. In which the birth of sage Bhagiratha is attributed to the sexual union between two females through divine blessing of Lord Sankara. So we can see that there was a sanction for the same sex desire but with divine intervention. This same sex 'encounter' of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu, who took the form of a woman-Mohini, leads to the birth of Lord Ayyappa. Thus we can easily see the treatment of queer relationships in many of the Hindu religious texts. Vanita and Kidwai points towards the prohibition of 'ayoni' or non vaginal sex in The *Manusmriti*, one of the earliest treatises on Hindu law. Thus we can easily see the treatment of queer relationships in many of the Hindu religious texts. Although these relationships were sanctioned only under divine interventions but there is no evidence that such acts had been punished in ancient India.

The *MarkandeyaPurana* carries the story of Avikshita, the son of a king who refused to marry because he believed he was a woman. During the medieval period, the Bhakti movement started in India which broke up the orthodox firmness upto some level. Thus the same sex love was legitimised with devotion and godly love. "Thus poets like Surdas (15th century),Tulsidas (1532-1623) could sing praises to a male lover who was a divine being whilst female poets like Mirabai (1498-1547) and Vithabai (15th century) could circumvent the strictures imposed on women and marriage" (Dasgupta 655). With the advent of Islam in India there was a lot of work done on same sex love especially between men and they were not considered to be offensive. In Sufi literature also, the love for same sex was expressed in homoerotic metaphors. Bringing out the same sex love in Sufi poetry, Kidwai says, "many Sufis insisted that only same gender love could transcend sex

and therefore not distract the seeker"(115). So the representation of queer relationships has been an important aspect of the ancient Indian literature.

People of the third sex are analysed in the *Kamasutra* and broken down into several categories that are still visible today and generally referred to as gay males and lesbians. While gay males and lesbians are the most prominent members of this category, it also includes other types of people such as transgender and the intersexes. The third sex in *Kamasutra* is described as a natural mixing or combination of the male and female natures to the point in which they can no longer be categorized as male or female in the traditional sense of the word. Third-gender citizens were neither persecuted nor denied basic rights. Gay men could either blend into society as ordinary males or they could dress and behave as females, living as transvestites. Transvestites were invited to attend all birth, marriage, and religious ceremonies as their presence was a symbol of good luck and considered to be auspicious. This very feature gave homosexuals a social representation in the society. Lesbians were known as *svairinior* independent women and were permitted to earn their own livelihood. They were not expected to accept a husband.

When the British arrived in India they were surprised at this openness in sexual matters in the Indian literature and society. Soon after making India its colony, the British introduced their Anti sodomy law in India as Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. This declared imprisonment as the punishment for sodomy. Before the enactment of this law although queer sexuality was not approved but still it was not punishable offence. However with the passing of this law, homosexuality was officially condemned by the law and was considered to be a criminal activity. As Vanita and Kidwai point out "at most times and places in pre-nineteenth century India, love between women and between men, even when disapproved of, was not actively persecuted. As far as we know, no one has ever been executed for homosexuality in India" (xviii). Thus the treatment and representation of queer sexuality and relationships suffered a huge set back. Sexuality was not anymore considered to be a common phenomenon but it was reduced to something personal. The attitude of Homophobia as spread by the British was accepted by many Indians. Now the literature with homoerotic illustrations like *Kamasutra* faced criticism.

Ismat Chughtai's 1940's *Lihaf* delicately represented the relationship between two women. At that time it was considered to be obscene. From the late 1980s onward, openly gay and bisexual writers like Sunil Sanyal, Vikram Seth, Firdaus Khan, and Bhupen Khakhar drew worldwide attention. Satish Alekar's *Begum Barve* (1979), Vijay Tendulkar's Marathi play, *Mitrachi Ghosht* translated into English as *A Friend's Story* (1980) was considered revolutionary because it had a lesbian protagonist. Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* (1986), Shobha De's *Starry Nights* (1991), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) have touched upon the homosexual mindset. An anthology of writings by contemporary lesbians, *Facing the Mirror* (1999), and one of writings about gay men in the twentieth century, *Yaraana* (1999), have been well received. R. Raj Rao's novel, *The Boyfriend* (2003) is among the first gay novels written in English in India. Mahesh Dattani's explorations of gender roles in *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991), *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998) and *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (radio play, 1998) and started a new trend of representation of LGBT community in a new and positive light on the stage. Thus we can easily trace the history of queer literature to the beginning of civilization. Queer literature has travelled through many different phases in which sometimes it was concealed and only hinted and at others it was accepted whole heartedly. The representation has also transformed, while at first it was presented with respect to deities and sages now they are represented in relation to common human beings. It has also gone through a rough phase where it was completely discarded but now again it is in the phase of great transition. Thus queer literature has its own rich heritage and tradition which in the hands of new playwrights, poets and novelists is moving towards new heights.

Review of Work Done

"Social Taboos in Plays of Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani" by Dr. Santosh Kumar Sonker brings out various issues with which the plays of Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani deal with. Both, Tendulkar and Dattani are social realists committed to reveal evils present in the contemporary society. They have depicted the marginal position of women and their struggle against exploitation dealing with the issues, such as gender discrimination, class -conflict, homosexuality, child sexual abuse, plight of eunuchs, violence and power etc.

"Theme of Protest in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar" written by Komal Preet Virk brings out the theme of love, sex, violence. The plays reveal the anger and frustration of the post-1960 generation in the Indian context. The psychological study explores shifts and changes that have taken place in the modes of human thinking, feeling and behaving.

"Social Concerns in the Plays of Vijay Tendulkar" by Pratibha Sharma and Sanjit Mishra reflects how Tendulkar's plays represent an individual's inner and outer world. While dealing with the social realities, he unveils two major tendencies of Indian society: male dominance and feminine frailty. Tendulkar's play raises the questions rather than providing a guideline or message to the solutions of the problems they deal with in the society.

"Non-traditional Sexuality in Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story*" by Kavya discusses homosexuality in heterosexual society. Tendulkar through the protagonist Mitra mirrors how heterosexual is ruthless towards homosexuals, how they are not accepted in the society and they suffer psychological insecurity and guilt.

Janardhan Reddy. K and Dr. P. Satyanarayana's "Vijay Tendulkar: A Playwright of Power and Violence" deals with the themes of Power and Violence in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar. The themes of oppression on the basis of gender, human violence, the power politics, representation of lesbian issue, aesthetics of cruelty against idealism of civility, reaffirmation of Human values against the nexus of Gender Politics and Power Politics are brought out in the different plays of Vijay Tendulkar.

"Talking the Taboo: A Study of Mahesh Dattani's Major Dramas" by Ramesh B. Patel highlights the issues with which Mahesh Dattani has dealt in his major dramas. Dattani's treatment of the theme of sexuality and gender issues i.e. the predicament of eunuchs, homosexuals and lesbians is brought out. The hollowness, pettiness and ugliness of modern age make the life of these sexual minorities difficult has been brought forth by the critical study of his plays.

Sidhartha Sawant's "Thematic Concerns and Technical Features in Mahesh Dattani's Plays" brings out the themes of communalism in *Final Solutions*, state of

eunuchs in *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, gender discrimination in *Tara* and also the theme of homosexuality in *On A Muggy Night in Mumbai*.

"Mahesh Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai: An Articulation of Gay Identity Crisis*" written by Jaspal Singh brings out the way in which his play represents the crisis faced by gays who torn between their true self and the expectations of society. The hidden fears and feelings are very sympathetically brought out. The identity crisis of the homosexuals finds an important place in the whole discussion.

"Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story: A Problem Play of Gays and Lesbians*" written by Janardhanreddy. Kand Dr.P.Satyanarayana projects a powerful discussion on the condition and predicament of homosexuals in this homophobic society of ours. Tendulkar through the protagonist Mitra explores how heterosexual society holds contempt towards homosexuals. They are not accepted and because of this they suffer psychological insecurity and guilt. He has raised an untouched issue of lesbianism in this play.

None of these works deals with the treatment of alternate sexuality in the selected plays on comparative basis. These articles deal with various issues but none deals with construction of queer identity, repression of queer behaviour and the social stigma queer individuals have to face. The present study deals with comparative analysis of Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story* with respect to treatment of queer issues, their repression and subsequent comparison of idea therein. The focus is to find out how various social, economic and political discourses work towards repression of queer identities and reaffirm the oppressive discourse of heteronormative sexuality.

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Repression of Queer Identity in Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story* and Mahesh Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*

In the Indian society which is to a large extent homophobic, there is no sanction for the expression of free will regarding the sexual preferences. In order to earn and maintain the dignity and respect individuals have to behave in a certain definite way as defined by the normative social structures. In order to maintain its supremacy over the lives of individuals repressing their sexuality has always been the most efficient tool in the hands of the power structures. Sexuality is reduced to the status of a matter not to be discussed or talked about in the public sphere. This strategy is operative in the society for a long time and is still operative in the present day world. In his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault very efficiently has pointed towards the repression of sexuality as:

The seventeenth century, then, was the beginning of an age of repression emblematic of what we call the bourgeois societies, an age which perhaps we still have not completely left behind. Calling sex by its name thereafter became more difficult and more costly. As if in order to gain mastery over it in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present. And even these prohibitions, it seems, were afraid to name it. Without even having to pronounce the word, modern prudishness was able to ensure that one did not speak of sex, merely through the interplay of prohibitions that referred back to one another: instances of muteness which by dint of saying nothing, imposed silence. Censorship. (17)

Thus, in order to maintain supremacy the heterosexual power structure repressed the free expression of sexuality by prohibiting any discussion about it. The issues related to sexuality of an individual have most of the times been swept under the carpet under the name of values, culture etc. which are nothing more than the discourses created in order to maintain the heteronormative supremacy. These issues have been brought out to the front stage by the Indian dramatists through their innovative theatrical vision. They have succeeded in expanding the

new horizons of visibility by breaking away from the already existing conventions. Stage now is used to reveal the true nature of sexuality and also it brings into light the experiences responsible for the sidelining of queer identities. These issues have been handled with great care and sensibility by two of the most prolific and highly experimental dramatists Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani. Both these dramatists have been successful in representation of the queer dilemma, repression of sexual orientations, problems they face in heteronormative society and also the possibility of alternative sexual relationships.

The plight of the homosexuals and various atrocities they face in the homophobic society have been very well depicted by the dramatists in contemporary dramatic scenario. Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani are the towering figures who have dealt with the issues of the queers with utmost care and attention. The treatment of the queer identities is not only rational but also the treatment of these issues is having a realistic approach. The plays which have been most successful in bringing out the plight of homosexuals are *A Friends Story* by Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*. Both these plays are emblematic of the experiences of homosexuals and their dilemma regarding their own sexualities.

A Friend's Story deals with the story of Sumitra Dev known as Mitra and her struggle to deal with the problems and the oppression she has to face on the pretext of being 'deviant' or 'different' Tendulkar portrays the life-changing moments in Mitra's struggle to cope with the societal pressure and the dilemmas she faces of having a queer identity. The focus is primarily on Mitra's friendship with the sutradhar Bapu, their friendship and the changes it undergoes as the play proceeds. Mitra in the play is a homosexual and being under the pressure of the normative rules of heterosexual society has attempted suicide. She has no friends but later she finds a friend in Bapu to whom she confesses of her sexuality. Their friendship is full of complexity and Bapu ultimately comes to represent the homophobic society. There is also a love affair of Mitra with another girl Nama which proves to be destructive for Mitra and completely ruins her life after it comes to light. Dalvi, who is the lover of Nama doesn't approve of her relationship with Mitra and becomes adamant at bringing her to ruin. At last Mitra being unable to deal with the separation from Nama, who gets married, is completely dejected and

commits suicide. Tendulkar very honestly brings out the attitude of society towards the queers which makes it difficult for them to lead a life of their own choice.

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai also deals with the queer identities and brings out the way in which the norms formulated by the society can prove to be a major hindrance in ensuring happiness and contentment to all individuals. Dattani sets his play in an urban setting with suave, intelligent and modern characters as Ankur Konar in his article "Drama, Dattani and Discourse: Position and Exposition" remarks:

Dattani's playscript casts its focus and locus entirely on the urban space, specifically rooted in the dynamics of domestic space. Environmental sustainability of the cities like Bangalore or Mumbai in his plays are the symbolic tropes and modes of economic power. (1)

Kamlesh, the protagonist of the play is a homosexual and is not ashamed of his sexual identity and accepts it completely. His lover Ed/ Prakash leaves him as he is ashamed to be a homosexual and decides to become straight. Kamlesh is not able to get over Prakash even after being involved with another partner Sharad. In order to seek help, he invites his friends Sharad, Deepali, Bunny, Ranjit to his place. All of them are homosexuals, some of them happy with their identities and others not. Deepali and Sharad openly accept their homosexual orientations while Bunny and Ranjit have devised certain ways to hide their identities. Bunny did this by getting married and Ranjit by going to some other country as he finds it difficult to get acceptance in India. Bunny and Ranjit act as the mouthpieces in the hands of Dattani to comment on the prevailing hypocrisy in both the homosexual and heterosexual worlds. Kiran who is the sister of Kamlesh and is about to marry Ed, being completely unaware of his homosexual identity is also employed to highlight the attitude of heterosexuals. Towards the end of the play when she faces the truth she is completely shattered. Shame and guilt experienced by Ed at the revelation of his identity force him to attempt suicide but he is saved. The play is open ended and provides no solution but raises many important questions as to the attitudes towards queer relationships.

At the social level, heterosexual relationships are taken to be unethical, so individuals with queer inclination have to hide their real identity under social pressure. All this start from quite a very young age when parents start repressing

the sexual orientation of individuals and they are taught to behave in specific ways as prescribed by the society. Vijay Tendulkar in his play *A Friends Story* brings this repressive technique embedded in society, operating right from the childhood where they are forced to behave in certain ways. While narrating her story to Babu, Mitra says:

When she came of age, rather early, they got worried. They became very strict. 'What will people say?' was the bugbear they set up to control her. They sought to stamp her mind with the fear of men, at a time she didn't know why men were dangerous. (431)

Thus, the repressive matrix of heterosexual society which starts instilling the heteronormative norms in the children can be easily observed. This repression of sexuality gets started right from the childhood. Under the societal pressure the queer individuals have to repress their true identities. They are not able to openly accept their true identities as they have a very strong fear of being made an outcaste by the society. Mahesh Dattani in his play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* brings out the plight of the queer individuals who under the pressure of society repress their desires. At the very beginning of the play it is clearly suggested that the two men i.e. Kamlesh and the guard had sex in the bedroom. There goes on a conversation between them which follow as:

KAMLESH. Tum, kya . . . yeh sab . . . paise ke liye karte ho?

GUARD .Nahin. Hahn! Hahn, main paise ke liye hi to karta hoon sab kuch! (51)

KAMLESH. You do all this for money?

GUARD. No. Yes! Yes! I do everything for money only! (translation mine)

It is clear from the gestures of the guard that he is telling a lie. There is a sort of irony present in his reply as money could not be the only reason for which he is doing this. The truth is that in order to hide his actual desire for the companionship of a man he makes an excuse that he is doing all this for money.

Later on when Kamlesh further asks him whether he likes it or not, he has no answer but understanding his situation Kamlesh himself remarks, "But we will have to pretend you do it only for the money!" (51)

The pressure of social forces is such that the queer individuals themselves are not able to accept their own identity. They are ashamed of the identities they have and also they try to avert from their true selves in order to gain acceptance. Ed or Prakash in the play had been the former lover of Kamlesh who being ashamed of their relationship decides to get rid of his homosexual inclination and become straight. He says, "I am not happy with being who I am. And I want to try to be like the rest" (92).

Thus we can easily see that these queer individuals are repressed to such a level that they themselves are not able to accept their own identities as they are well aware that the heteronormative social norms would never provide any sanction to their orientations. This predicament is further highlighted by Ranjit when he says, "At some point or another we all wish to be something we are not" (69).

The hollowness of homophobic society can be easily seen as they are not able to understand or just don't want to understand the situation in which the homosexuals live. The sort of confusion, dilemma, mental conflict and the identity crisis faced by them are not easy to comprehend. The only reason behind this is that there already exists a pre-notion about the sexuality which prevents the further rational introspection regarding this matter. They feel alienated in the homophobic society as they are not able to identify completely with the heterosexuals who turn a deaf ear towards their sufferings. This plight of homosexuals is brought out very effectively by Tendulkar who makes Mitra the mouthpiece for the homosexuals. Mitra brings out this pain of alienation among homosexuals alive when she says, "It's useless. Certain things can be shared only if you accept things as they are, here and now" (424). Here we can easily visualise the frustration of the homosexual individuals who always face the non-acceptance of the society.

Dattani also raises the same issue of non-acceptance by the heterosexual society where the queers have to repress their identity. When Kamlesh, suffering

from severe depression consults a psychiatrist in hope of being understood and getting some help, he finds no respite for his present situation. Sharing his experience with his friends Kamlesh says:

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 to reorient yourself. (69)

This is one of the ways out from the dilemma as suggested by the heterosexuals to the homosexuals, to change themselves as they cannot change the society. Even the most rational individuals offer such kind of remedies which further alienate these homosexuals in the society. Here we can also observe psychiatry as a powerful discourse in the alienation of homosexuals. Instead of understanding and working towards providing space to homosexuals, psychiatry further tends to be helpful in their subjugation by encouraging them to avert from their real sexualities and accept the sexuality with which they can't really relate to. Psychiatry as a part of psychoanalysis should help in resolving the problems faced by homosexuals not by making them repress their actual sexualities but by helping them to accept their real identities. It is treated like a disease which can be cured by medication and reorientation. Thus through the discourse of psychiatry, the heteronormative norms are further strengthened which results in further repression of homosexuals.

There is a huge amount of frustration which the homosexuals feel when being chained by the societal norms they have to repress their sexual feelings which further suffocate their isolated lives to such an extent that they start questioning their own identities. This frustration is easily visible in the outburst of Mitra when she says, "Who makes us the way we are and sends us here? Why are we what we are? Why do we become our own slaves. . . We have to search for own answers. No one can help. One is alone" (424). The same frustration can be seen in Kamlesh when his beloved man Prakash/Ed leaves him under the pressure of society. Mitra was very well aware of her situation in which she would

not be able to maintain heterosexual relationship with any man. This turned her restless and soon it took the form of a psychic disorder where she grew more and more stubborn and rebellious. Sudden outrageous outbursts mark her frustration with the heterosexual sexuality. Coming out openly as a homosexual would not only invite criticism but also social hatred. That is why, Kamlesh says, ". . . For the first time in my life, I wished I wasn't a gay" (69). So this frustration and questioning as well as the dissatisfaction with queer identities is universally present which further leads to the social ostracisation of the queers.

The only way to gain acceptance is to hide the reality of queer individuals. The only way out of this predicament is to pretend to be straight in this homophobic society which categorises everything, even the identities on the basis of straight and queer. The deviants have to maintain their sexualities in secrecy and have to pretend to be following the sexual norms of the society. In order to survive they need to fake their identities as is evident from the remarks of Bunny when 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 instinct of camouflage" (70).

The institution of marriage is another remedy which offers an easy escape from being identified as homosexuals. In this homophobic society marriage acts as the most effective tool to suppress the real sexual inclinations of individuals. As Bunny also suggests Kamlesh that he should get married and pretend to be straight. This would turn to be in his favour as no one would suspect him to be a homosexual which in turn would provide the social security but also he can satisfy his homosexual urges in secret. The conversation between Bunny and Sharad goes as:

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

SHARAD. And pretend to be straight like you!

BUNNY. What's wrong with that? Huh? Do you think I will be accepted by the millions if I screamed from the roof tops that I am a gay. (70)

The same solution was offered to Mitra when her parents become suspicious of her behaviour. Mitra tells Bapu how her parents decided to get her married and how she had to obey their orders. She says:

. . . Well, pretty soon everyone decided their darling girl had to be fixed up with a decent boy. She was forced to maintain friendly ties with a particular boy. They tried hard. Created opportunities for them to meet. Evenings were set aside for this. A gentle force was exerted. The girl obeyed orders. (431)

So we can easily see how the notion of marriage in heterosexual society holds an important place in the social structure. It is not just possible to always live in social isolation as there is always a need of being socially accepted in the social structure. The homosexuals are denied this right of being together and are unjustly denied the companionship of their partners. The homosexuals are often turned into hypocrites who hide their real identity by wearing a mask of heterosexual identity by getting married. Many times, they have to camouflage their identity for the fear of being ostracised. One has to pay a very heavy price if he accepts to be a gay. They know it very well that they can't love the person with the same intensity as they can do with the person of the same sex, but still under pressure they accept it. Nama Deshmukh in *A Friend's Story* despite of being in relationship with Sumitra gets married just out of the social pressure which won't provide any sanction to their relationship. In the same way, bringing out the dogmatic nature of the society and marriage which is not based on love for companion, but is meant more for social acceptance and security, Dattani making Bunny as the mouthpiece for this prevailing hypocrisy of society says that, "She boasts about my work to all her neighbours. Our children are popular in school. And they all love me. And they all love me. At least I am not depressed like Kamlesh" (84).

The attitude of heterosexual individuals can be seen with much gravity in the comments of Kiran, who herself is a heterosexual and knows about the homosexual tendency of her brother Kamlesh. She also suggests him to repress his sexual desires in order to live with dignity in the society. When Kamlesh asks for suggestion from Kiran of what he should do and whether he is wrong in having orientation towards same sex, the following conversation takes place:

KAMLESH. Let them talk! If two men want to love one another, what's the harm?

KIRAN. Kamlesh take my advice. Don't let people know about you. You will spend your whole life defending yourself. If I had a choice, I would stay invisible too. (91)

The suggestion as given by Kiran to her brother Kamlesh is in many cases used by homosexuals in order to have social status and to protect the identity they have made in the society by being heterosexual. This is evident proof of the hypocrisy present in the homosexuals who try to put their identities inside the closet under the pressurizing norms of the society. Bunny, who is an actor and plays the role of an ideal husband in some TV programme is an example of this prevailing hypocrisy among homosexuals. When Kiran questions his sexuality, he simply abstains from accepting his reality and averts the question.

KIRAN. I just wouldn't have guessed.

BUNNY. Guessed what?

KIRAN. That you are . . . well, like my brother.

BUNNY. Oh no! I am not . . . like them. They are such intelligent people and good company. I am a very liberal-minded person. (76)

Dattani explores new horizon of human experiences that can provide more comprehensive images of the struggle of existence in the backdrop of socially constructed images. Dattani very strongly keeps his own point of view regarding the gender identity of an individual through the medium of Bunny when he says, "All I am saying is that we should all forget categorising people as gay or straight or bi or whatever, and let them do what they want to do" (88).

As discussed in Chapter One, gender is the repetitive performance of various acts, so it is our notion of different acts which further takes the form of gender roles. As a common notion of male and female roles are already decided, so any divergence from these performances leads to the designation of an

individual as deviant. Through the enactment of these roles one not only earns acceptance but also gives him or her power and authority. As Sharad puts it:

All it needs is a bit of practice . . . Don't sit with your legs cross keep them wide apart. And make sure you occupy lots of space in the room. It's all about occupying space, baby. The walk. Walk as if you have a cricket bat between your legs. And thrust your hand forward when you meet people. . . . Watch the speech. No fluttery vowels. Not 'It's so-o-o hot in here!'-but It's HOT! It's fucking HOT! (101)

Thus these superficial performances of an individual decides actually his identity to a great extent. It has nothing to do with the sexual orientations of an individual. If a person has homosexual yearnings but still he behaves as per the norms of society even then he is taken to be heterosexual. So, the deception of appearances as well as mannerisms are used as useful trope by the homosexuals to hide their real identity. Ed in the play breaks his relation with Kamlesh and says that he has become straight. He uses the performance to hide his homosexuality and pretend to be straight. Taken by the fake identity as presented by Ed, Kiran makes the following remark about him, "He is so . . . male. So protective, so caring and so assertive" (104). But the truth is completely different and the disguise of Ed as a heterosexual comes out when he confesses in front of Kamlesh that he still loved him and wants to maintain his homosexual relation with him even after marriage as no one would suspect them that way.

This repression is not just evident from the dialogues between the characters but also the settings of both the plays bring out many things. The title *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* itself points towards the suffocating conditions in which the queer sexualities dwell in the heteronormative society. The characters repeatedly talk about the hot air and high temperature which points towards the heat which these queer sexualities are facing against them in the society. The reference to working air conditioner in Kamlesh's flat hints towards the satisfaction and comfort all these queers experience there. This is the place where they longer have to camouflage and can breathe freely. It is the place which gives them respite from the oppressing society. Thus we can feel the presence of society whether directly or indirectly as Konar remarks, "In the qualitative progression of

thought through the interpretative impasse of dislocation, collocation and allocation, there is no abrupt break with society" (11). The wedding in the same compound where these queers are meeting is ironical. At one place the marriage of heterosexuals is celebrated and everyone blesses them. On the other side are these homosexuals whose relationships are not sanctified and face contempt. Thus, the music and noise of the marriage procession seems to be unbearable for all the queers. It reminds them of their failure in gaining acceptance in the society. The multi-level stage setting also provides an insight into the psyche of the queers. "Different zones and levels on the stage indicate the different psychological impasse of different characters" (Konar 10). In other words it is the representation of their mental spaces. In the introduction of ACT-1 there is a description of Kamlesh's flat which goes as:

The stage is divided into three acting areas. The first is a small flat, beautifully done up in 'ethnic chic fashion' . . . The windows overlook the Mumbai skyline and act literally as a window to the city with its glittering lights. The entire flat is almost too perfect to be real. Yet it speaks a lot of its occupant, Kamlesh and his attempt at creating a world where he can belong. The second area, a completely non-realistic set comprising three levels, is black and expansive. Characters in this area are immediately suspended in a 'shoonya' where they are forced to confront their inner thoughts. Below this is Kamlesh's bedroom. The bedroom is realistic, but hidden behind a gauze wall, giving it some mystery and secrecy. The backdrop of these three acting areas is the Mumbai skyline, engulfing the created world of Kamlesh, the secret private space of the bedroom and the deeper space that belongs to the inner thoughts of the characters. (49)

Thus we can see how not only the characters are the representatives of the oppression, dilemma and truths of their sexualities but also the stage setting itself talks about them. *A Friends Story* also is full of symbolic representations which allow an individual to peep inside the psyche of homosexuals through the medium of Mitra. Babu's room is a symbol of a safe place where Mitra can be herself; she need not hide her homosexual identity. When the room is clean then it represents the harmony of Mitra's life and the peace in her mind. At the other time everything

in the room is scattered and cigarette butts are lying everywhere, this points towards the disturbance in Mitra's life and her mental agony when she feels cheated by Nama. The cigarette butts too are a symbol of the lives of homosexuals. Just as the cigarette butts are of no use after the cigarette is over, similar is the case with the lives of homosexuals. The society treats them as useless pieces and wriggles them under their feet as they know they are not able to fulfill the heteronormative norms of the society. Later in the play when Mitra writes unnamed love letters to Nama, this reflects the loss of identity of Mitra and other sexualities. Her visit to the filthy and unknown areas in order to meet is clear symbol of her strong repulsion towards the moralistic and social codes. This in turn is her disappointment with the norms of the society. Bapu, who tries to understand Mitra is the symbol of writer's sympathy towards homosexuals, whereas Dalvi is a symbol of the oppressing society and its hostility towards homosexuals. At the end death of Mitra symbolises the loss of hope in the society which is homophobic at large. Thus we can easily see how the character themselves become the symbol throughout the play. They are not just single characters but represent a whole community on a whole.

Mahesh Dattani and Vijay Tendulkar have very successfully brought out the suffering of homosexuals by the representation of the repression which they face not only on the account of society but also because of the inner conflicts going on within themselves. The repression grows stronger when the queer individual is a female like that in the case of Mitra. The repression of female homosexual is at a much larger scale in the patriarchal heteronormative society. By making the central character a female, Tendulkar has pointed out towards the role of society in repression of doubly marginalised females."Tendulkar observes that woman suffers largely as the victim of the institutional body of powers in the Indian society. Often there is a collision between the two i.e., woman and society sparking off Violence" (Janarhanreddy et al. 179).Repression of queer sexuality is in play everywhere in the heteronormative society by making heterosexuality natural and legal and on the other hand homosexuality illegal, unnatural and abnormal. The repression of queers gain momentum when the discourses which are otherwise believed to provide some space for them, themselves become operative in repression of queer sexualities. Psychiatry which is otherwise thought to provide

space for the repressed queers itself treats queerness as a disease which needs to be cured. Complete restraint from queer tendencies are recommended to cure queerness. Thus psychiatry itself becomes handy in repression of queer sexualities. The repression of society goes on to such extent that the queer individuals are forced to follow heterosexual norms of marriage which is considered to be the best cure for homosexuality in the homophobic society. This becomes very clear when Mitra's parents being suspicious of her queerness make many attempts to marry her. Similarly Bunny Singh, who is homosexual, asks Kamlesh to get married in order to get over his desire for Prakash. Religion also plays an important role in the suppression of queer individuals by regarding queerness as a sin and the work of devil. In order to get rid of queerness, they recommend regular prayers as the only way out of this sin.

It is not the individuals alone who disapprove homosexuality but the high institutions of society like church who do not approve and sanctify such relations because relations between same sex, since they cannot be procreative are seen as unnatural and carnal. (Singh 2)

Power is also used to repress the queers, sometimes it may take the form of physical assault and at the other time it can be seen in the form of misuse of authority. When Dalvi in *A Friends Story* comes to know about the relationship between Mitra and Nama, he abuses her verbally as well as physically. This is the use of power to repress the queer inclinations by the threat of force. At the other occasion, when Mitra's affair with Nama becomes public, the college authorities throw her out of the college. This is the misuse of authority to repress queers. Misuse of power is not just against Mitra but she also uses power to subjugate Bapu and Nama, "Nama was frightened of the power of Mitra exerted over her and surrendered to her overtures easily. Bapu too, was forced to allow them to use his room"(Janarhanreddy et al. 182). Thus power is not only exerted by queers but also by them in order to maintain their relationship. An outcome of all these repressive attitudes results in the camouflaging of identities by queers which proves to be devastating for themselves also as they face identity crisis. Thus both the playwrights have very efficiently brought out the repression of queer sexualities at different levels and by different modes in the society.

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Social Stigma on Queer Identity in the Selected Plays

Queer Identities have always been viewed with an eye of huge contempt and have often been stigmatised in the society. This social ostracisation leads to make queerness a social taboo about which nothing is to be said or even listened to. In this present scenario Mahesh Dattani has used his theatrical techniques to break the silence regarding the queer identities. He has dealt with this issue with a deep human insight as well as with true humanistic sympathy. Regarding this, John McRae in his introduction to *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, writes:

. . . the themes of *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* deserve to touch the whole of society and to be touched by it. 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 it is for individuals to fall victim to the expectations society creates. (McRae 45)

The play is set in a flat where there is a gathering of some friends which are later on discovered to be queers is going on but the presence of outer world can be observed from time to time in the course of action. A wedding is going on in the same building. There is a lot of noise, music and wedding songs etc. which indicates the intrusion of the outer world into the personal lives of the characters. Highlighting the presence of society, Jaspal Singh in his article "Mahesh Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai: An Articulation of Gay Identity Crisis*" remarks:

Dattani cleverly juxtaposes two contrasting scenarios where there is the gathering of gays in a flat on one hand, where all the action takes place and of a wedding going on offstage and sounds of celebration are quite loud and clear. The wedding is the sanctification and endorsement of a heterosexual relationship. (1)

The outside heat is stressed upon at many places in the play which indicates the actual hostility which these queer people face in this homophobic society. The air conditioner in Kamlesh's flat and the relief it provides to them is symbolic of the comfort these people feel without the fake identities which they carry in order to survive in the hostile society carrying hostility and contempt

towards them. The hypocrisy of queer subjects is not just their tactic to gain acceptance in the society but also is symbolic of the oppression of the society.

Dattani spotlights the crisis that gays face as they are torn between their true self and what the traditional Indian society thinks and expects of the gays. Their hidden fears and feelings are carefully portrayed in these plays. Dattani, within the framework of dramatic structure tries to investigate the identity crisis of the gays who occupy no honourable space in social order. (Singh 1)

The same oppression at the level of the society can be easily observed in *A Friend's Story* which represents the violence whether it be physical, mental or emotional, against the individuals who are labeled as misfits and considered to be unworthy of belonging to it. Mitra, who is not ashamed of her sexuality tries to build relationship of love and friendship in this harsh homophobic society but is left all alone as no one could understand the traumatic condition she was present in. The male characters very efficiently bring out the true face of the homophobic society which is afraid of queers strong and independent personality. There is a deep seated contradiction which persists in the homophobic society and leads to the stigmatisation of these queer individuals.

A Friend's Story opens with the discovering of the Mitra's photograph by Bapu with which he is astonished as well as repulsed at the same time. This was the beginning of the friendship of Mitra with Bapu and in this relationship Mitra invests whole of her trust but she never finds whole acceptance on the part of Bapu, who comes to symbolise the homophobic society which can at some point try to pretend to understand the situation of queers but in reality never relates with them. This becomes very clear with the confusion and reluctance Bapu faces when Mitra confesses to him about her sexuality. He says:

. . . What she had disclosed about herself left me dazed. Do such women exist? Are they born like that or do they get conditioned as they grow to be what they are? Is it an ailment or a human trait of a particular kind? What would happen to Mitra? It was bizzare, repulsive and . . . abhorrent. (434)

Thus, we can clearly see how the homophobic society as represented by Bapu, is reluctant towards the queer subjects and is not ready to accept them as their actual selves and further stigmatising their subjectivities. There are a lot of misconceptions which exist in the society regarding the queer individuals. They are not considered to be normal and are often regarded as something evil. A *Friend's Story* deals with a queer person who happens to be a female. The way society looks upon her is represented through the medium of Bapu. Mitra is regarded as "frigid" (434), "eunuch" (435), "not normal" (455) and "lesbian bitch" (456). This is how the society stigmatise the queer individuals by calling them names without any true acknowledgement of their true state. A negative image is cropped up and the image is further demonised and it assaults both mentally and emotionally, further reducing their status of being an evil for society. The dialogue between Bapu and Pande sums up this in a very effective manner while they are talking about Mitra.

BAPU. I mean a girl who is altogether . . . she doesn't get turned on by men.

PANDEY. Call them frigid.

BAPU. What? PANDEY.F-R-I-G-I-D. The touch of a man leaves them ice cold.

BAPU. I mean, things must be difficult for them, I mean life . . .

PANDE. It must be very difficult for a man caught up with such a dame. Poor bastard, he can neither chew nor swallow . . .

PANDE. You have seen them clapping and dancing haven't you? Eunuchs . . . they're like that. (434-435)

The true face of homophobic society is unveiled here, as instead of trying to understand the actual position and problems of queers, they are considered to be an evil. "Even those parents who are willing to be considered as modern will not let their children branded as homosexuals, as it will bring stigma on the entire family" (Patel 125). Stereotypes are created and their identities are belittled and this adds to further alienation of queer identities.

The identities of queer individuals are created in binary opposition of the heterosexuals. The stereotypical images are the result of the stifling, dominating discourses operating in the society. In homophobic society, a male is defined by certain behavioral patterns like being aggressive, strong etc. which are associated with being manly. Foucault also has analysed the stereotypical image of homosexual as:

In the nineteenth century texts there is a stereotypical portrait of the homosexual or invert, not only his mannerisms, his bearing, the ways he get dolled up, his coquetry, but also his facial expressions, his anatomy, the feminine morphology of his whole body are regularly included in this disparaging description". (18)

Camouflaging identity thus becomes very important for the queers in order to maintain the reputation and to save themselves from being thrown out of the society to a distant corner of alienation as Sawant remarks, "Every second person may be a homosexual but fear of ostracism restrains him from exposing himself" (38). This anxiety of queers being situated in the margins is brought out by Deepali when she says, "It's not the shame, is it? With us? . . . It's fear . . . Of the corners" (14). The norms of society make it very difficult for the queers to accept their real identities openly and they have to cover themselves in the veil of secrecy which leads to hypocrisy at large on the behalf of queers. But this hypocrisy is not just limited to the queers as the society and its norms are responsible for it. This repression on the part of society has been pointed out in the introduction to *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* where Jon McRae writes:

. . . 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. (McRae 46)

Thus the queers tend to hide their sexuality in order to survive in this hostile world. Even if they make an effort to explain themselves to the society, they are shunned off often. Mitra brings this out when she says:

. . . I will have to tell my people sometime. The question is, even if I were to tell them, will they understand? They may not even know

that such condition exists. Even if they know it, they may find it easier to feign ignorance." (433)

The only people with whom queers can associate are other queers who can understand their plight as they are themselves the victims of hostility meted out by the society. They are alienated from the society as it is not just possible to live alone on love; every individual also yearns for social acceptance and company. So, even being aware of unhappiness they experience, they still have to follow the constricting social rules and decorum. The nature and the remedy offered by the homophobic society is clearly indicated when Kiran says, "Kamlesh, take my advice. Don't let people know about you. You will spend your whole life defending yourself. If I had a choice, I would stay invisible too" (91). Bringing out this situation alive Bunny says:

. . . 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 in this room...I have tried to survive. In both worlds. And it seems I do not exist in either . . . I deny them in public but love them in private. (102-103)

A Friend's Story deals with the friendship of Mitra, Bapu and Mitra's affair with another girl Nama. Although Bapu from the very beginning of the play helps Mitra but he never approves of or her love for Nama. He doesn't consider her to be normal and her love to be natural. He wants to be friends with Mitra but at the same time he is also rebuffed by her sexuality. At many times he asks himself whether he was doing it right by helping Mitra or was something wrong with it. Bapu expresses his dilemma as, "But I had the niggling feeling that I was doing something wrong... I never stopped questioning myself. Is it right or wrong?" (444)

So, this is the predicament which queers face as their love is not given any sanction in the society and they have to maintain their relationship in secrecy and away from the eyes of the society. The social forces with their demeaning effect often produces guilt, alienation, aggression, remorse among the queers, as they are not able to adjust themselves in the set rules of the society which are guided by homophobia and results in the destruction of individuality of a queer. Thus the queer community suffers under the pressure where their identity is lost and there

arises a state of crisis for them. Kamlesh puts it in his words as, "They can't see us at all, although we can see them. They must be blind" (81). The true plight of queers is revealed here as this homophobic society is truly blind towards the concerns and the conditions of these queers and forces them to hide their real identities in order to be a part of the society.

In *A Friend's Story* Nama Deshmukh in order to hide her love affair with Mitra also maintains her relationship with her boyfriend Dalvi. In public places or in front of him she refuses to accept her love for Mitra. Even when Dalvi abuses Mitra as, "You bloody lesbian bitch, you I'll kill you! Aren't you ashamed? . . . I'll crush you, you devil, I tell you, I'll tear you to pieces on the streets, I'll strip you on the road" (456). The hostility of society thus becomes very evident from the way Dalvi abuses Mitra and also the helplessness of queers to discard their own identity is brought out by the playwright. Also as the action commences Nama further refuses her relationship by saying that she and Mitra are just friends. Although the inclination of Nama is towards Mitra but she constantly refuses as she is very well aware of the very fact that their relationship would be in no way be accepted by the society, which judges everything on the norms of being straight and everything else is judged on this basis. Also if the relationship comes out into open then it would bring out a huge amount of shame and denouncement on the social front. In order to avoid this segregation from the society, Nama leaves off to Calcutta in order to get married when her love affair with Mitra is made public. Also she just washes off her hands clean she says that she was tricked in and blackmailed by Mitra and it was a forced upon relationship not of her own consent. "On hearing the death of Mitra, there is a sense of relief" (Janardhanreddy et al. 182). It becomes clear from the reactions of Dalvi who represents the heteronormative society and says, "Everything ends with Death. She is no more" (494).

Similar is the case in the love affair of Kamlesh and Ed. Kamlesh was not ashamed of his queerness just like Mitra but his partner is not happy with being a queer just like Nama Deshmukh. Both Mitra and Kamlesh yearn for the company of their loved ones who in turn are not sincere in the love affair. On one side there is Nama who alleges that the relationship was not on her consent but was forced upon her and marries, on the other side there is Ed who says that he has become heterosexual and is involved with Kamlesh's sister Kiran who is unaware of his

true identity and is going to marry him. So, this needs to be understood that the feelings which queers have are similar to that of the heterosexuals but the difference lies in the choice of partners which should be the individualistic decision made by people instead of being forced upon by the society. Under this restriction imposed upon the queer individuals, they are denied the basic right of being loved. It becomes very important to provide equal space to queers in the society and should be allowed to make a choice of being what they want to be.

Thus the social stigma on queerness prevents it from being an acceptable state and the queers have to feign their true identities in order to gain power and dignity in the society which decides everything on the sexuality. Where heterosexuals are given all the power and queers are segregated from the main stream. This is evident from the ironic statement of Sharad where he says:

. . . being a heterosexual man- a real man, as Ed put it-I get everything. I get to be accepted-accepted by whom? Well, that marriage lot down there for instance. I can have a wife, I can have children who will adore me simply because I am a hetero . . . a real man . . . If I can be a real man, I can be king. (101)

This social stigma is further elevated when the queers have to maintain their relationship in secrecy or they are at the risk of being out casted from the society. This is brought out through the medium of guard when he brings back the photograph of Ed and Kamlesh, after it falls from the window in the compound where the marriage is going on. The guard says:

Aap log apna kam sari duniya ko batana chahte hai . . . Aapka woh photo! Baraat wale ke compound me gira! . . . Sab bache dekh rahe the! Sab hans rahe the . . . Aur phir badon ne bhi dekh liya. Sab ne dekh liya! . . . Abhi aap logon ka kya hoga? Aap ye sab khullam khulla kyu karte hain? (105)

You people want to tell your deeds to the whole world . . . That photo of yours! Fell in the marriage ceremony compound! . . . All children were looking at it! Everybody was laughing . . . And then the elders

also saw it. Everybody has seen! . . . What would happen to you people now? Why do you do all this openly? (translation mine)

Another character Kiran seems to be the real sympathiser of these queer individuals and advocates that they should be allowed to marry the partner of their own choice or else they would never be happy. She unaware of the deception of Ed on being queer utters the ironic words, "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" (102). At other times she acts as the mouthpiece of playwright to comment on the society and its attitude towards the queers when she comes to know about the relationship of Ed and Kamlesh. Her reactions are conventional and it further suggests the social stigma and represents not just her reactions but of the society as a whole. She becomes overwhelmed with the feeling of guilt as well as shame of being in relationship with Ed and says:

Ah, but they know you. Just think. Somewhere, sometimes you will meet someone at a party who might say- 'You look familiar' and every time you hear that, your heart will beat a little faster, your feet will grow cold. Has this person seen that picture? Does this person know who I really am? (108)

Thus the society appears again and again in the course of both the plays from time to time, sometimes the playwright makes the characters mouthpiece for the society and at other times the presence of the pressure of society becomes evident in other forms. In *A Friend's Story* Bapu appears to be a sympathiser of queer world especially when he gets tired of talking Mitra out of her queer relationship and out of desperation he addresses the audience as:

Where does this stubbornness come from? Why do some people insist on the impossible? What does one do with people who are bent on treading the path of endless pain and agony? Nothing. Wisdom lies in doing nothing. But what if one is unable to do nothing? (458)

Tendulkar, making Bapu as a sympathiser of queers, brings out his own humanistic concern towards the queer subjects and sympathises with what they

have to face in this heterosexual society. Bapu on other occasions also come to represent the deaf and dumb society which never acknowledges its queers and is adamant at making them leave their real identities and become straight as if being queer is some kind of disease which can be cured. He offers this solution to Mitra to forget Nama and become heterosexual. He puts it as:

What has happened has happened. It had to stop at some stage, and it has. Let life begin afresh now. Let's see this as a new opportunity which has come our way to change course. . . If you resolve to change, then everything can change . . . We waste our time in thoughtless actions. Thinking makes us realize our mistakes. What's the use of putting heart and soul into something which can never happen? (484)

On the other hand Dalvi becomes the representative of the society carrying hostility towards the queer individuals. When love affair of Mitra and Nama become public her name is scratched out from the register as the management is afraid that the name of the college would be defamed if it comes to light. It is made to appear that she herself had left the college. Dalvi turns hostile towards Mitra which in turn represents the hostility of society towards queer subjects, when he says:

. . . I will dispatch letters to any college where she gets admission. I have already got the letters cyclostyled. I will make everything public . . . she can't be crushed at one go. She's the sort who will wriggle on, sprouting nine lives . . . I'm not going to let that bitch go free. If need be, I will go personally to wreck her chances. Watch me. (480)

So both the writers have employed the same characters to represent the hostility as well as sympathy towards the queer world. There is also the representation of the change of consciousness of the characters which also represents the society at one stage or the other. In the introduction of *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* John McRae, bringing out the intrusion of the outside world writes:

The outside world is always pressing in - the heat, the sounds, the people pestering Bunny, the kids who find the photo. Very few

dramatists are able to give this sense of a whole society . . . it recalls Ibsen at his social best. (45)

We can easily draw parallels between both the plays *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *A Friend's Story*, as both bring out the way in which the queer identities are stigmatised and considered being unnatural and devilish at the same time. Both the playwrights have presented the sympathetic outlook on the injustice and harsh treatment they have to face. They have very efficiently brought out the hypocrisy of homophobic society which demeans the individuality of queers through the different stifling and repressing discourses.

Thus the social stigma attached to queer people makes the survival of queers difficult in the society which is largely homophobic. The queers have to live their life under fear and by veiling up of their true sexuality or else they are ostracised from the society. In order to survive, queers have to camouflage their identity. Thus hypocrisy forms a permanent streak in the personality of queers. They are always haunted by the thought of isolation in the society in case their queerness comes out. In *A Friend's Story* Nama camouflages her queerness by giving the name of friendship to her relationship with Mitra. When their queer relationship comes into light she completely denies such relationship and the whole blame comes upon Mitra. *A Muggy Night in Mumbai* provides a vivid picture of this camouflaging through different modes like physical appearance, getting married or leave the country as queer relationships could never find acceptance in the society. So, the social stigma attached to queer sexuality not only isolates an individual from the society but also from himself.

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Queer Dilemma: A Study of the Selected Plays

The dilemma of queer individuals regarding their own identity is dealt with a much sympathetic and rational outlook by both Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani. Queer dilemma is faced by the queer individuals in every walk of life. They become suspicious of themselves and their identity too at one time or the other. Some of the queers are strong enough to accept their real identities while others who are in a state of dilemma, often refuse to accept their distinct individuality and identity. In a desperate attempt to get rid of their queerness, they very often try to avert from their true queer identity and this results in a traumatic condition for these individuals and they are thrown into the dark void of existence where they neither belong to this world nor to the other world. This predisposition of queer individuals has been highlighted with a deep introspective technique by both the playwrights. Very tenderly they bring out the outcry of the queers facing dilemma of existence in the outer as well as inner world. There always exists a deep dilemma in the psyche of queer individuals which constitutes the conflict between the personal desires and social binders.

In the beginning of *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* Kamlesh asks the guard to make arrangements for the get together he has organised with his friends. The action is carried on at two different levels. At the surface level, Kamlesh is asking the guard to make arrangements for the party but on the mental level he is asking the guard for his company so that he can fulfill his sexual desires. He makes a desperate attempt to stop the guard for his company and out of desperation he hurriedly rushes towards the guard in order to tie his shoelace and says, "Let me do it for you. Please . . ." [Kamlesh kneels beside him, grabs his foot and tries to put it on his thigh] (50).

He further asks the guard if he enjoys love making with him or he just does it for money. This is a way for Kamlesh to get rid of his guilt. The exasperation and apprehensions of Kamlesh further become clear when he says that, "But we will have to pretend you do it only for money!" (51). Thus here Dattani brings out the tension going on inside Kamlesh which arises out of his homosexual love and the realization of his eccentricity. The same kind of dilemma is experienced by Mitra in *A Friend's Story* when she tries to explain her condition to Bapu but finds it difficult

to confide in him and says, "It's useless. Certain things can be shared only if you accept things as they are, here and now" (424). Thus the frustration is visible which is a result of the great dilemma faced by these queer individuals regarding their sexuality and the situation worsens when they do not find any way out of their situation. They neither belong to this world nor to that world which is the main reason behind this internal conflict.

The love relations in both the plays also bring out another facet of the queer dilemma. The dilemma is not just regarding the queer identity but it also occupies another sphere of personal choices they have to make. The love relationship of Prakash and Kamlesh is an example of such a personal conflict. Prakash calls off his relationship with Kamlesh on the pretext of being ashamed of his sexuality and by saying that he has got rid of his homosexuality and has become straight. Kamlesh is not able to cope up with this situation and expresses his helplessness in the following confession he makes to his friends:

Please! I am afraid! I need your help! I need you all. I am afraid. Frightened. 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. 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. It would have worked between us, but he was ashamed. (68-69)

So this is the personal dilemma which the queer individuals face in their love relationships, which are often shattered when they become suspicious of their own sexualities as not being natural but something more of a fantasy or something unnatural. "On the conscious realisation of the fact that her being 'homo' would not permit her to maintain normal human relationship, makes her restless and it subsequently transforms into a psychic disorder of her personality" (Janardhanreddy et al. 137). All this results in the catastrophic situation for which they further blame their sexuality. The same situation of personal devastation is faced by Mitra when her love partner Nama goes off with her boyfriend leaving Mitra bewildered at the situation. Out of rage she says, "Bapu, she followed him

straightaway. The bitch. He had only to whistle to have her running to lick his feet. Simply disgusting. I hate her. Shouldn't she show some spunk?" (457)

This outrageous breakout of Mitra on being disappointed about the attitude of Nama provides a deep insight into the deep embedded feeling of inferiority and shame which persists in the psyche of these queer individuals. Throughout their lives they have to face the combat between their personal choices and the choices they have to make on the social front. The feeling of loss of acceptance of their sexualities within themselves is the biggest dilemma they face. Such violent reactions are the clear indicators of the sense of guilt of the queers and the hostility of society. Concern of Tendulkar with the victimisation of individuals become one of the main themes in his plays and can be summed up as:

The plays of Vijay Tendulkar's play focus on the conflict and confrontation between individual and society. The angry and frustrated protagonists of his plays are actually the victims of harsh circumstances in life in the so-called modern, cultured society. The anger and frustration of these young men and women is expressed in their rejection of the conventional or traditional values and norms. (Virk 98)

If these queer individuals need to gain acceptance in the eyes of whole society, they first need to accept themselves with whole heart. While some of them are honest and bold enough to accept their sexualities in front of everybody without any shame or hesitation, the others are not ready to accept themselves. Nama is an example of such a character who completely restrains from accepting it. She doesn't feel complete in her relationship with Mitra and considers their love affair to be a completely different matter. She says, "Well, I like Mitra as a friend. I . . . I like many things about her. But Manya Dalvi is a different matter altogether I mean, there is no comparison. What I mean is- I'm not able to say what I mean . . . the truth is - I think . . . I don't know what I mean. I'll go" (460). Here this confused confession on the behalf of Nama is the representation of true state of mind of queers who themselves are confused about their own identity or to put in other words they find it difficult to accept their sexual identity.

To be or not to be' identified as a gay 'is the question' that Ed and other gays in the play face. Overwhelmed by the circumstances and social pressures, Ed twice tries to commit suicide in the play. His attempt to suicide shows that he is the weakest of all the homosexuals in the play because he is suffering the most from this identity crisis. (Singh 3)

Kamlesh is not ashamed of his sexuality just as Mitra and they yearn for the company of their lovers who are not ready to accept their sexualities and identities as queers. Prakash is also ashamed of his identity as a queer and he even claims to have become straight. Ed says, "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" (85).

In these words Kamlesh brings out the dilemma of queer individuals who think that their queerness is some sort of a disease or an evil which needs to be treated. They make a big mistake by denying their queerness as it is something that can be cured only and only if they accept themselves as they are and they get to love themselves for what they are. It is never possible to get rid of the sexuality. The only possible solution out of it is to be a hypocrite, pretending to be something altogether different from the reality. This is evident when Prakash who had been claiming that becoming heterosexual was possible for the homosexuals says in a dialogue with Ranjit:

RANJIT. Aren't we all forgetting something? Does Sharad really have a choice? Can he become heterosexual?

ED. Of course he can. It's been done before. (100)

But later on we see that as the play reaches its climax, it is Prakash himself who contradicts his own statement and sets a perfect example for the hypocrisy prevailing in the lives of the queers when he confesses that he was still in love with Kamlesh and wanted to maintain his homosexual relationship with him and also that his marriage was merely a cover- up for their relationship as no one would doubt them that way. Ed says, "You are my brother-in-law. I can meet you any

time . . . Nobody would know. Nobody would care . . . I'll take care of Kiran. And you take care of me" (105).

So we can see that the hypocrisy adopted by Prakash in order to save himself from the disgrace is not only the reason for the suffering of Kamlesh but also he is hurting Kiran by hiding his true identity from her. Thus it is the dilemma which they face regarding their acceptance which further forces them to hide their sexualities. This hypocrisy of queers in relation to their sexualities becomes clear in the following lines regarding *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*:

The play reveals double identity of men who live their private lives of homosexuality in the images of heterosexuals. Sharad challenges Ed who has the mask of heterosexuality and considers heterosexuals as a real man Bunny and Prakash/Ed enjoy homosexuality under mask of heterosexuality. Bunny, who is a bisexual, is a hypocrite. He claims to be a perfect husband because he loves his wife more than any heterosexual man does; his wife boasts of his work to the neighbours as she has no problem with him; and his children who love him are popular in school. But his confession about his homosexuality reveals dissatisfaction in his life. The play witnesses the power of society due to which homosexuals turned into heterosexuals. (Sonker 5)

Such a conflict becomes visible when Bunny, who has been hiding his queer identity from his wife by playing the role of a perfect husband and father, expresses it and he says, ". . . But for my wife . . . I do hope she will forgive me when I tell her" (107).

So, the predicament of acceptance with their queer individuality by other homophobes is also a great matter of dilemma which surrounds the queer individuals. This dilemma paves the way for the emotional instability of queer individuals and their feelings fluctuate from one end to the other. Sometimes they are ready to accept their identity without any shame or remorse, but at others, they just wish to be something altogether different. This becomes evident from the conversation of Nama and Bapu when she confesses:

She . . . loves me . . . very much. I too like the way she treats me . . .
But sometimes I get fed up even with her love . . . Too much of it . . .
Moreover, I have my own problems. How can I explain . . . and she is
hardly in condition to hear me out or understand . . . That becomes a
big problem. (469)

The frustration of Nama is a result of the conflict she is going through in order to decide whether to accept Mitras love for her or not. Same is the case with Sharad who loves Kamlesh but doesn't get his love back. Although when Kamlesh confesses his love for Sharad, he makes an honest confession and says, "Oh spare me the lies! You could never love anyone because you are still in love with Prakash" (56).

Thus we can easily make out how the life of homosexuals is same as that of the heterosexuals. Their longing for fulfillment of love is the same as that of heterosexuals. The same situation is faced by Mitra who despite of Nama's deceitfulness still loves her with whole heart. Her helplessness is projected very tenderly by the playwright in the lines which follow as, ". . . I still love her, Bapu, I still crave for her. My blood cries out to her! To her, only to her! (475). The sundry responses of the individuals are a result of the distress, vulnerability and empathy which further highlights the internal conflict going on within the individuals who don't have the right to choose a life of their own choice.

Being the victims of the dilemma they face in both the personal as well social life these queer individuals very often choose to have a life which is against their wishes. Bunny who is a homosexual chooses to play a role of a straight homosexual man with a perfect life, having kids and a wife. But in reality this is not the life he really wishes to live. He in a state of great distress confesses: ". . . I have tried to survive. In both worlds. And it seems I do not exist in either" (103).

Such is the dilemma of belonging neither to this world of homosexuals nor to that world of heterosexuals. If they choose to live in the world they have chosen, they face derision from the world of homophobes. On the other hand if they try to be a part of this homophobic society they face great misery by negating their real self and living a fake life. The escapism of queer individuals from facing their

predicament finds many other ways. Regarding the escapism and hypocrisy prevailing in the queers, John McRae in his introduction to play sums up the whole situation as, "For the fault is not just the characters'- it is everyone's, in a society which not only encourages hypocrisy, which demands deceit and negation, rather than allowing self- expression, responsibility and dignity" (46). Ranjit in *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is such an escapist who instead of facing the situation has settled out of the country. He thinks it the best way to continue living with his own choices as he is free to live on his own terms. But this escapist attitude does no good to any queer individual as it is not possible to escape the real self even if they leave everything far behind. Highlighting the situation of queers in India he says:

KAMLESH. I don't want camouflage and I don't want glitters. I don't want to flaunt or hide anything.

RANJIT. Well, this is the price one pays for living in India. . . .

RANJIT. 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! (70-71)

This is the fortune of the same sex lovers in our country. In case the queer relations come into the open, the lives of these queers become miserable and they are forced to leave that place and live somewhere else in secrecy. This happens with Mitra also, when her affair with Nama becomes public. She was thrown out of her house by her parents and Nama too leaves that place in order to get married to someone else in order to save the honour of her family. She tells about her marriage to Bapu and says, "Perhaps- for good . . . My marriage has been fixed. The boy is from Calcutta" (481).

The realisation of moral responsibility, which is in most of the cases in contradiction to personal choice is another form of predicament with which queers have to deal. Such a situation is faced upon by Kamlesh as he still loves Prakash and wants to be with him but Prakash is getting married to Kamlesh's sister Kiran. He wants to tell Kiran everything about Prakash but he is held back when he thinks about the happiness of his sister. Queers face such kind of moral dilemma

when they have to suppress their feelings in order to follow the rules of the existing social setup. As a queer, these individuals are never able to get an unprejudiced platform for their self-representation.

This dilemma of the queers may result in very distressing circumstances where an individual is completely devastated by the frustration of his/ her desires. They may grow violent and start questioning their own identities and they grow a hostile attitude towards themselves. Such is the fate which Mitra has to face after she is all heart broken and completely shattered when Nama leaves her and her family too disowns her. She has nowhere to go and no one to rely on. She becomes a regular visitor to the bars where she spills out her anger and frustration over her lover, her family and her friend Bapu. She feels deceived and completely heartbroken. Her condition is really heart moving and finds expression when she irksomely explodes in the bar and says:

Bapu is a pig. A first class pig. Thinks he has the right to boss me. Thinks Mitra is a . . . is an umbrella . . . No- no . . . a chair . . . a handbag. . . I'm a human being, I have my will . . . No, I'm not a good little girl. I'm a whore! A lesbian, do you know that? A lesbian bitch! A freak! (492).

Here, we can see very clearly how Mitra falls a prey to the dilemma she is facing, which results in complete ruin of Mitras character. She has no respect left either for herself or anyone else. In contrast to her there is the character of Deepali in, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, who is also a lesbian but, is proud of her sexuality. She not only completely supports the identity of queers, but also has the courage to accept it without any shame as compared to Mitra who has lost her self-respect. This becomes clear in her conversation with Sharad which goes on like this:

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

DEEPALI. Don't- don't use that word . . . You can call yourself a dog, call yourself a pig, but never never insult a female. (59)

At another moment she confesses with great dignity that; "I thank God. Every time I menstruate, I thank God I am a woman" (66). Thus there are differences in the attitude of queer individuals about their sexualities. While some accept and respect it, there are others who just yield to the conflicting circumstances and loose respect for themselves. Such is the case not only with Mitra but also with Ed who at one point admits, "I am not happy with being who I am. And I want to try to be like the rest" (92).

The characters in *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *A Friend's Story* face the same dilemmas, same harassment, and same paradoxes, but at the end there is a huge difference in the way they counter their conflicts. When they come to realise their disposition as queers and they face the truth of their existence, the way they take this is altogether different. Mitra in *A Friend's Story* is not able to cope up with the situation and feeling defeated, commits suicide. On the other hand Kamlesh regains his confidence in himself and his identity as a queer and comes over his obsession of Prakash who proves to be a renegade. He realizes and accepts his love for Sharad. Prakash tries to commit suicide but has no courage to do so. In the moment of distress Ed says, "Don't come near me! Nobody will know why. They will think I got a little drunk and keeled over" (109).

Except Prakash every other character, be that Kamlesh, Deepali, Sharad, Bunny, Ranjit, everybody finds courage to fight up for their rights and to accept their queer identity leaving behind all hypocrisy. Kamlesh makes a genuine confession for Sharad and says, "Yes I do love him. I can be honest with him. I don't have to deal with lies. And he has the courage to live with me, we both do- to live openly as two men in love" (104).

So, Kamlesh getting over his fixation with Prakash accepts his love for Sharad who is not a hypocrite like Prakash and is honest as well as proud of his sexuality. There comes a combined realisation of respect for each other as well as for themselves. They all become ready to stand up for the cause of queer community by supporting each other. When Prakash tries to commit suicide, all others try to stop him. They try to instill confidence in him to come on terms with the present situation. The solution which they offer is to accept his sexuality in

order to become acceptable in the whole society. They all become one powerful voice and become the mouthpiece of Dattani:

DEEPALI. Don't do that, Ed. Ed! . . . Step out through the door and walk out, look them in the eye, take a taxi and go home.

RANJIT. We've got to make a start!

KIRAN. Walk out of the door, Ed.

DEEPALI. We will all go out together with you!

BUNNY. You will survive, Ed. Come back in! (109)

So the play presents a live picture of the aroused consciousness to face the world and look them into an eye while accepting their own sexuality and being proud of it. Dattani through his characters is talking about the possible remedy to reduce the anxiety, suffering and the dilemma which is deep rooted in the queer individuals. He makes Kiran a sympathiser from the heterosexual world who also suggests the acceptance of queer relationship in the following words, "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" (102).

The play doesn't give any solution but makes an effort to raise the issue of queer sexualities giving voice to their predicament. The drama ends with the song of Sharad, "I ask myself what I have got and what I am and what I am not" (111). Thus, Dattani points towards the internal conflict of the queers to accept or reject their sexualities. There is no solution provided and the decision is left on queers whether to accept or reject their queerness.

Thus we can easily see the treatment of queer dilemma with a sympathetic and realistic portrayal of the characters in both the plays. On one hand *A Friends Story* brings out the dilemma of Mitra to express her queer sexuality in front of Bapu, on the other hand *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* portrays the dilemma of queers regarding their sexualities within themselves. They try to hide their queerness not only from the society but also from themselves. The love relationship in both the plays results in disappointment because of the indecision

and dilemma of the partners. The frustration and confusion regarding their sexuality make queers deeply insecure and it becomes visible from their violent reactions in both the plays. Hypocrisy prevailing in queers is emblematic of their dilemma about their own sexualities. Both the plays very efficiently brings out the dilemma of queers concerned with their sense of belongingness as they never belong to the world of homosexuals or to the world of heterosexuals.

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Conclusion

A literary art accomplishes true and worthy significance when it becomes able to faithfully present the existing scenario, experiences shared by the common folk, and various indiscrepancies prevailing in the society, dilemmas of existence, human sensibilities and also conforming to the universal socio- moral codes. This task of representation of true human predicament is very aptly carried on through a very effective literary genre of drama. Drama in a way is the direct communication between the writer and the audience through the means of artists. Drama is not new to Indian literary scene as it has been representing the universally acknowledged human sensibility without any constraint of time or space. Direct presentation on the stage results in arousal of the much anticipated rewards in the form of enlightened consciousness of the audience. It is the oldest, authentic, and the most appealing form of literature. Indian English Drama has been successful in commencing its own distinctive tradition by deploying a series of avant-garde themes and innovations. The contemporary playwrights revisit and reinvestigate the unaddressed and unacknowledged issues present in society for a very long time, within the present socio-culture and political scenario. Various issues as that of gender discriminations, caste ridden practices, social discernment and prevailing moral degradation are addressed with great sensibility.

Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani are among this creed of the contemporary playwrights who can be comprehended as the social realists who being dedicated towards the society have made unending efforts to bring forth the evils present in the contemporary society. Vijay Tendulkar is a Marathi playwright writing originally in Marathi and most of his plays are available in English translation. Mahesh Dattani on the other hand is an Indian playwright writing in English. Both of them have changed the scenario of Indian English drama to a great extent. Both of them are essentially social commentators who have delved deep into the evils, problems and the harsh realities of the contemporary social ambiance. Mahesh Dattani and Vijay Tendulkar both have employed the fundamental themes which form the common ground for their dramatic merit. Both Tendulkar and Dattani have successfully incorporated the themes of child sexual abuse, biased attitude towards the sexual minorities, gender discrimination, patriarchal social system, identity crisis, conflict between social, personal and

moral values etc. Thus this huge diversity of themes traversing the untouched and unexplored arenas has added to the excellence of both these writers. This approach towards theatre has resulted in emancipation of the rights of the marginalized as well as discriminated sections of the society.

In both the plays under study i.e. *A Friend's Story* by Vijay Tendulkar and *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, there runs the unconventional theme of homosexuality. *A Friend's Story* deals with the exceptional love relationship between two girls Sumitra and Nama. The play completely abstains from depicting any kind of homosexual relationship between the male characters. On the other hand *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* portrays both male and female characters as homosexuals. Among all the characters only one character Kiran is heterosexual and others including Ed/Prakash, Kamlesh, Ranjit, Deepali, Bunny, all are homosexuals. Although some of them like Bunny and Prakash are feigning their identity as heterosexuals but at the climax of the play they accept themselves as being homosexuals.

The portrayal of women characters in the plays of both Tendulkar and Dattani is another striking feature of their art of characterization. Women are an important part of the plays of these playwrights. Women are neither conservative nor conventional. They act in different ways quite unlike from the set notions. In the first place they are represented as passive sufferers and at the other they are represented as being ardent and emphatic. They retain a spirit of their own and often are ready to deny and resist the forces imperiling their identity. The character of Mitra in *A Friend's Story* and that of Deepali in *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* are the characters that represent the vivacity of women characters. Nama and Kiran are the embodiments of the fragility of women and are unable to fight against their oppression. However, Kiran in *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, towards the climax of the play gains strength and refutes her subjugation, but nothing of this kind appears in *A Friend's Story* where Nama leaves the place permanently for getting married and this highlights the weakness of her personality. So this is the difference in the representation of women characters in Dattani and Tendulkar, as the women in Dattani's world comes out more powerful and undefeated, whereas the women in Tendulkar's plays fight with the circumstances but they are finally defeated. The reason behind this may be due to the difference in the condition of

women in their contemporary society. Tendulkar wrote at the time when freedom and awareness regarding the rights of women were not much acknowledged but the society at the time when Dattani is writing offers equal space for the existence of women. Thus the impact of society is quite visible in the portrayal of women characters.

These queer sexualities have been prohibited both in Indian civil as well as penal code. The Indian Penal Code 377 has declared homosexuality illegal which is emblematic of the discrimination against these sexual minorities. It devoid the queers of the right of free choice regarding the life partner. In a way this is an attack on the free will and basic rights of the people. This discrimination against the queer sexualities received a lot of opposition on the behalf of many literary intellectuals. The protest was received with a healthy outlook and it worked out the things in positive direction. This revolution against this law resulted in some relevant amendments in this law which has further added to reduce the suffering of these queer individuals.

Family also forms an important part of representation in the action of both these playwrights as well as plays. The family can be seen as a sight of conflict in both these plays. In *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, the representation of conflict within the family is epitomized with the relationship between Kiran and Kamlesh who are siblings and both desire the same individual Prakash. The conflict in *A Friend's Story* is more visible on the psychological level in the character of Sumitra. Her family imposes restrictions on her and also forces her to get married. When they come to know about her queerness they throw her out of their house. So, family forms an important part of representation. In *A Muggy Night in Mumbai*, Kiran, Kamlesh's sister is going to marry Ed who was the former boyfriend of Kamlesh. She is not aware of his sexuality but when she comes to know about it, she is repelled by him. Kamlesh tries to create a happy world for his sister by getting her married to the person she loves. He is torn between the moral responsibility towards his sister and his undying love for Ed. Thus this is how family comes to represent the society where queers waver between their personal choices and the expectations of society.

The influence of the society is visible at other times in the setting of plays. While *A Friend's Story* is not limited to just one place and it moves from college to hospital to liquor dens, filthy streets etc. which clearly points towards the acquaintance of Tendulkar with these places. He had to visit these suffocating dens in filthy streets as his elder brother had become a drunkard, so Tendulkar became a visitor to these places and he incorporated this in his plays, where the characters are often visitors to these places. Whereas the play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is limited to the well-furnished flat of Kamlesh in a society in Mumbai. The setting in his plays is mostly urbane which also up to some extent is influenced by his middle class urban family.

The difference in the class of the characters in both the plays also influence the reception of queerness. While *A Friend's Story* deals with semi urban, lower class where homosexuality is still a big issue and is not accepted. This happens with Mitra who is thrown out of her house by her family. Whereas in *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* the characters belong to urban upper class which is not so rigid regarding queers. The acceptability is low but still there is a chance of acceptance. Kiran is well aware of the queer sexuality of Kamlesh and accepts it in positive terms. She also believes that homosexuals should be allowed to marry to the partner of their choice. Thus we can see how sensibilities are influenced by the class structure.

With the help of his dramatic expertise and theatrical competence, Dattani has offered the presentation of the concealed and fiery reality on the stage. There are different planes of representation which suggest the splintered disposition and morality of human beings in present world. In Act 2, Ed can be seen as fantasizing and talking to himself loudly and is imagining a person sitting next to him and listening to what he is saying. Kamlesh listens to what Ed was saying and thus their relationship begins. From past, the scene shifts to the present where a get together is going on in Kamlesh's flat. Deepali wants Kamlesh to tell Kiran everything about his and Prakash's story. So we can see how there is a frequent shift of scenes from past to present. This element of stage fragmentation is not much visible in the plays of Tendulkar.

Both Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani's plays are the reflections of an individual's inner and outer world. Tendulkar's plays raise several queries and mostly abstain from providing any recommendation or message towards finding the solutions of the problems they deal with. He never makes the characters his mouthpiece for commenting on the social milieu. Where Dattani's play along with representing the social conditions often makes the characters his mouthpieces to comment on the society and also there is always some kind of message in order to change the present situation. Although the characters of both the playwrights use a language common to all without any embellishment but still there is divergence in the narrative technique of both the playwrights. In case of Tendulkar the action of the play goes on like a story where everything moves with a constant rhythm and there is not much innovation regarding the dialogue and they go on like a normal conversation between individuals. In Dattani's play the innovative narrative technique holds a special significance. There is a dialogue inside a dialogue, one of which is dialogue with another character and also a dialogue within. In the beginning of Act1 of *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* where Kamlesh asks the guard if he does all this for money only, he is not just asking guard this question but also he is trying to satisfy his dilemma that such queer tendencies are present in all or is it just the case with him. There is a flux in the action of the play as it moves between past, present and future also. The use of powerful imagery, symbols etc. mark the point of difference between him and Tendulkar as such craftsmanship is not much visible in his plays.

Music also forms an integral part in the plays of Dattani. In *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* music has been used as a powerful symbol giving voice to different conflicts at different times. Sometimes it is used as an effective tool offering respite from the stressful situations, at other time it is used to raise the questions related to identity and sexuality. The song 'What Makes A Man, A Man', raises the question of acceptance by the society. Indirectly it is questioning the heterosexual world the reason behind the discrimination of queers. Then Sharad continues the song as "So many times we have to pay for having fun and being gay". This clearly brings out the fate of queers in heteronormative society which steals away every reason from queers to be happy. The play ends with the lines "I ask myself what have I got and what I am and what I'm not". These lines truly

represent the dilemma of queer individuals regarding their sexuality. Thus the use of music in the plays of Dattani is another example of his strict adherence to the innovative stage techniques. He has also employed another trope of mental spaces for the effective representation of the psychological conflicts going on within the individual. No use of music is evident in *A Friend's Story*. The tension goes on building and is represented through the dialogues of the characters inspite of giving any symbolic representation to the conflict. The existential tendencies are visible in both the playwrights, who have represented the contemporary social milieu and the predicament of this human condition.

Although there are many striking parallels as well as departures of both the playwrights as well as between both the plays but still they have proved to be successful in the true representation of the plight of the marginalised queer sexualities. The way they have been stigmatised in the heteronormative society and also the problems they have to face being the part of this harsh society, have been depicted and handled with great humanistic touch. The psychological dilemma which they have to face as a result of the double personality they have to carry is also represented very aptly by both the playwrights. The aim of representation of the use or in true sense the misuse of power in maintenance of the existing homophobic norms has been achieved with the truthful representation of the attitude of the society towards these queer relationships. The society which has denounced the queer individuals and sexuality has demeaned the identity of these queer individuals to such an extent that this suffocation makes it very difficult for them to lead a normal and peaceful life and this predicament of queers have found a strong ground in the representation on the stage. How this society deters all the rights of these queer individuals to lead a contented life has been depicted with sympathy.

These two plays are the representation of the conditions prevailing in the society. All these issues which are sidelined by the society as fringe issues find an appropriate medium of representation in these plays. These plays peep into the dark and unvisited, untraversed realms of the human psyche which otherwise remain unexplored. The sensitive issues hovering over the society under the conspiracy of silence are tackled with great rational outlook and deep psychological insight. These plays not only raise the taboo issue of homosexuality

but also offers scope for the reflection of individualistic as well as collective consciousness. Thus through the medium of these plays, individuals get a deep insight into their own lives. Issue of homosexuality has been voiced through these plays. The main aim of these plays is to bring out the intricacies of various conflicts whether they are personal or social and also discuss the issues surrounding it. These plays have very successfully chronicled the social victims and the irrationalities, shortcomings and biases of Indian society.

Contemporary Indian society is facing a lot of issues which need to be taken care of in order to cure the society of its evils. One of such tabooed issues in our society is the issue of queer sexuality. In this homophobic society of ours there is no sanction for the expression of free will regarding the sexual preferences. In order to earn and maintain the dignity and respect individuals have to behave in a certain definite way as defined by the normative social structure. In order to maintain its supremacy over the lives of people the tool of repressing the sexuality of individuals have always been the most efficient tool in the hands of the power structures. Sexuality is reduced to the status of a subject not to be discussed or talked about with others in public. This strategy is operative in the society from a very long time. The identity of queer individuals is created in binary opposition of the heterosexuals. The stereotypical images are the result of the stifling, dominating discourses operating in the society. The true face of homophobic society is unveiled which creates stereotypes and their identities are belittled and this adds to further alienation of queer identities. Both these plays are trying to bring out this fact in front of the whole society.

These plays bring out harsh attitude of the homophobic society which makes the life of queer individuals quite difficult. They are treated as something evil and are reduced to the status of being abnormal and different which leads to the marginalisation of the community of queers. Various issues related to the struggle of the marginalised sexualities and their predicament finds an unbiased representation in both these plays. In other words, these plays serve as the safe haven for the true representation of queer sexualities by voicing their rights of leading a life of their own choice. Through the humanised and rational outlook of both these plays the deconstruction of the stereotypes as created by the heteronormative society in order to maintain its supremacy, have been possible.

Also they create sympathy and awareness which in turn has been successful in opening up of new vistas for the creation of a better world where they can relish life on their own terms. The hope of creation of a whole new world where sexualities are not decisive features of the identities of individuals is the biggest contribution of these plays. This further leads to the change of the attitudes of the common people towards the queer individuals which has added to the improvement of these queer individuals to a large extent. Thus, both these plays have been successful in imparting an irreplaceable impact on the sensibilities of the individuals which may be slow but is quite steady and has worked towards greater visibility and acceptance for the otherwise discriminated and subjugated sexualities.

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