

**The Politics of Alternative Sexuality:
Deconstructing Identity in Mahesh Dattani's Plays**

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By

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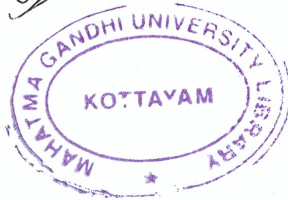
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Declaration

I hereby declare that thesis **The Politics of Alternative Sexuality: Deconstructing Identity in Mahesh Dattani's Plays** is the record of original research work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Latha Nair. R, Associate Professor, Department of English and Research Centre, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.



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Preface

The study ‘**The Politics of Alternative Sexuality: Deconstructing Identity in Mahesh Dattani’s Plays**’ emerges from an increasing understanding of Mahesh Dattani’s dramaturgy as oriented towards discourses of gender and sexuality. The poststructuralist view of gender/sexuality as cultural construct challenges the Cartesian coordinates that construct gender/sexuality as fixed categories. Poststructuralists and contemporary gender theorists have furthered Foucault’s problematising of gender/sexuality and deconstructed the bipolar structure of gender/sexuality. Theorists like Simone de Beauvoir, Gayle Rubin, Judith Butler, Catherine McKinnon, Germaine Greer, Teresa de Lauretis, Ann Koedt, Adrienne Rich and Kathleen Gough have contributed to the problematic and complexity in the construction of gender/sexuality. Butler’s view of gender as performance deconstructs the correspondence between sexed body and sexual practice. Her conception of performance as “repeated stylised acts” justifies the occurrence of alternative genders/sexualities outside the space of mainstream categories of gender/sexualities. Mahesh Dattani attempts to accommodate the alternative genders and sexualities within the textual framework of his plays.

The introductory chapter, **The Politics of Alternative Sexualities**, explains the development of gender theories leading to the establishment of alternative genders/sexualities. Construction of gender/sexuality becomes problematic with Foucault’s study *The History of Sexuality* where he emphasises the historical evolution of gender/sexuality as discourses of power. Following Foucault, contemporary gender theorists have unravelled the greater intricacies implicated in the cultural construction of gender/sexuality.

The poststructuralist theories have destabilised gender binaries and fixed identities on the one hand and emphasised the discursive construction of gender and sexuality as paradigms of power on the other. This leads to the acceptance of alternative genders and sexualities in culture, theory and discourse. In addition to the masculine and feminine genders, there are lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders. These alternative genders also represent sexual practices which the individuals prefer. Mahesh Dattani attempts to accommodate the alternative genders and sexualities within the textual framework of his plays.

Politics, often identified with ideology, is a set of ideas in the unconscious that makes one represent reality in a particular way. It is related to power and hegemonic systems of society. The phallogentric structure of society is consolidated on the foundation of heterosexuality or heteronormativity. Any other genders and sexualities beyond the heteronormative are treated aberrant. In the perspective of other genders, other sexualities like LGBT are counter-hegemonic and alternative sexual practices. Therefore, the politics of alternative sexuality constitutes the construction of other genders/sexualities as counter-hegemonic and alternative to heteronormativity. Though they constitute gender/sexual minorities, they are never abnormal or deviant.

The second chapter, **Queering the Queer: A Study Gender and Sexual Identities in Dattani's Plays** deals with the construction of queer identity in Dattani's select plays. The chapter explains the evolution of identity as a construct. Theorists like Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, Said, Hall, Gilroy, Althusser and Butler have contributed to the understanding of identity as a

process of becoming rather than as a state of being. They have challenged identity as a stable and fixed category and established it as a flux or an unstable category. The second part of the chapter deals with the analysis of six plays of Dattani to reveal the fluidity of gender and sexual identities. In the plays *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *Do the Needful* Dattani deals with the theme of homosexuality to bring out the hollowness of heteronormative frame of society. *Seven Steps Around the Fire* offers an insightful peep into the life of the *hijras* and establishes the flexibility of the male/female gender binary. *Dance Like a Man* and *The Girl Who Touched the Stars* unfurl the lives of those individuals who cannot conform to the gender norms of society.

The third chapter, **Problematising the Queer: Critiquing Gender and Sexuality in Dattani's Plays**, deals with the problematic of queer identity in Dattani's plays. The chapter begins with a discussion on the development of queer theory and the evolution of queer as alternative gender/sexuality. Queer is a broad term used for gender and sexual minorities who remain outside the space of gender binaries in the phallogentric social order. It accounts for gender ambiguity and gender ambivalence in the realm of sexual practices. It also accounts for the epistemological and ontological possibilities of the non-heterosexual "Other." The second part of the chapter analyses five of Dattani's plays to foreground the characteristics of queer identity by untying the complexities and intricacies inherent in the construction of the queer. In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *Do the Needful*, Dattani daringly touches upon the theme of homosexuality to bring out the realities of sexual choices of people other than heteronormativity. *Seven Steps*

Around the Fire and *Dance Like a Man* examine the representation of the gender queer, elucidating on the *hijras* and the men who cannot stick on to the prescribed norms of masculinity respectively.

The fourth chapter, **Discoursing the Queer: A Study of Power, Knowledge and Hegemony in Dattani's Plays**, discusses how the queer is discursively constructed in the plays of Mahesh Dattani. The initial part of the chapter explains the development of discourse from the perspective of Foucault. According to him, discourse is ideologically variable bodies of knowledge. Knowledge and power are analogous in structure. Hence discourse, knowledge and power remain unified or interrelated. Knowledge in every society has its own procedures to control, select and organise the production and distribution of discourses. As an object of desire or power, discourse is not a single medium but a set of power structures that textually construct relations between knowledge and power, subjectivity and ideology. For Foucault, though hegemonic, power is not merely suppressive. He observes that the exercise of power often becomes counter-productive. He cautions that the repressive acts related to queer practices are likely to produce undesirable consequences. In this context, the category of queer emerges as counter-hegemonic. The queer identity or the queer self gets stabilised in institutionalised forms of discourses like drama. There are four different components identifiable in any discourse: objects, operations, concepts and theoretical options. Any discourse can be analysed from the perspective of this fourfold structure of discourse. Dattani has meticulously crafted his plays *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, *Do the Needful*, *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *Dance Like a Man* with the necessary components for the formation of a queer discourse. The

plays are singularly different and defy structural and thematic uniformity. The playwright might have been forced to exclude certain components in certain plays to suit the requirements of the portrayal of the story. Besides, being a radio play *Do the Needful* also contains the limitations of depicting queer attire and queer gestures. However, the plays unearth a queer discourse which goes submerged within the dominant heteronormative discourse of society.

The concluding chapter sums up the research findings which emphasise the poststructuralist view of the fluidity of gender/sexuality. Butler's view that gender is performative deconstructs the correlation between gendered body and sexual practices. This results in the emergence of alternative genders and sexualities. In Foucault's genealogical and technological approaches, gender and sexuality can be constituted as power structures historically evolved in modern societies. The radical sexual politics of the queer results in the construction of the queer as a realm of alternative and counter-hegemonic sexual practices followed by various categories of sexual minorities. Dattani's plays aesthetically represent the construction of gender and sexual identity and the problematization of the queer. Rather than presenting the queer as a complex category on stage, Dattani perseveres to present the queer as a complex category that challenges its Structuralist representation and Modernist aesthetic. He deals with the discursive construction of the queer by exploring the relationship between discourse, power and knowledge. His plays selected for study discursively construct the queer, using tools like queer registers, queer gestures, queer expression, queer space, queer time and discourses of gender and sexuality. The queer constitutes an alternative and counter-hegemonic discourse to heteronormativity.

The thesis concludes with a logical understanding of an analogy between the queer and the postcolonial identities. It attempts to elucidate the queer and the postcolonial as culturally heterogeneous and as hybrid identities formed in opposition to the forces of assimilation. The queer, like the postcolonial, is characterised by a double articulation and double consciousness. Dattani's dramaturgy explores a polemical and contested terrain where the postcolonial and the queer intersect. It is a serious probe into the politics of alternative sexuality leading to the deconstruction of the notion of gender and sexuality.

The researcher also would like to state that she had the great privilege of meeting the playwright Mahesh Dattani on the occasion of his visit to Kerala in connection with a National Seminar at Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady on the topic **Sites of Resistance: Theory and Praxis**. The researcher was fortunate enough to attend Dattani's inaugural address, his press meet and later to have an exclusive interview with him. Considering the great privilege she had, she has included a summary of her interview as an appendix to the thesis.

Chapter I

Introduction:

The Politics of Alternative Sexualities

The term politics has undergone a sea change since the time of Plato. Plato used politics as synonymous with great ideas capable of radical social changes. His disciple Aristotle developed politics into a “practical science,” the supreme “virtue” of which was to make citizens happy. But Plato’s concept of politics as a great idea is still acceptable to poststructuralist thinkers. Louis Althusser often equals politics with ideology. He states that politics is a set of ideas in the unconscious that makes one represent reality in a way. By connecting politics and the unconscious, Althusser endorses Pierre Machery’s concept that politics is unconsciously assimilated by society. On the other end of the spectrum, Michel Foucault thinks that politics is the way in which the society is organized and is manifested in the attitude of the masters and the world-view of the subjects. He emphasizes the materiality of politics as manifest in the structural organization of society. While Foucault converts ideology/politics into discourse, Althusser converts the synonymous term with the real and the imagined conditions of life. Althusser regards ideology as a system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of an individual or a social class. Ideology is a “representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Storey 153). Ideology creates an allusion to reality. The reality behind the representation of the world can be discovered by interpreting ideology.

The question of the politics of alternative sexuality emerges in the context of an understanding that the notions of gender and sexuality are ideological constructions. Unmasking the ideological foundations of these concepts is part of a radical politics because it involves a critique of the traditional and the dominant conceptions of sex/gender/sexuality and at the same opens up the avenue for an inclusive domain of these conceptions.

Sex, gender and sexuality are interconnected. While the first is a biological construct, the second and the third are cultural constructs contributing to the making of one's cultural identity. Gender is a cultural construct produced through the socialization of sex roles assigned by the society. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (295). She observes that the gender roles are constructed as mutually exclusive categories. Gayle Rubin also makes a similar observation: "Far from being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identity is the suppression of natural similarities" (Reiter 180). She means that genders are socially constructed through the repression of certain elements of personality traits. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that there is no necessary connection between sex and gender: "If gender is the cultural meanings that sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex" (10). She points to the situation where gender is socially constructed independent of sex. Butler remarks: "When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one and woman

and feminine a male body as easily as a female one” (10). This idea deconstructs the one to one correspondence between the sexed body and gender. According to Butler, gender distinctions have significance only within a phallogentric social order in which the heterosexual order proceeds from the binary system of genders consolidated by compulsory heterosexuality. In this context, Butler explains:

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of the heterosexual desire. (30)

This differentiation results in the consolidation of sex, gender and desire.

In the article, “Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State,” Catherine MacKinnon argues that women emulate patriarchally constructed images and values to become elevated as models. She cites this as an example of social construction of gender. MacKinnon explains: “Gender socialization is the process through which women come to identify themselves as sexual beings It is that process through which women internalize . . . a male image of their sexuality as their identity as women” (Meyers 71). MacKinnon means that women internalize the male view of female sexuality as female identity.

Kate Millett and Germaine Greer also speak about the cultural construction of gender. In *Sexual Politics*, Millett observes that women are sexually colonized by men in a power structured relationship. She defines

sexual politics as an arrangement whereby women are controlled by men. She argues that the relationship between genders in a cultural and ideological context of sexual politics is anchored on power relations (26). She contends that patriarchy constructs rigid gender roles and confines men and women to socially prescribed roles. In *The Female Eunuch*, Greer argues that woman is represented as a sexual object in a phallogentric world order. According to Greer, woman is constructed as a person without libido and the desexualized, ideal woman becomes a castrated creature or a eunuch (347). She connects gender and sexuality and argues that social construction of gender limits the sexuality of women. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that gender and sexuality are not innate capacities but are acquired through performance. Performance is a category that can converge as an individualized act in the realm of power. “The performative is the one domain in which power acts as discourse” (“Critically Queer” 17). By performativity she means stylized “repetition of acts” based on desire (Rivkin and Ryan 900). Performance is reiteration of a norm to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present and concedes the convention of which it is a repetition. The performative repetition brings the act under the norm of discipline and generates the need for mimesis. According to her, male and female are no longer stable categories, and sexual identity does not precede gender, but are produced and reproduced through repeated performances. Teresa de Lauretis analyses how filmic texts function as “technologies of gender”. In *Technologies of Gender*, she states that the construction of gender takes place both in the representation and the self representation of individual, constructed

in relation to power structures (3). She argues that alternative sexualities and other genders get represented in counter-hegemonic discourses and are manifested in horizontal resistance and minor subjectivities.

Sexuality is the nomination of persons in everyday practice based on behavioural roles and is a reformulation of the social processes of subjection. The conception of sexuality as a set of acts, desires and practices diminishes its role in shaping identity. The relation between gender and sexuality undergoes cultural transformations in moulding identity formations and sexual practices. Sexuality, as with gender, operates in a variety of ways to construct identities. As already stated, Butler introduces the notion of sexuality as performative acts, subverting the view of sexuality as the fundamental truth of the self. Butler posits sexuality as acts, expressions, behaviours and practices, and their repetition, like speech acts and constructed identities. This conception subverts the discourses in which the minor sexualities and their practices are delegitimized. She maintains that sex, gender and desire are compulsory orders packed with assumption which generate their meanings. She regards sexuality and gender as “foundational” as they are personal attributes devoid of identity. According to her, gender constructs the cultural meaning of the sexed body. This is a context which mismatches between sexed body, gender and sexuality. Butler deconstructs the notion of gender and sexuality as pre-discursive. This means that they are not produced prior to culture by discursive acts. Butler denaturalizes the heterosexual matrix based on binary difference. She achieves

this through the “performative condition of gender,” which explains how the body becomes a site for gendered meanings. Cross-dressing produces gender and exposes it as basically unnatural. According to Butler, there is little difference between the beauty rituals of the biological female/male and preparatory acts of the drag queen/king. Therefore, the relation between the original and the imitation is complex and shows the difference between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed (*Bodies That Matter* 174). Butler suggests that there is a “dissonance . . . between sex and performance, sex and gender, and gender and performance” (*Bodies That Matter* 175). It follows therefore that sexual identity, gender identity and performativity, though interconnected, are different.

In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault presents body as a locus on which hierarchies are inscribed and reinforced. The body is perpetually under the pressure of discourses. The body is also a site on which the discourses are enacted and contested. Foucault thinks that personality is the core of personal identity. According to him, four types of institutional practices work together forming strategic unities to enforce a normal sexuality. They are hystorization of women’s bodies, pedegogization of children’s sex, socialization of procreative behaviour and schematization of perverse pleasure. The female subject is identified with its reproductive functions which allow society to confine women to the private domestic sphere. In this regard, Foucault remarks:

Ahystorization of women's bodies: a threefold process whereby the feminine body was analyzed . . . as being thoroughly structured with society whereby . . . it was placed in organic communication with the social and body. . . the family space...and the life of children . . . the mother, with her negative image of 'nervous woman' constituted the most visible form of hysterization. (104)

Foucault observes that women's body is colonized by sexual practices and confined to family space on the one hand and connected to the social space by the reproductive functions on the other. In "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An agenda for Theory", Catherine McKinnon argues that sexuality is the foundation of the male dominance: "Sexuality, then, is a form of power. Gender, as socially constructed, embodies it, not the reverse. Women and men are divided by gender . . . by the social requirements of heterosexuality, which institutionalizes male sexual dominance and female sexual submission" (Meyers 73). McKinnon contends that sexuality is the locus of hegemony and it acts as an oppressing force in controlling female bodies. McKinnon cites as an example the notion of consent in rape and marriage. Consent is a conflicting term in the sexual relationship in marriage. According to her, "rape in marriage expresses the male sense of entitlement of access to women" (Meyers 72). Though heterosexuality is characterized by hegemony and inequality, it is accepted as natural. Women's passivity consequent to socialization fails her to resist unwanted sex and therefore marital rape passes off as sex initiated by the male. At the deeper level sexuality is culturally, historically and socially

constructed. In this context, Gayle Rubin observes in “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality:” “Sexuality is as much a human products as are diets, methods of transportation, system of etiquette, forms of labour, times of entertainment, process of production and modes of oppression” (Nardi and Schneider 106). Rubin emphasizes that a social or historical understanding of sexuality is variously used from a human need to a system of production or oppression.

In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault argues that desires do not pre-exist biological sex, but they are constituted during historically specific social practices. He challenges the conventional description of sexuality in terms of repression and prohibition and offers a new approach to sexuality as a mechanism of power. He views sexuality not as a drive but as a “dense transfer point for relations of power” (103). Foucault emphasizes the role of psychoanalysis in exploring the true nature of sexuality as a cultural product. The cultural production of sexuality underlines the power relations maintained by it. He introduces the concept of “scientia sexualis” or science of sexuality to reflect on the true nature of sexuality. Sexuality is constituted along three axes: the formation of sciences which refer to sexual behaviour, the systems of power which regulate the social practices and the forms within which individuals are enabled and obliged to recognize themselves as subjects of sexuality. This is in contrast to “Ars erotica” or the erotic art, mostly a part of the cultures of the Orient and Rome which use the knowledge of the sensual pleasures to probe the nature

of sexuality. When the two concepts are combined together sexuality becomes a matter of morality as well as knowledge.

Power has a great impact on the nature of sexuality. According to Foucault, power is not inherent in the individual; it is a matter of complex relationships: “. . . power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations” (*History Vol. I* 94). The knowledge of sexuality is greatly influenced by power. Foucault analyses the effect of power on sex:

Power is essentially what dictates its law to sex. . . sex is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden. Secondly, power describes an order for sex that operates at the same time as a form of intelligibility: sex is to be deciphered based on its relation to the law. And finally, power acts by laying down the rule: power’s hold on sex is maintained through language or rather through the act of discourse that creates . . . a rule of law. (*History Vol. I* 83)

Foucault means that the mode of action of power about sex is of a juridical-discursive character. Foucault further argues that the regulation of sex is designed to maintain heterosexual monogamy. He reveals that the regulation of sexuality by various discourses is a means by which power is organized in society. Foucault’s arguments on sexuality can be condensed in three important statements: 1) Sex is subject to historical and cultural transformation and

mediated by medical, legal economic and pedagogic discourses. Sexuality is represented in historically and culturally specific ways, privileging normative heterosexuality. 2) Homosexuality, like heterosexuality, is a construct invented in contradistinction to and as a way of reinforcing heteronormativity as the basis of the family under capitalism. 3) Foucault presents sexuality as controlled by power. But his concept of power has diffused questions, models of resistance and concludes that resistance is plural. Social institutions like religion and law shape the role of sexuality in human life.

In the article “Thinking Sex: Notes for A Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” Rubin argues that gender oppression and sexual oppression are not the same. Sex and gender are two distinct factors in social practice. Gender affects the sexual system which has the gender-specific manifestations. In this context, Rubin deflects from the feminist view which regards sexual oppression as part of gender oppression. Rubin calls for a radical theory of sex which rules out the sexual hierarchy and the constructed binary of good/bad sex. Gender hierarchy insists that good, normal and natural sexuality is heterosexuality, which is marital, monogamous, reproductive and non-commercial. Any sex which violates these characteristics is considered bad, abnormal and unnatural. This is a confirmation of sexuality into a single standard which is the tendency for variation, which is the fundamental characteristic of life. The negativity of sex is against the development of a radical theory of sex. This is the contribution of the Christian tradition. But Rubin argues that sex is a vector of oppression, which transcends race, class or ethnicity. Sexuality like gender is political and is

categorized on the basis of rewards and punishments. Rubin also contends that sex laws do not distinguish between consensual and coercive behaviour. Such a distinction questions the normal and the accepted status of heterosexuality, which is defined in terms of power relations.

In *Three Essays on Theory of Sexuality*, Freud presents woman as *homme manqué* (mutilated man) and penis envying and discusses homosexuality and female orgasm. He considers heterosexuality as the normal form of sexuality and homosexuality as a deviation. He also argues that women have two types of orgasms -- clitoral and vaginal. He explains that a psycho-sexually developed woman represses clitoral sexuality in order to experience vaginal orgasm. But Ann Koedt, in her article "The Myth of Vaginal Orgasm," challenges Freudian example of female orgasm. Her arguments based on the research findings of William. H. Masters and Virginia. E. Johnson shake the foundations of heterosexuality. According to her, the vagina is the most insensitive part of the female body and clitoris is the "only one area for sexual climax" and "all orgasms are an extension of sensation from this area" (Schneir 355). Koedt finds out five reasons for the myth of vaginal orgasm. First, the vagina is the best stimulant for phallic penetration. Second, male chauvinism refuses to view woman as a separate independent human being. Third, the penis is considered the paradigm of masculinity and its equivalent signifier phallus stands for male power and male privilege in a patriarchal society. Clitoridectomy performed on women is to pre-empt forms of orgasms other than vaginal. Fourth, "men fear that they will become sexually expendable if the clitoris is

substituted for the vagina as the centre of pleasure for women” (Schneir 341). Lastly, men do not want women to be sexually free. Koedt explains the red motive of the myth: “. . . the establishment of clitoral orgasm . . . would threaten the homosexual institution. For it would indicate that sexual pleasure was obtainable from either men or women, making heterosexuality, not an absolute but an option” (Schneir 342). She proves that vaginal orgasm is a patriarchally constructed myth that conforms to heterosexual norms. Koedt calls upon women to reject the ideas of sexuality formed for male pleasure and invent new ways of mutual sexual enjoyment. This argument leads to a sexual definition of lesbianism.

In “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” Adrienne Rich argues against an exclusive sexual definition of lesbianism, which for her is a domain of woman identified experiences. It is not simply the “consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman.” It also involves “the sharing of a rich inner life, bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support” (Schneir 317). Rich argues that heterosexuality is compulsory and oppressive. According to her, viewing heterosexuality as the norm relegates other forms of sexuality as deviant. Rich also elaborates on the eight characteristics of male power which Kathleen Gough enumerates in her essay “The Origin of the Family”: men deny women their sexuality or force male sexuality on them, command or exploit their labour to control their produce, control their children, use the masculine objects in male transactions, cramp their creativeness and withhold from them

large areas of knowledge and culture. She concludes that the power politics in a heterosexual relationship leads to sexual inequality. Social enforcement of heterosexuality ensures male dominance in physical, economic and emotional realms. Rich also argues that compulsory heterosexuality is a “many-layered” lie (Schneir 323). Oppressive forms of heterosexuality like family, marriage, rape, pornography and so on remain unquestionable. According to her, women assimilate heterosexuality only to be known as normal in a phallogocentric world.

A progressive shift in the attitude towards sexuality is reflected in Foucault’s celebrated rejection of the notion of “repressive hypothesis.” In *The History of Sexuality*, he argues that sexuality is not a natural instinct of human life, but a practice constructed against historical, social and cultural backgrounds, despite its biological origins. According to him, the question of how sexuality functions are more important than the question of what sexuality is. In his view, the relationship between knowledge, power, and sex forms the major factor that relegates homosexuality to the mainstream heterosexuality. In Foucault’s poststructuralist frame, an individual loses his/her autonomous Cartesian subject position as one who has an innate identity independent of language. The self in this context becomes a social construct which is influenced by language and knowledge. In the contemporary context, one’s sexuality can be identified in terms of a variety of possibilities, all related to one’s gender. The discourses on gender and sexuality construct a person’s identity which is defined in terms of difference.

Another remarkable understanding of sexuality is based on the essentialist and the constructionist views. The essentialist view emphasizes the intra-psychic nature of sexuality that cannot be determined by social analyses. In contrast to this, the constructionist view elucidates sexuality as a social construct. Their arguments circulate the view that social roles constructed on the basis culture formulate the normal behaviour in society. Thus, the biological existence of a human being, including one's sexual activities, is often conditioned by society. A wide range of gestures related to sexual pleasures occurs across cultural and historical boundaries. In this regard, Jeffery Weeks in his book *Sexuality* observes, “. . . the forces that shape and mould erotic possibilities of the body vary from society to society” (18). Erotic experience is therefore transcultural. As sexuality is constructed in terms of power relations, in anti-essentialist view, sexuality is ideological with possibilities of alternative politics both in its practice and representation.

Gender or sexuality is not natural but naturalized by hegemonic structures of society. The male/female gender binary and the heterosexuality based on it are fortified by the hegemonic phallogentric organization of society. According to Robert Stoller, the term sex represents biological trait and gender refers to the extent of masculinity or femininity a person shows. He argues that sex and gender complement each other. But it is desirable to differentiate them to make any conceptual sense of their functions. This argument allows him to explain the phenomenon of trans-sexuality. According to him, sex and gender do not match for trans-sexual. He further states that homosexuality is also not

monolithic like heterosexuality; it is rather a range of sexual styles and practices. Stoller identifies three elements in the formation of gender identity. They are biological and hormonal influences, sex assignment at birth and emotional and psychological influences. Stoller also endorses the feminist view of the distinction between sex and gender. He also concludes that the differences between men and women are socially constructed and therefore flexible and even changeable.

Sexual identity and sexual behaviour are closely related to sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is a concept evolved in the capitalist and industrialized West. There is a disagreement among theorists in the universal application of sexual orientation. Foucault underlines in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* that sexuality is the invention of the modern state, the industrial revolution and capitalism (42). Foucault undertakes a genealogical study of sexuality. So, he considers sexuality as a historical and a social construct. Foucault explores a social constructionist model of sexuality in his multi-volume work *The History of Sexuality*. He indicates the possibility of distinct sexual identities as a part of social construction. His studies have influenced contemporary theories on sexuality. By positioning the emergence of the heterosexual and the homosexual as distinct categories, contemporary theorists explore the interdependency between homosexuality and heterosexuality. By demonstrating that the poststructuralist sexual identities are constructed through discursive systems, they examine the textual representations of gender and sexuality as ways to reinforce or destabilise social meanings of sexuality.

By distinguishing between gender and sexual identity, they also differentiate and identify a spectrum of sexualities. In post-Foucauldian gender theories, there are three primary ways in which gender functions in lesbian, gay and queer studies. The first is the conventional binary gender categories that are used to define homosexuality. The second and the third are intra-gender investigations into the working of male or female sexualities. They go beyond gender and define sexuality in unconventional ways.

David Halperin, in his “Is There a History of Sexuality,” states the distinction between sex and sexuality. He argues that sexuality is a cultural product and is capable of appropriating human body in the context of ideological discourses. He explains: “Unlike sex, sexuality is a cultural production; it represents the appropriation of the human body and of its physiological capacity by an ideological discourse. Sexuality is not a somatic fact; it is a cultural effect” (Adelove, Barale and Halperin 416). In this context, queer theory may be considered a recovery of historical conception of sexuality. From the historical perspective, sexuality is regarded as an identity inscribed within a subculture. Judith Butler argues that sexuality is manifested as a self-conscious performance. Within contexts, sexuality is understood and articulated as a part of the cultural production of meaning. Butler means that performance is a mode of negotiating social and sexual relations.

Gayle Rubin uses the phrase “sex/gender system” in her essay “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex.” By this term, she

means “a set of arrangements by which the biological rawmaterial of human sex and procreation is shaped by humans, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how desirable some of the conventions may be” (Nardi and Schneider 165). Rubin underlines that the difference between men and women is related to procreation, but is appropriated by social interventions. She argues that this system is explored by society to articulate that “part of social life is the locus of the operation of women” (Nardi and Schneider). Rubin argues that gender differences become oppressive because of social intervention. She considers gender as the outcome of “the socially imposed division of the sexes” (Nardi and Schneider). Rubin also draws insights from Levi Strauss’s theory of kinship for a structural template. She considers sex, gender and sexuality as figures of kinship. She further contends that the system is reproduced in children’s development. According to her, the distinction between sex and gender is systematised in society. In every society, there is a specific mechanism that converts sex to gender.

Catherine McKinnon develops a theory of gender into a theory of sexuality in her work *Towards a Feminist Theory of State*. According to her, the social meaning of sex is created by sexual objectification of women. It is a practice whereby women are treated as objects for satisfying men’s desires. Therefore, masculinity is defined as sexual dominance and femininity as sexual submissiveness. She explains: “. . . genders are created through the eroticization of the man-woman difference and dominance/submission defines each other. This is the social meaning of sex” (113). McKinnon

means that gender is hierarchical and is connected to sexualized power relations. In Foucault's view, power relations are central to any analysis of social/cultural constructs. Foucault points out that power relation is conspicuous in all relations defined in terms of difference. Foucault uses the term "technological" regarding power relations in the structures of gender and sexuality. Foucault thinks that power functions in every human relationship: ". . . power relations are intentional and non-subjective" (*History Vol. I* 194). For Foucault, power has a dual nature. It limits as well as creates the possibility for individuals. Foucault, therefore, envisions "technologies of the self or gender or sexuality." This is evident in a patriarchy where power relations are hierarchically structured.

Anne Fausto-Sterling, in her *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, discusses the possibility of having more than two biological sexes. She critiques false dichotomies like nature/nurture, biology/culture and essentialism/constructivism. She finds the problematic of sexuality and sexual identity in these dichotomic sexes. She calls for a more flexible view of sex and sexuality. She does not give any significance to the sexed body. She argues that the individual has the right to redefine his/her sexual identity, even by disowning his/her sexed body. She insists that the category sex must be removed as a form of identification. There is no essential relation between sexed body and sexuality. As already discussed, sexuality is performatively constructed or produced by orienting the body according to the desire of the mind. There is, therefore, the possibility of sexual identities that

do not conform to heteronormative practices. They are represented by the broad term “homosexuals” and their sexual practice as “homosexuality.” But, unlike heterosexuality, homosexuality is not a monolithic practice. There are therefore several categories of homosexuals. They are together called sexual minorities. They include lesbians, queers, bisexuals, transgenders, queers and intersex persons (LGBTQI).

Patriarchy denies the right for the political participation of women and sexual minorities. There are biological and cultural factors inherent in this denial. This is intricately related to body politics. Body politics means the set of cultural practices and social policies which empower society to regulate the human body. Society regulates both the individuals and the body. Several categories of power intersect in body politics. They include institutional penal power embedded in the government, disciplinary power exacted in economic production, the discretionary power exercised in consumption and the personal power negotiated in intimate relations. The individuals who engage in body politics are classified in terms of power relationship: those marked as superior and others marked as inferior. The people who are superior have the privilege to control their bodies as well as others. The people who are inferior are denied the rights to control their own bodies.

In feminist perspective, body politics is the historical struggle of women against the objectification or the commodification of the female body, violence against women and the campaign for the reproductive rights for women.

Feminists argue that the body is always subject to cultural, social and political appropriation. Carol Hanisch coined the phrase “the personal is political” in the context of body politics. She argues that the phrase represents struggles for equal rights within domestic and sexual relationships as well as equal rights in the public space. The phrase emphasises women’s power and authority over her body. The second wave feminism promotes body politics by resisting sexual violence and sexual abuse. It is a matter of common knowledge that sexual minorities like the queer are subject to greater sexual violence and sexual abuse. This is because the queer is a metaphor or a trope that can strategically stabilise the relationship between man and woman in a patriarchy. Heterosexualization of sexuality reflects intolerance towards homosexuality and the rights of the queer. Heterosexualization is based on the hetero power relations and related to heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is a perspective that only heterosexuality is normal and that other forms of sexualities are its weak imitations. This perspective negatively affects the queer or LGBT as heteronormativity is expected to render sexual dissidence invalid.

The term transgender was coined by Virginia Prince who was an advocate for heterosexual male transvestites. She authored the pioneering work *The Transvestite and His Wife* and *How to be a Woman Through Male*. By transgender, she means a person who lives full time in a gender other than the one identified at birth but without surgical body modification. Initially, the term refers to an individual who lives in a social role not associated with

his/her natal sex, who does not take to genital surgery as a means of supporting gender presentation. But there is a distinction among transvestites, transsexuals and transgenders. Transvestites contextually change their clothes. They take to cross dressing like the drag. The transsexuals permanently change their genitals. They take to sex modification surgery. The transgenders make a sustained effort to change their social gender roles through non-surgical means. They take to social and cultural practices to change into the gender of their desire. According to Prince, cross-dressing reflects the emotional and virtuous aspects of the male self and offers a relief from the demands of masculinity. But Leslie Steinberg contends that the transgender is an umbrella term used to represent all gender-variant people who do not conform to norms. Steinberg identifies the transgender as a person who lives outside the system of the gender binary. The term encompasses transvestites and transsexuals, androgynies, butch lesbians, effeminate gay men, drag queens, non-stereotypical heterosexual men and women, and the intersex individuals. It also includes members of non-Western, non-European indigenous cultures: Native American “breached”, Brazilian “travesty”, Indian “*hijra*”, Polynesian “Mahout”, Omani “sanity”, African “female husbands” and Balkan “sworn virgins.” In this regard, it is worthwhile to recall the observation of Fausto-Sterling that sexuality is best understood not as a dichotomy but as a continuum. She bases her assumptions on her exposure to intersex conditions. She explains:

While male and female stand on the extreme ends of a biological continuum, there are many bodies...that evidently mix together anatomical components conventionally attributed to both males and females. The implications of my arguments for a sexual continuum are profound. If nature really opposes us for more than two sexes, then it follows that our current notions of masculinity and femininity are cultural conceits. (31)

Faustus-Sterling explains that genetic females are potential females since they preserve their capacity for reproduction but males are never classified on their genetic identity.

The poststructuralist feminists, Butler and de Lauretis, deconstruct the concepts of gender and sexuality. They deconstruct heteronormativity which is defined to conform to gender roles to cultural norms. In fact, they deconstruct the structuralist concepts of identity and redefine continuums. Butler and de Lauretis deconstruct gender and sexual identities based on decentred structure. In the structuralist concept, identities are defined as binary oppositions in which the first term is preferred to the second. In the case of hegemonic categories like gender and sexuality, the second term is devoid of agency which is essential for articulating resistance. Since patriarchy, heterosexuality or heteronormativity is a hegemonic structure; it continues unhindered by any resistance in society. But in actual practice there is resistance to oppressive and hegemonic structures like gender and sexuality. Then gender or sexual

identities are deconstructed; they are endowed with agency and capacity for resistance. Moreover, the deconstruction of the binary opposites male/female or masculine/feminine makes it possible to accommodate more flexible and fluid forms of gender and sexuality. This justifies the existence of forms of sexuality other than homosexuality and heterosexuality. Butler and de Lauretis explore the application of deconstruction to conceptually justify alternative and counter-hegemonic forms of sexualities outside the binary pair, homosexuality/heterosexuality. The presence of minor sexualities is further consolidated by postmodernist thought which distinguishes between gender and sexuality, explains the conflict between social constructivism and essentialism, brings in minor sexualities like LGBT communities to the collective consciousness, and explores most of the gender-bending and gender performativity in both life and arts. De Lauretis originally used the term queer with limited connotation of homo-social desire in the edited work *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*. Butler, in her later work *Bodies That Matter*, connects gender and sexuality to the discourses of power. But the earlier work was an attempt to “reinvent the terms of our sexualities, to construct another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual” (*Queer Theory* 4). De Lauretis consistently attempts to redefine sexualities, sexual identities and sexual subjectivities.

The poststructuralist lineage of queer theory is also endorsed by William B. Turner in his work *The Genealogy of Queer Theory*. He remarks that “poststructuralism is queer” (22). He argues that queer theory is the outcome of

a conceptual break from the legacy of the Second World War. In Turner's view, the post-war critical disillusionment has permitted interrelated contestations of dominant ideologies which result in the challenges to power relations and identity. The concept of queerness has developed as a challenge to specific categories in general and epistemological status of such categories in particular. This emphasises that the queer is an epistemological structure rather than a power structure. Sexuality is regarded as a complex array of social codes and signs. Gay and lesbian theories focus on the intersections of desire and show that homoeroticism and heteroerotic function as mutually confusing modes of expression within cultural constructs of identities. Queerness, therefore, creates a state where equality and ambiguity are accepted as the norms.

Nikki Sullivan addresses a wide range of issues regarding sexual identities in her work, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. She questions the self-reflexivity of identity: "Why it is that identity is never radically open nor entirely self-created, and why and how it is that resistance and change are possible" (97). According to Sullivan, queer theory rejects defined categories of bipolar opposites and deconstructs the hegemonic heteronormative discourse. She interprets the destruction of heteronormativity as a pragmatic step to change the social conceptions of sex, gender and sexuality. The categories of sex, gender and sexuality are represented through the power of discourse and resistivity as performativity. She argues that the cultural dynamics of queerness creates an interactive community for "a being-together

animated by resistance, the discord and disagreement” between individuals or groups, enabling difference and identity (Sullivan 148). Queer is therefore defined as a resistance to the norm, a position, a practice of actions.

The attitude of the mainstream society to the various categories of the queer seems to be relative. In *Sex Differences in Attitudes Towards Homosexual Persons, Behaviour and Civil Rights: A Meta-Analysis*, Bernal Whitley and Mary E. Kite state that men’s attitude towards gay men are generally more negative than their attitude towards lesbians. Sex gender systems make men more negative towards homosexuality. They also find that men are more traditional in their views about gender roles than women are. They find the reason for the traditional gender role system in homophobia. They argue that male gender roles are more clearly defined in society than female gender roles. They also find that men who violate the traditional gender roles are subject to more sanctions or penalty than the women who transgress the traditional gender roles.

Lee Edelman, in *Homographies*, follows Sedgwick’s insights of feminist analysis of sexual difference to explore the invention of male identities in literature and film. Edelman examines what he calls the homosexual differences or the arbitrary divisions between heterosexual and homosexual masculinities. He suggests that a project of “homographesis” is essential to critique the contemporary cultural conceptualization of gay identity. For Edelman, the term homographesis means the simultaneous processes of oppression and resistance reflected in modern reading strategies. He remarks

that homographesis assigns a visible difference to gay bodies through prominent ideological strategies. He observes: “. . . the construction of homosexuality as a subject of discourse, as a cultural category about which one can think or speak or write, coincides . . . with the process whereby the homosexual subject is represented as being, even more than inhabiting, a body that always demands to be read, a body on which his ‘sexuality’ is always inscribed” (10). Edelman also outlines another resistant homographesis: a reading and writing practice that resist categorization. It is a practice “intent on de-scribing the identities that [a social] order has so oppressively inscribed” (10). Edelman’s analysis enables one to de-identify and destabilise oppressive modes of representation of sexuality.

In her work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Sedgwick analyses homosexuality and heterosexuality in terms of “homo-sociality.” Homo-sociality represents various bonds between men necessary to maintain social systems. It operates in the transfer of status and property through women like marriage, birth and so on. These bonds between men created through women are considered by Western culture as antithetical to pure homosexual bonds. In this work, Sedgwick illustrates how the two antithetical terms related to sexuality continually collapse and merge into the homo-social in practice and literature. Sedgwick thus finds the origin and reflection of homoeroticism within hetero-erotic practices. Sedgwick’s analysis foregrounds the fact that desire and identity are neither coterminous nor congruence.

The analysis of desire is a powerful means of destabilising any assumptions that strengthen the construction of both gay and straight identities.

Jonathan Dollimore, in his work *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*, contrasts the homosexual writings of Andre Gide and the English writer Oscar Wilde. Dollimore points to the difference in the French and the English perspectives about sexuality. According to Dollimore, Gide symbolised a kind of acceptance of identity altered by sexual difference, whereas Wilde symbolises a full acceptance of the difference interrogated by the possibility of identity. The two writers represent the two theoretical possibilities and Dollimore traces this through the Renaissance and contemporary culture. He shows how literature, histories and subcultures of sexual and gender dissidence illuminate contemporary debate in cultural theory and psychoanalysis.

In her work *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick attempts a feminist exploration of differentially structured systems of oppression. She argues that Western epistemology is influenced by the inconsistencies in the conventional binary oppositions between male heterosexuality and homosexuality. In *Epistemology* she combines both feminist and anti-homophobic perspectives: “In twentieth-century Western culture, gender and sexuality represent two analytic axes that may productively be imagined as being as distinct from one another as, say, gender and class, or class and race. Distinct, that is to say, no more than minimally, but nonetheless usefully” (30). She means that gender

and sexuality are different but analogous epistemes. Sedgwick places sexuality at the centre of contemporary culture. She argues that any understanding of Western culture will be incomplete and even damaged if it does not incorporate “a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition” (1). She remarks that homo/hetero distinction central to modern sexual definitions are incoherent for two reasons. First, there is a contradiction inherent in the homosexuality and the characteristic of a distinct minority which Sedgwick refers to as “a minoritizing view” (1). Second, there is a sexual desire that potentially marks everyone including the heterosexual subject, which Sedgwick refers as a “universalizing view” (1). She observes that there is a contradiction in the gendering of homosexual desire in both transitive and separatist terms. Sedgwick focuses on everyday differences between the people considered sexually but not epistemologically significant:

For some people, the preference for a certain sexual object, act, role, zone, or scenario is so immemorial and durable that it can only be experienced as innate; for others, it appears to come late or to feel aleatory or discretionary. For some people, the possibility of bad sex is aversive enough that their lives are strongly marked by its avoidance; for others, it isn't. For some people, sexuality provides a needed space of heightened discovery and cognitive hyper-stimulation. For others, sexuality provides a needed space of routinised habituation cognitive hiatus. (25)

Sedgwick asserts the incoherence of contemporary definitions of sexuality and the descriptions of sexual variations. Her works provide insights against the normalising discourses of homosexuality and heterosexuality. She also emphasises the heterogeneous and unsustainable elements of sex/gender identities.

Derrida's concept of the supplement can also be effectively used to deconstruct the binaries masculine/feminine or heterosexuality/homosexuality. In these binaries, the latter term functions as the supplement which is at once an addition and a substitution. In Derrida's view of the supplement as addition, the supplement's exterior position as an adjunct is challenged and is internally created as the "Other." In Derrida's view of the supplement as substitution, it becomes Rousseau's "dangerous supplement" which Derrida calls "catastrophe" or "scandal". The dangerous supplement can threaten the natural presence. Thus, in the binaries of gender and sexuality the feminine or the homosexuality can become the "dangerous supplement" or Derrida's "catastrophe." The supplements like the feminine or homosexuality can challenge and subvert the binary structures consolidated by the phallogocentric organisation of society. The "natural" and the "original" self-sufficient system still require the enrichment of the supplement as the other for its predominance. Therefore, the masculine or the heterosexual projected as the dominant by the patriarchal society cannot survive without the active assistance of its supplement as the "Other," the feminine or the homosexual.

Alternative and minor sexualities find serious expression in Indian English literature. Same sex love is increasingly accepted in Indian sensibility. Many contemporary writers have foregrounded the experiences of the queer as materials for literature. They argue for the liberation of the queer and their works often form the platform to represent the resistance of the queer. The contemporary queer literature in India includes fiction, shortstories, poetry, prose and drama wherein the writers boldly delineate the epistemological and the ontological crisis of the queer. They indeed make a trenchant view of the queer life. *Trying to Grow*, a semi-autobiographical novel by Firdaus Kanga, *Strange Obsession* (novel) by Shobha De, *A Married Woman* (novel) by Manju Kapoor, *The Boyfriend* and *Hostel Room 131* (novels) by Raja Rao, *Two Krishnas* (novel) by Ghalib Shiraz Dhalla, *Vivek and I* (novel) by Mayur Patel, and *The Pregnant King* (novel) by Devdutt Pattanaik are the best known novels that portray the people with alternative sexuality and gender. *Lihaaf (The Quilt)*, a short story by Ismat Chughtai, *Quarantine: Stories* by Rahul Mehta and Mahesh Dattani's short-story *The Reading: A rom.com in cyberspace* mirror the politics of minor sexualities. Besides the novels and short-stories, the queer literature in India also comprises of edited works like *A Lotus of another Color: an Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience* by Rakesh Ratti, *Facing the Mirror: Lesbian Writing from India* by Ashwini Sukthankar, and *Same-Sex Love in India: Reading in Indian Literature* by Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai. Hoshang Merchant is one of the prominent gay poets in Indian English literature. *Flower to Flame*, *Love's Permission* and *Bellagio Blues* are

a few of his poetry collections. His explorations on the subject of the queer have also been materialised in the form of critical studies titled, *In-discretions: Anais Nin and Forbidden Sex, Forbidden Texts. Yaraana: Gay Writing from South Asia* is an edited work which includes prose, poems and plays by various authors that churn out the essence of being a gay. Merchant's *The Man who would be Queen: Autobiographical Fictions* gives a good account of his own experiences of leading a gay life.

Contemporary Indian drama is a major platform where the issues associated with gender and sexuality are discussed. Deeply rooted in Indian ethos, Indian drama is highly didactic. It never compromises its didactic purpose when it takes up the task of portraying socially relevant topics like gender and sexuality. The Indian dramatists have cleverly blended the Western techniques with the indigenous ones in dealing with the questions of contemporary relevance. This has framed the hybrid and strong foundation of modern Indian drama. Though the pioneering playwrights like Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Gieve Patel and Gurucharan Singh made a grand inauguration of English theatre in India, most of their plays were not suitable for performance. Indian English plays attained fruition on the stage with the dramatic ventures of the playwrights like Badal Sircar (Bengali), Vijay Tendulkar (Marathi), Girish Karnad (Kannada) and Mohan Rakesh (Hindi). Though the four playwrights based their plays in regional languages, the English rendition of their plays has captured the attention of the whole country. Drama for these playwrights is a powerful tool to mirror the society and even

to mock at the society for its follies. Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan are two major playwrights of the contemporary period who have grabbed a remarkable space on the Indian dramatic arena. Gender related issues form the favourite themes of both the playwrights as they render in their plays the patriarchal social orders and the subsequent silencing of women and other gender/sexual minorities.

Sexuality is a powerfully visible subject in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani. They very daringly represent the issues of sexuality in their theatre. They deliberately challenge the normative conceptualizations of gender and sexuality and argue for other modalities and orientations of sexual behaviour. Tendulkar makes a vivid representation of women in a patriarchal setup. He exposes how women become mere objects of desire and how they are suppressed by men. He highlights the craving of women to fight for their freedom and rights and against their inability to come forward. He is also noted for his dauntless creation of women characters who surpass the cultural limitations of sexuality. His plays *Kamala*, *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *A Friend's Story* clearly manifest his commitment to this marginal subject. *A Friend's Story* is ever appreciated for its uniqueness in portraying same-sex love on stage. It is indeed a bold attempt to present lesbian love in the early 1980s in India. Through depicting lesbian love, rather than choosing homosexuality among men, Tendulkar has initiated a strong move for women's liberation. Rajesh Talwar, a lawyer and a playwright of the recent times, captures the issue of alternative sexuality in his play *Inside Gayland*. His play

is a satire on the law criminalising homosexuality in India. The contemporary Indian theatre also views the play *6*, based on L.B. Hamilton's *A Midnight Clear*, written and directed by Jeff Goldberg. The play depicts the story of two former gay lovers who rediscover a profound love between them later but cannot be together. Representation of homosexuality on stage is indeed a challenging task as direct visualisation of performances will have greater impact on the spectators.

Dattani is a prolific playwright. As a playwright of the urban masses, he chooses English, the language of the urban middle class as the medium of his plays. Dattani draws his characters from the new generation middle and upper-class Indians, whose individual interests do not match with the age-old traditions that the family imbibes in them. Angelina Multani, in the introduction to her work *Mahesh Dattani's Plays: Critical Perspectives*, observes: "Dattani's themes reflect and comment on the ordinary and everyday conflicts of so many urban people who may be living in transitional periods of history, caught between the firm undertow of Tradition and social values and the pull of modernity and globalization" (11). His characters are restricted by the threshold of family and society. Dattani's theatre group Playpen, founded in 1984 forms a strong background for his theatrical ventures. As a versatile playwright, he won the first Sahitya Academy Award for an English playwright in India.

Besides being a playwright, Dattani is a scriptwriter, dancer and teacher. As a scriptwriter, he is known for the films that concentrate on social issues

that are hardly looked upon. He owes to his credit films like *Ek Chingari ki Khoj Mein (In Search of a Spark)*, which highlights the issue of dowry and *Ek Alag Mausam (A Special Season)*, which discusses the AIDS crisis. He also wrote the screenplays for the film adaptation of his plays *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, released with the title *Mango Soufflé* and *Dance Like a Man*. Out of his craving for dance he learnt Bharatanatyam despite dance being considered as an art for women. In doing so, he emphasises the notion of gender as performance as maintained by Judith Butler. For Dattani, drama is not merely a source of entertainment but a tool for social reform. His unrestricted urge to inject in society the reformative capabilities of drama makes him do the role of a teacher. He conducts workshops on drama in India and in other parts of the world for developing and widening the scope of drama as a means of reforming society. He maintains the view that drama though is not easily accessible to people like films, the impact it creates is immensely powerful.

The prowess of Dattani as a socially conscious playwright lies in the themes he introduces in his plays. Most of his plays are imbued with the notions of gender and sexuality. He places his attention on the gender and sexual marginalisation in the urban areas. A woman becomes the first in the list of marginalisation based on gender and sexuality. The subjugation of the females, the various factors for their subjugation and their empowerment are heated topics in society. A marginalised Indian female, especially hailing from the lower stratum of society, one who is a victim of sexual abuse, or dowry or domestic violence, one who is denied freedom and context to voice her rights

and sufferings, often becomes a favourite character in the female-centred writings. Dattani's significance as a playwright, who deals with gender and sexuality, lies in his portrayal of the middle and upper class women who apparently lead a cosy life. He probes into their psyche to unravel their subordination under the male characters like husband/father/brother. He exposes the Urban Indian women's inability to express themselves within the family and the consequent emotional turbulances of their lives. Family at times becomes the most oppressive unit, especially for women. The family advocates and argues that its stability depends on the sacrifice of women. This stereotyping is particularly applicable to women and the queer. The powerful ideology which governs the lives of women and the queer is a social construct that overlooks the rights and privileges of the marginalized.

Queer is a major gender and sexual minorities about whom the Indian society often remains silent. The gender and sexuality of the queer which do not conform to the social norms make them the marginalised of the marginalised. Although society is aware of their presence, the issue of queer is mostly ignored and people with such orientations are branded as deviant and mean. But, Dattani daringly makes these cursed figures the protagonists of his plays to bring them forward and enlighten the society about the hollowness of the traditional notions of gender and sexual.

Dattani's plays like *Where There's a Will, Dance Like a Man*, *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Night Queen*, *Do the Needful*, *On a Muggy Night in*

Mumbai, Seven Steps Around the Fire, Thirty Days in September and *The Girl Who Touched the Stars* (radio play) subvert patriarchy and question the heteronormative understanding of gender/sexuality. These plays introduce a variety of themes to question the male/female gender binary and the assigned gender roles for the male and the female. These plays portray characters who are ardent patriarchs having a strong hold over their families, but later end up with the realization of the absurdity of the patriarchal orders. Women, homosexuals, transgenders, people who cannot conform to the socially accepted gender norms and victims of child sexual abuse are the other characters who find a decent space in Dattani's plays. Dattani, by introducing such characters, problematises the notions of gender and sexuality and also makes them speak of their miserable lives.

Besides the issues related to gender and sexuality, Dattani's social concern also extends to various other evils that have made life miserable for the poor. He has brilliantly brought in the currents of religious fundamentalism which disturbs a pluralistic society like India in the plays like *Final Solutions* and *The Swami and Winston* (radio play). His radio play *Tale of the Mother Feeding her Child* and *Clearing the Rubble* too stand as good evidence of his understanding and concern for the disasters that strike the country. In his stage play *Brief Candle: A Dance between Love and Death*, Dattani deals with the experiences of the cancer patients whose lives have been distorted by medical treatments. In the play, he attempts to lighten the heaviness of the burden that human life carries. Dattani comments in his note on the play: "I have in fact

attempted to work on that thin line that defines comedy from tragedy . . . In that sense, I do see the play more as a comedy with a flaw” (*Brief Candle* 3). The play is about a group of cancer patients in a hospice preparing to organise a play written by one of their friends who has lost his life to cancer. *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?*, another theatrical venture of Dattani throws its spotlight on actresses who have lived their entire life for the theatre. Lillete Dubey, observes in the note on the play: “. . . a story set against the backdrop of the theatre, tracing some of the theatrical forms that constitute our history, and recounting a tale that mirrored the stories of a multitude of women artistes who were consumed with a love for their craft, almost at the cost of everything else” (*Me and My Plays* 48). The playwright has enriched the play by locating it in the context of the Partition. Dattani’s scrupulous explorations of the struggles of city life have landed him on the platform of *The Big Fat City*. He delves into the miseries of the common man who fight the hardships of the city which is normally regarded as a dream world. It is a “black comedy” as Dattani puts it, where the playwright cleverly wraps in humour the troubles of the people.

The thesis focuses on six plays of Dattani, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On A Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Do the Needful* (radio play), *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, *Dance Like a Man* and *The Girl Who Touched the Stars* (radio play). They are analysed in strategic frameworks of poststructuralist theories on identity, queer and discourse. Each chapter forms its own theoretical framework to analyse the plays. These plays are chosen as they specifically deal with the themes of gender and sexuality. The select plays provide adequate contexts to

explain the construction of queer identity, the problematic of the queer and the discursive construction of the queer in the plays of Dattani. They illustrate that gender and sexuality are cultural constructs. They also demonstrate that homosexuality is not monolithic, but comprises of several alternative/minor sexualities. The plays underline that, unlike heterosexuality, all forms of homosexuality are counter-hegemonic alternatives to heteronormativity. This dissertation thus examines how Dattani deconstructs gender identity to represent the politics of alternative sexualities in his plays.

Chapter II

Queering the Queer:

A Study of Gender and Sexual Identities in Dattani's Plays

The notion of identity in its various manifestations has always been a contentious subject of serious academic debate in “human sciences.” Identity as a concept has been problematised in different academic domains and has figured as a major trope in contemporary literary discourses. The traditional understanding of identity as something stable, fixed and definite is radically challenged in the contemporary cultural critique.

In this context, Kathryn Woodward, in her “Introduction” to *Identity and Difference*, observes: “This book is about identity because identity matters, both in terms of social and political concerns within the contemporary world and within academic discourses where identity has been seen as conceptually important in offering explanations of social and cultural changes” (1). She views identity as an index of social and cultural changes.

Paul Gilroy in his book *Between Camps: Race and Culture in Postmodernity* also states that the issue of identity needs to be taken seriously: “We live in a world where identity matters. It matters both as a concept theoretically, and as a contested fact of contemporary political life. The word itself has acquired a huge contemporary resonance, inside and outside the academic world” (301). He emphasizes that identity is a contested territory. However, some social and cultural theorists observe that identity becomes a

concern only when it encounters disintegration. In this regard, Kobena Mercer in his article “Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics” observes: “identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (Rutherford 43). Crisis and confusion make identity problematic. Mercer argues that Western philosophy has been using the term “identity” and its metaphors to address the paradoxical questions of stability in the midst of fluidity and unity in the midst of diversity. However, in the contemporary stratified world of race, class and gender, the terms “identity” and “identity politics” are central to literary and cultural discourses. In the contemporary world, people organize themselves on the basis of their differences on constructs like gender, race, class and ethnicity. If difference was a question of inferiority and subordination in the past, it is a source of assertion and celebration in the contemporary period. Thus, the union of the people on the basis of their collective cultural identity has given rise to the politics of difference. This constitutes what is generally termed as cultural politics or identity politics.

In the Foucauldian sense, identity is a subject position which a person assumes at a particular instance of his existence in relation to the “Other.” Therefore, identity primarily inheres in and is constructed by difference. It is a context-bound position. In contemporary discourses, identity is defined as a set or matrix of relations based on certain cultural constructs like race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and so on. This creates the possibility for an individual to have

multiple identities depending on the contexts in which his/her self is positioned. Theorists approach the concept of identity from multiple perspectives resulting in the innumerable attempts to define identity. According to Richard Jenkins, “identity refers to the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities”(4). If Jenkins’ attention is on the social dimension of identity, Stuart Hall’s attention is on individual identity. According to him, “identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses (339). Until recently, identity is viewed as a kind of fixed point of thought and being It used to be conceived as the ground of action and the logic of something like a true self. But identity is not a possession, but a social process of achieving an equilibrium between conflicting expectations. Therefore, Hall asserts that identity is a process and is a split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the “Other” to oneself. Hall points to the fact that one cannot construct one’s identity except in one’s relationship with the “Other.” Identity cannot fulfil its social function if the individual simply conjures up an image of himself and imposes this on his social partners. Identity becomes effective only when the partners form an image of the individual in which he also recognizes himself. Identity is therefore a negotiation between the self image of the individual and his/her image evolved through social interactions in different contexts. In this regard, Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov, with reference to ethnic identity observe in their article “Beyond Identity:

What cognitive perspectives suggest, in short, is that race, ethnicity, and nation are not things in the world but ways of seeing the world. They are ways of understanding and identifying oneself, making sense of one's problems and predicaments, identifying one's interests, and orienting one's action. They are ways of recognizing, identifying, and classifying other people, of construing sameness and difference, and of "coding" and making sense of their actions. (25)

Identity constitutes ways of perceiving the world, others and the problems of human existence. James Clifford also upholds the idea that identity is not something solid and concrete independent of other entities. According to him identity is not "a boundary to be maintained but as a nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging a subject" (344). The question of difference, so integral to the notion of identity, needs to be probed further.

The uniqueness and distinctiveness of identity are determined through the marking of difference from others. Jean Paul Sartre understands human identity in terms of an inter-subjective experience. According to him what makes one's identity possible is the other's "gaze." The most common form of identity formation thus involves binary oppositions. But in a set of binaries the "Self" is treated as norm and the "Other" is deemed as deviant, especially in cultural and gender context. It becomes the basis of exclusion and marginalization in the society. When this exclusion is protested against, or resisted to, the same difference may be construed as a source of celebration,

source of power, pivot of activism and politics, as it happens in the case of “dalit” or “queer” identity. Cornel West also explains the process of identity construction in his article “The New Cultural Politics of Difference”:

“Distinctive features of the new cultural politics of difference are to thrash the monolithic and homogenous in the name of diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity; to reject the abstract, general and universal in the light of the concrete, specific and particular, and to historicize contextualize and pluralize by highlighting the contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting and changing” (119). He underlines that there is no unitary identical subject, to itself across time; rather identity is always unstable, fragmented and contingent since it depends on the exclusion of the “Other.”

The concept of identity normally has a connotation more of sameness than of otherness. The word identity is etymologically derived from Latin *idem* meaning the “same.” The “same” however does not mean identical but implies a continuity of the aspect(s) by which a person is recognized by the society and even by himself. John Locke, in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, emphasizes the psychological continuity as the base of personal identity. He defines personal identity as an identity of consciousness through duration in time. Derek Parfit in his article on “Personal Identity” argues that a person’s psychological continuity is linked to memory. But identity does not depend upon simply remembering the important events of one’s life. It is also marked by later changes in beliefs or ideological affiliations that

can influence one's selfhood and demands a re-designation of the individual in terms of a new identity.

This notion of identity is inextricably interlinked with the concept of subjectivity. Subjectivity refers to the human consciousness which makes one the subject and agent of his thought and actions. Subjectivity connotes what it is to be a subject and refers to both being a subject as well as the process of becoming a subject. In his work *Subjectivity*, Donald E. Hall defines the notion of subjectivity as:

Often used interchangeably with the term 'identity,' subjectivity more accurately denotes our social construct and consciousness of identity. We commonly speak of identity as a flat, one-dimensional concept, but subjectivity is much broader and more multifaceted; it is social and personal being that exists in negotiation with broad cultural definitions and our own ideals. We may have numerous discrete identities, of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc., and a subjectivity that is comprised of all of those facets, as well as our own imperfect awareness of our selves. (134)

Traditionally, subjectivity refers to the individual experiences and thought processes defined with reference to the self or "I." It is a complex product of numerous discrete identities and consciousnesses about oneself. A subject is a self-conscious being that has subjective experience, subjective consciousness or a subjective relationship with another entity. The subject is virtually

synonymous with the notion of the “self,” as an autonomous and self-actuating being which possesses valid self-knowledge. The self refers to the conscious, reflective personality of an individual. Moreover, this self is the agent responsible for the thoughts and actions of an individual to which they are ascribed.

The Western philosophical tradition posits the possibility of two main models of the subject. The first characterizes the subject as a knower. For such a subject, the world is its object, and the subject’s relation to that world is an epistemological one. The task of the subject is to achieve knowledge of the world. The second model characterizes the subject as an agent. For such a subject, the world is the place where actions occur, and the subject’s relation to that world is construed in practical and moral terms. Descartes and the representatives of German idealism like Kant, Fichte and Hegel consider human subjectivity as the foundation of all reality and knowledge and maintain that it is deeply rooted in thought. The very notion of the subject or “self” originates in Descartes. Descartes’ famous dictum “cogito ergo sum”- I think, therefore, I am - encapsulates the very idea of the self as an autonomous subject, a being who is conscious of its ability to think and is aware of its existence. Thus, Descartes postulates a split between the thinking subject and an external world of objects. The subject is a conscious being who thinks about and perceives an objective world. Hence, Descartes’ “cogito” privileges the individual over the traditional concept of the self. It foregrounds the subjective truth as holding a higher and more important epistemological place than the

objective truth. For Descartes, the individual's subjective experience is the foundation of truth. So he considers the self as consciously awakened rational being which comprehends the empirical reality of the subject. However, the Cartesian notion of subjectivity as reasoning, free agency and autonomous consciousness is challenged by the anti-Rationalists and the anti-Idealist philosophers.

The Empiricist philosopher, John Locke and his followers refute the notion of an autonomous "cogito" which is characterized by innate principles. According to them, the human mind is a *tabula rasa* and is devoid of any *apriori* concepts. Knowledge is the result of perceptions. Empirical philosophy in its extreme position as envisaged by David Hume rejects all notions of self, identity, substance and matter. Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer who continued this critique reject the notion of a unified and autonomous Cartesian subject. Nietzsche, who followed the tradition of Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer, postulates that subjectivity is the product of repressive value systems. According to him, the abstract notions such as reason, truth, morality, logic and identity are the products of the biological and physiological activities of man. The human conceptions of the subject and its world are no different from this biological process. According to him, it is the Will-to-Power which constructs a subject, which through its active and reactive energies, reinvents existence and confronts life at random contingency. This subject transcends all logocentric oppositions in its varied manifestations. The subject is both an incomplete

biological entity and an artifact of dominant ideologies. Thus, the Nietzschean notion of subject both challenges and subverts the Cartesian concept of an autonomous self.

Nietzsche's understanding of the subject anticipates the Poststructuralist notion of subjectivity/identity. With the emergence of the postmodern theories of Michael Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser and Jacques Derrida, the notion of human identity as the backbone of all truth is again subjected to serious critique. Foucault's archaeological history investigates the specific historical and ideological contexts along with the processes that which create the subject. He focuses on the material aspects of subjectivisation to show that subjects are not abstract entities but embodied beings. His genealogy of knowledge and power show how knowledge and power are interdependent and sustain mutually as forms of control and means of organizing subjectivity/identity. According to Foucault, discourses create the inevitable structures for the fashioning of subjects as minds and bodies. He negates the conventional philosophy's notion of subject as singular and *apriori*. According to him, the dominant discourse of each epoch objectifies the subject according to its values, beliefs and interests. "Subject" and "truth" are the products of historically contingent discourses and thus they have no existence outside or beyond discourse (McLaren 57-58). Subjectivisation, thus, involves the technologies of power which function at the multifarious levels in the life of an individual.

Louis Althusser maintains that ideology constitutes individuals as subjects. It connects individuals to their real conditions of existence. In his article "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Althusser introduces his concept of ideological state apparatus. The ISA comprises of family, religion, education, law, culture and many other things in society which play a pivotal role in the shaping of an individual. The discourses propagated by the ideological state apparatus 'hail' the individual in social interactions that gives him his identity. Thus, ideology recruits subjects among individuals. Althusser uses the term 'interpellation' to refer to this operation. An individual's ability to perceive his identity is not innate; rather he derives his identity from the social conditions where he is placed. Althusser argues that ideology interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects. Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) is another concept that Althusser brings in to explain the notion of identity. The RSA imposes control and represses the innate tendencies of the people which do not match the social norms by violent and coercive means. According to Althusser, an individual's identity - the formation of "I" - is thus largely shaped by the social practices which are fixed on strong ideological foundations. The ISA and the RSA play a crucial role in moulding one's desires, choices, intentions, preferences, judgments and so on. This situation represses the individual's interests in favour of the social norms. The social norms, deeply rooted in ideology, are heavily dependent on the elite interests and tastes. They are determined by those who possess power in society. The social norms, powerfully carved out by the powerful in society,

are imposed on those who lack power. The dominant class ensures their dominance over the oppressed and naturalizes their oppression through ideology.

Althusser's concept of ideology is closely associated with Jacques Lacan's Mirror Stage which initiates the formation of "I" or the subject. Lacan argues that subjectivity is connected to the unconscious, and therefore language and sexual difference are constituted at the unconscious level. Mirror stage marks the transformation of the subject when the child connects itself with the reality around and begins to derive its identity. The child forms an image of itself as a unified being separate from the mother and the rest of the world. It understands this "I" as the primordial even before it is understood in a dialectical relationship with the Other. Mirror stage is associated with primary narcissism. This "I" is the ideal "I" which also forms the source of secondary identifications, including libidinal identity. The ideal "I" remains irreducible in an individual. The ideal "I" is always combined with the socially determined "I," which is often in conflict. An individual subject knows his form of the body as "Gestalt" and is familiar with the exterior factors that influence the constitution of his identity. Despite the mental permanence of the real "I," a subject is forced to project himself with the identity constituted by the external factors. Thus, the socially determined identity dominates the real identity. For the image, the mirror stage becomes a threshold of the visible world. According to Lacan, the Mirror Stage lights up a relationship between the *innenwelt* and the *umwelt*. He establishes the contrast between the *innenwelt* and the *umwelt* to emphasize the interaction between the interior space the "I"

occupies and the physical world of the subject. The dialectical relationship between both is highlighted when he says that the “I” comes into being through an interaction with the outside world.

Psychoanalysis particularly the Lacanian contribution to the formation and development of identity is worth examining. According to Lacan “The Imaginary Phase” or the “Mirror Stage” plays an important role in the formation of identity in the life of a child. The image in the mirror helps the child to understand that it is different from its mother and for the first time the child develops a sense of the “Other” which is later fixed by the entry of the symbolic order. However, the child’s notion of its unity with its mother is broken only with the introduction of language in the life of the child. Through the process of suture, the child develops a very pleasant and at the same an alienating image, where it assumes a sense of unity and wholeness for itself. This is however, only a misrecognition and illusion which the ego develops for the child. During this stage the child assumes that it is whole and unified and refuses to accept its fragmentation and alienation. As a consequence the self, that the child forms, is fragmentary, split and illusory. This misrecognition and suture construct an identity for the child where it wants to return to the unity with the mother. The consequence of this desire is the creation of a certain kind of fantasy, where the child is entangled in a never ending process of constructing a unified identity through the symbolic order and projecting itself in the ways in which others see it.

The Symbolic Order into which the child enters after the Mirror Stage is very important for Lacanian psychoanalysis. This is the domain of language where a person consolidates and unifies himself. The linguistic structure creates a sense of wholeness and unity for the individual. Entry into the Symbolic order enables an individual to make meaning. According to Lacan, the very unconscious is structured like language and an individual does not have an existence outside language. Martin Heidegger and Derrida also align themselves with Lacan in their understanding of the relation between man and language. In this context, Lacan in his book *Ecrits* observes: “The form in which language is expressed itself defines subjectivity . . . I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object” (93-94). The sense of unity created by language enables an individual to master his fragmentariness and achieve unity with himself. However, uncertainty is inherent in this process of developing the notion of identity and this process is marked by inadequacy and insufficiency. In this context, Kathryn Woodward in *Identity and Difference* comments: “The failure of identity and the fragmentation of subjectivity offer the possibility of personal change, and can be incorporated in accounts which challenge the notion of a fixed, unified subject” (46). Thus Lacan’s questioning of Freud in his psychoanalytic project radicalises not only the Freudian concept of subjectivity but also the Cartesian and Kantian notion of identity as permanent, unified and homogenous.

A serious philosophical and historical investigation of the notion of identity was further introduced and elaborated by Michel Foucault through his concept of discourse which problematises the notion of a fixed and autonomous identity. He emphasizes the decisive role which discourse plays in the construction of identity. Following the postmodernist and poststructuralist philosophical positions, he dismantles the notion of a fixed, autonomous and definite identity and argues that identity is a subject position assigned by discourses. Foucault, therefore, argues for a radical subversion of the way in which the construction of subjectivity is understood. In this connection, Foucault observes: “May be the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are” (cited in Donald E. Hall 336). The main contention of Foucault’s argument is that one’s subjectivity is formed by the dominant discourses which are prevalent in the society. The construction of identity in a discourse governed world is possible only through the subversion of the dominant discourses which demand the individual’s surrender to the strategies of power. In this context, Foucault in his article “Subject and Power” remarks:

The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our day is not to try to liberate us from the state and the state’s institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for centuries. (*Critical Inquiry* 785)

Therefore, according to Foucault, the understanding and theorization of identity requires a deconstruction of the dominant discourses which impose autonomous and monolithic identities to individuals.

Michel Foucault examines the notion of identity in terms of the dominant discourses that developed in different historical epochs in the past. In his *Discipline and Punish* he maintains that the development of discipline in the 18th and 19th centuries made a striking impact on the individual bodies and on the shaping of the individual identity. With the emergence of modern economic, political and military institutions, the individual bodies attained new economy and politics. The individuation of the bodies stood for the different tasks one performed. The individuals were trained, observed and controlled according to the task they did, which made individuation a necessity. Foucault talks about four kinds of individuality constructed by discipline – Cellular (concerned with the special occupation of bodies), organic (concerned with the natural ability of individuals to do the activities accordingly), genetic (concerned with the evolution of activities of an individual body over a period of time) and combinatory (concerned with the combination of force of many individuals which can form a single massive force).

Discipline moulds individuals according to the needs of the modern industrial age. The docile bodies are moulded in disciplinary institutions where they are strictly observed and recorded. The required discipline is imposed on the individuals by monitoring rather than using force. Foucault adopts the concept

of panopticon of Jeremy Bentham to elaborate his idea of the technologies of the body and the self. Panopticon, though an architectural model, was not used in constructions. But it was adopted in the construction of modern prisons.

Panopticon is an architectural structure designed to monitor every prisoner at a time. The prisoner would not know when and where he is observed and thus need to keep the code of conduct throughout. Foucault's elaboration of his carceral system includes its operation and failure. His concept goes beyond the structure of a prison to overlap into the social life. Schools, military institutions, hospitals and factories which run on a model of prison to keep their respective etiquettes also come under the concept of prison, for Foucault. Those who come under any such institutions are expected to follow the discipline defined for each of them. The major intention of all the institutions to impose control on people is to control delinquency. Delinquents sprout out when one is not keeping the track of set norms in society. The institutions train the people according to the codes of life in society. Those who go against these norms are put to reform or punished. Thus, in a social system designed on the model of panopticon, there is limited platform for an individual to develop his innate tendencies. One's behaviour is seriously pruned and wound by the social institutions to mould him as a social individual, rather than as an autonomous individual. One's identity is greatly shaped according to the social expectations. Here the identity of the individual subject is controlled, regulated and manipulated according to the requirement of the sovereign or the society.

The Poststructuralist idea of the subject propounded by Jacques Derrida and others, critiques liberal humanism's fundamental notion of the primacy of the autonomous and the unified individual subject. Traditional philosophy's supposition of a unique individuality and common human essence places man at the centre of the world. Poststructuralist thought exposes the logocentric assumptions of the Western philosophy and argues that subject and subjectivity are constructed in language and discourse. The subject being a construct of language, which is constituted by signifiers and marked by constant deferral of meaning, cannot be a unified and a stable entity. The subject is purely a linguistic construct and a "site." The subject, as Roland Barthes observes, is not a person, it is only an instance of saying "I" (Heath 145). The subject, though holds together enunciations, is empty outside the instances of enunciation. Thus, the subject is not a singular, unified and stable entity capable of thinking and knowing outside language, but is only marked by subject-positions inscribed in language and in discursive formations.

Identity in the poststructuralist context is culturally constituted and is a result of differential relationship. The innate identity of a person is deferred to derive an identity that suits the respective cultural context. The visible identities such as race and gender are the outcome of social perceptions. They are understood in terms of their physical appearance and anything beyond it is disregarded. Thus, in such a context, truth is determined by what is visible. But when the visible radiates a false self of an individual there is an uncanny between the real self and the identity gleaned from physical appearance. According to Foucault,

“this inexhaustible wealth of visible things has the property of parading in an endless line; what is wholly visible is never seen in its entirety. It always shows something else asking to be seen; there’s no end to it” (*Death and the Labyrinth* 110). Identity based on visibility is a revelation of cultural ideology and not the truth of one’s self. In such a context identity becomes a false self which matches with ideology. It projects the identity anxieties and material inscriptions of social violence in suppressing the real self. The visible is a sign which calls for an exploration of what is behind, the reality which the sign signifies.

The visible which determines identity is often defined by contextual features. Context-dependent analysis of identity becomes important as the locality and specificity play a key role in shaping one’s identity. Identity is a sole product of one’s social interactions in a particular culture at a particular historical period. This space-time factor achieves much importance in the era of globalization and diasporic displacement. The realignment of diaspora has contributed to a redefined cultural difference among the newly interacting populations. This splatter of culture combined with the effects of colonialism and the political and economic disparities between peoples, genders and races form strong constituents of identity today. It is in this context that one should take into account the duality of the nature of identity: that is, its personal and social dimensions.

Individual or personal identity is inevitably interlinked with social identity. Personal identity consists in one’s projection of oneself to the world, irrespective

of whether it is validated by the society or not. John Locke, who first developed a theory of personal identity, considers identity or self depending on consciousness rather than on substance or soul. Identity for Locke is founded on the repeated acts of consciousness, that is, repeated self-identification of oneself with oneself. However, this personal identity does not have its authentic validity without a social context where one is recognized by others. So the multiple modalities of one's being with the society in different categories of relationships make a society and the individual's participation within that group gives rise to social identity. However, social identity does not erase individual identity; rather it only emphasis certain identical characteristics and overlooks individual differences. But an individual is always free to possess multiple identities as identities are neither fixed nor absolute. What an individual normally does is that he prioritises a specific identity depending on the context in which he happens to be. In the Foucauldian perspective, an individual doesn't have a fixed and stable identity, but only a certain subject position depending on the context. Identity, therefore, is context-bound. However, one's choice of identity is important for himself and for the society as personal identity is inextricably interlinked with societal identity. In this context, Amartya Sen, the Indian Nobel Laureate observes: "The reasoning in the choice of relevant identities must, therefore, go well beyond the purely intellectual into contingent social significance. Not only is reason involved in the choice of identities, but the reasoning may have to take note of the social context and contingent relevance of being in one category or another" (28). According to Sen, the choice of one's identity is to a great extent

determined and conditioned by the societal interests and choices. The individual identity whether in matters of gender, sex, politics, nation or religion are mediated by social identity. According to Jean Paul Sartre, the human facticity (Sartrean term for identity) depends on several factors like a particular language, a concrete community, a political structure and ultimately of being part of the human species. For Sartre, man is basically a natural and cultural animal who does not determine the conditions and facts of his life. If one needs a complex environment for his identity, he also needs the community for his identity. So the construction of one's identity is implicated within the dichotomous forces of freedom and limit.

Social identity is a subject of serious concern in the contemporary world in the wake of identity or identitarian politics. Social identity could be the result of commonness among the members of a group or the difference from other groups. Whatever may be the driving force, individuals secure social identity by becoming members of various groups. Social identity, particularly in its identitarian political form, is the result of the realization that group identity has a potential political force and can be used either to end a certain kind of marginalisation or to achieve a particular end. The LGBT movement of the 1980s was the result of such an identitarian politics based on a social identity. However, this has given rise to a serious critique. Some theorists and activists following the philosophical and cultural position of Judith Butler argue that one should not assume the existence of an already existing identity, but should postulate the possibility of continuously constructing an identity

through performance. The identity question therefore would present two major strands: the essentialist and the non-essentialist conceptions of identity.

The essentialist notion of identity has its roots in the Platonic philosophy where it is assumed that every substance has an essence. According to Plato, individual objects in the world are mere facsimiles of ideal forms or abstract entities pre-existing in the Ideal World. In this context, Diana Fuss, the contemporary Lesbian/Gay right activist in her book, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* observes: “Essentialism is most commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the ‘whatness’ of a given entity” (xi). Following the Platonic essentialism, the Western Liberal humanist philosophy believes that human beings have an immutable, permanent and fixed essence or property. The contemporary feminist theoreticians examine the different possible strands of essentialism like Metaphysical, biological, linguistic and methodological and find that all forms of essentialist concepts are oppressive as far as women are concerned. As an overarching theoretical concept, essentialism believes that certain categories such as sex, class, gender, nation, ethnicity etc determine one’s cultural identity. So from the contemporary perspective, this notion of identity is highly reductionist as it fails to account for the complex multiplicity of human interactions and network of relations. Perhaps the only advantage of an essentialist position today is that it can be an effective political tool in identity politics. The Marxist, Feminist, deconstructionist theorist, Spivak considers the essentialist notion of identity as

effective in furthering and achieving the demands and goals of the marginalised sections of the society like the subalterns. She, therefore, advocates the concept of “strategic essentialism,” where the essentialist identity is used only as a political and methodological tool without its ontological validity. Strategic essentialism argues that it can take merely a political and descriptive form.

The non-essentialist theorists argue that while a person maintains a single allegiance she/he can have multiple affiliations to various categories of identity. Accordingly, for a non-essentialist or anti-essentialist philosopher, identity is neither fixed nor absolute. Derrida’s concept of differance, which establishes the centrality of difference to meaning production and an endless slippage or deferral of meaning in language, has unsettling consequences for the conception of identity. Differance posits that identities are not fixed; they do not cohere around a core or centre. It creates identity from relations of difference internal to language and these differential identities are internally unstable and unsettled. Homi K Bhabha in his article “Interrogating Identity: The Postcolonial Prerogative” uses the perspective of postcolonial experience to explore the notion of identity. According to him, the “invisibility” of the colonised can adequately represent the authenticity of the colonial subject and can undermine the colonial gaze. The impossibility of facing the “invisible” or the “absent other” undermines the attempt of the white to fix an identity for himself in terms of his difference with the other. Julia Kristeva’s concept of “chora” is an alternative site of subjectivity, where she makes a radical disruption of the patriarchal relations and subject positions found in language. The non-

essentialist approach to identity, therefore, argues for a very volatile, fluid and context-bound notion of identity. In this context, the observation of Amartya Sen, the Indian economist, in his book *Identity and Violence*, though from a very different perspective, is quite relevant:

I can be, at the same time, an Asian, an Indian citizen, a Bengali with ancestry, an American or British resident, an economist, a dabbler in philosophy, an author, a Sanskritist, a strong believer in secularism and democracy, a man, a feminist, a heterosexual, a defender of gay and lesbian rights, with a nonreligious lifestyle, from a Hindu background, a non-Brahmin, and a nonbeliever in an afterlife (and also, in case the question is asked, a nonbeliever in a before-life as well). This is just a small sample of diverse categories to each of which I may simultaneously belong - there are of course a great many other membership categories too which, depending on circumstances, can move and engage me. (19)

This advocacy of a non-essentialist conception of identity can be a failure in instances where a person would desire for a unique position of identity within his multiple affiliations and network of relations. Satya P. Mohanty, a literary scholar from India, in his article, "The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: On Beloved and the Postcolonial Condition" tries to tide over this limitation of the non-essentialist philosophy through his post-positivist realist theory of identity. He considers his theory as an alternative to non-essentialism

and takes a position between the extremes of the postmodernist and the essentialist notions of identity.

According to Mohanty, an uncritical understanding of the human experience is not philosophically rewarding, although experience plays a significant role in the formation of identity. According to him, experience is a social construct and an individual's personal and emotional experiences are not always subjective, because they are mostly determined by non-individual social meanings which the theories and accounts supply (Moya and Garcia 10). The post-positivist realist theory of identity, therefore, demands a reorientation and reinterpretation of cultural identity in terms a new understanding of experience. He further argues that “. . . experiences are crucial indexes of one's relationships with one's world (including our relationships with ourselves), and to stress their cognitive nature is to argue that they can be susceptible to varying degrees of socially constructed truth or error and can serve as sources of objective knowledge or socially produced mystification” (Moya and Garcia 38). This new perspective on identity becomes significant in the context of the multiplicity and complexity of human relations which are the products of globalisation, trans-nationalisation, scientific-technological revolution, communication revolution and more importantly of the radical revolution of contemporary philosophical since the 1960s. In this context, Paula M.L. Moya et al., in their book *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* observes on the conceptual importance of Mohanty's theoretical alternative: “His post-positivist realist theory of identity

solves the central challenge confronting theorists of identity today. It shows how identities can be both real and constructed: how they can be politically and epistemically significant, on the one hand, and variable, nonessential, and radically historical, on the other” (12). Though the post-positivist realist theory is able to give significant insights into the formation of identity, it has the limitation of not explaining the third person view of identity.

The two major psychoanalytic theorists who developed the concept of identity are Erik Erikson and James Marcia. According to Erikson, identity formation depends on an identity crisis which often begins in an individual during his adolescence. Identity crisis for Erikson is the result of a deep sense of lack which a person experiences in his life due to various reasons. It emerges from one's interactions with others and the consequent discontent it creates when one finds that one is not referred to in social framework as he desires. However, the resolution of the crisis depends on one's conscious choice of a new identity and the rejection of the former identity. Yet, the change of identity need not necessarily resolve the crisis as the person may not be able to accommodate the interactive possibilities of the new identity category. The significant aspect of Erikson's identity theory is that it aligns itself with the anti-essentialist identity theory where it postulates identity as not fixed, negotiable, volatile and subject to change according to social contexts. James Marcia, who further explored the identity theory of Erikson, identifies four statuses in the development of identity formation: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium and identity achievement. According

to Mercia, identity is not an apriori; it is the result of certain choices and commitments which a person makes in the course of his life. It is the result of a certain position an individual adopts and engages in constantly to achieve his desired identity.

Postcolonial theory, like any other major contemporary theory, with its wide range of theoretical engagements has created a large body of discourse on the question of identity. The early theorists like Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi in their path breaking studies of colonialism have examined the psychological impact of colonisation on both the coloniser and the colonised. The colonial ideology with its dichotomous opposition between the coloniser/colonised where the first term in the binary is always privileged and the latter always underprivileged has radically re-inscribed the identity of both the categories. In this context, Fanon in his *Black Skin White Mask* observes: “. . . the white man is not only the “Other” but also the master, real or imaginary” (138). According to both Memmi and Fanon, colonialism as an ideology and as a practice systematically erases the identity of the subjugated people by denying them a semantic space for the representation of their identity. The systematic denial of language and history is both an epistemological and an ontological violence on the colonised people. The feminist theorists believe that the phallogocentric philosophy of patriarchy is doing the same violence to women which the colonisers do to the colonised.

The postcolonial discourse in its most vigorous form is found in the Saidian theorisation of the Orient. *Orientalism* which inaugurated the postcolonial thinking argues that in the discursive production of the conception of the Orient, there is an implicit relationship between power and knowledge. Said makes a very pertinent observation in this connection: “Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense creates the Orient, the Oriental and his world” (*Orientalism* 40). The Occident systematically constructed certain categories of knowledge whereby the Orient was represented as the “Other.” The construction of the Occident/Orient within the dichotomous binary becomes the major reason for the historical as well as the philosophical negativisation of the Orient. Within the paradigm of binary relationship, the cultural identity of the Orient becomes that of the “Other.” Stuart Hall also argues that identities are constructed within discourses, within representations. If Hall argues that identities are contingent, arbitrary and constructed within discourses, Bhabha, affirms the instability of identity implicated within the colonial discourse. The colonial discourse in its attempt to produce and regulate a set of docile subjects, who would mimic the colonisers by “reproducing its assumptions, habits and values - the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (The Location 122) look for the production of a homogeneous discourse and identity for the colonised people. However, Bhabha argues that mimicry instead of creating an autonomous and fixed identity for the colonised, produces ambivalence. In this very process of mimicry and ambivalence the colonised subject develops

subversive strategies to resist the hegemonic colonial discourse. Moreover, it creates a hybrid identity both for the coloniser and the colonised. Edward Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* like Bhabha argues against any unitary concept of identity particularly in the context of Palestinian identitarian politics. He observes: “We have to defend peoples and identities threatened with extinction or subordination because they are considered inferior, but that is very different from aggrandising in past invented for present reasons” (*Culture and Imperialism* 7).

Identity, according to Stuart Hall, one of the founding fathers of Cultural Studies, has produced a large body of discourses as well as their critiques. According to him, all the deconstructive discourse of identity, based on a post-Cartesian notion of identity are critical of an integral, originary and unified identity (Gay et al., 15). So to the question, “who needs identity”, Hall suggests, two possible ways of looking at it. According to him, the whole Derridian critique of identity puts the concept under erasure and thinks it at the limit as it cannot be included in the old regime of concepts. However, a second position based on a Foucauldian as well as an identitarian politics demands perhaps not an abandonment of the subject but a reconceptualisation of it. The question of identity which Hall examines from a cultural studies and philosophical perspective is not an essentialist one, but a strategic one. He clarifies that it is not “that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which remains always-already ‘the same’ identical to itself across time” (Gay et al., 17) but a self “increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply

constructed across different often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions (Gay et al., 17). Identity, for Hall, is the result of specific modalities of power which are marked by differences and exclusions. According to postcolonial theorists like Fanon, it is this difference and exclusion that the colonial masters used for centuries to subdue the natives and maintain colonialism in the world. From the perspective of gender and sexuality again what marginalises the queer is an ideology of difference and exclusion. Hall further argues that identity is produced by specific discursive formations and practices and is constructed through differences in relation to the Other. Following Laclau, Hall affirms that the unity of any kind of identity, whether personal or social, is the result of a constructed kind of closure achieved within the bounds of power and exclusion and “are the result, not of a natural and inevitable or primordial totality but of the naturalised, over-determined process of closure” (Gay et al., 18) According to Stephen Heath’s concept of “suture,” identity is an intersection, a position which a subject is forced to assume knowing that it is mere representation constructed across a lack (106). Hall completely agrees with Judith Butler, who draws on Foucault to argue that the subject is discursively constructed and that there is no subject outside the law. In other words, Hall argues that identity, gender, sexual or any other category is arbitrary, constructed, volatile and fluid.

The two major categories of identity that are part of a serious cultural, political and philosophic problematic in the contemporary period are gender and sexuality. Despite the fact that sex is biologically determined, the social

and cultural characteristics attributed to gender and sexuality makes it a complex and problematic issue. The traditional binary opposition male/female with dichotomous characteristics of presence and rationality and absence and irrationality make gender and sexuality natural and essentialist. However, modern contemporary theory argues that gender and sexual identity are social and cultural constructs produced and reproduced by multiple modalities of power and discourse. Judith Butler, who examines the complex transactions between subject, body and identity, advances the position that the subject is constituted within discourse. Drawing on a Foucauldian and a psychoanalytic perspective, Butler observes:

Sex is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called a ‘regulatory ideal.’ In this sense, then, sex not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces (through the repetition or iteration of a norm which is without origin) the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate – the bodies it controls . . . ‘sex’ is an ideal construct which forcibly materialised through time. (*Bodies that Matter* 1)

Butlers’ concept of performativity further emphasises the constructed dimension of gender identity. She observes: “There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results” (*Gender Trouble* 34). This stress on

performativity undermines all notions of fixity, stability and originary unity associated with the traditional understanding of gender and sexual identity. The heteronormative sexuality is a patriarchal construct which prevents alternate forms sexual orientations and practices. In other words, discursively produced regulatory heterosexual sexual and gender identity suppress and repress the sexual preferences and orientations of other modalities of sexual practices. According to Butler, the heterosexual masculinity contains within itself a “heterosexual melancholy” about the lost “homosexual identification” (Guy et al., 108-116). The emergence of Queer theory and Queer movements in the contemporary period is a liberation from this repressed sexual identity and a resistance to the dominant unitary and monolithic heterosexual identity. In the present times of artificial anatomic modifications of sex, gender and sexual identities are fluid, volatile and contingent. Queer thus marks the countercultural fissure in gender identity.

Among the Indian dramatists, Mahesh Dattani stands out in the theatrical presentation of the poststructuralist interrogation of the notion of identity as a stable and coherent state of being. Identities of the queer adequately point to the poststructuralist position that identity is unstable, fragmented and contingent and a process of becoming rather than a process of being. Dattani carefully chooses his characters from the grimy areas of society to bring to light the forbidden truths about gender and sexuality. He presents on stage the alternative sexualities and minor genders to radically revise the notion of gender binaries. His plays *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On A Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Do the*

Needful, *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, *Dance Like a Man* and *The Girl Who Touched the Stars* are indeed hawking winds against the Cartesian notion of identity. Dattani boldly dismantles the notion that gender and sexual identities are stable, unveiling the bare truth of the lives of the homosexuals, the transgenders and the people who cannot conform to the prescribed gender norms of society. He staunchly asserts that gender and sexuality are concepts that go beyond biological reality that are shaped by social and cultural practices. He vividly presents how the social determinants of gender and sexuality often conflict with individual instincts and lived experiences. He makes a genuine attempt in his plays to show the deception of the socially fixed gender and sexual categories.

Working from a philosophical position and casting people with multiple identities, Dattani establishes the idea that identity is purely context bound. As a playwright of the queer, Dattani incorporates gay characters who wrap a false robe of heteronormativity in order to lead a normal life in society. He boldly problematizes the notion of identity as fixed and makes it an unsettled issue. His plays radiate the Foucauldian view that identity is constructed by the hegemonic groups in the society and that gender is a subject position in ideology and discourse. The characters embolden Butler's notion of gender as performance and they oscillate between their real and assumed gender identities to suit the social requirements. The playwright thus, strongly maintains that identity is a product of social relations.

Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* is a stage play that deeply dwells on identity politics. The play deals with the twin themes of female subjugation and homosexuality. At the outer layer the play captures the cramped lives of four women: Dolly, Alka, Lalitha and Baa. The first act titled "Women" brings all of them together and throws light on their lives. As the play opens a good picture of the luxurious and cosy life of the Trivedi family is revealed. The Trivedi women Dolly and Alka, who are sisters and married to the Trivedi brothers, are seen preparing for an outing with their husbands. But Alka soon gets the news of the cancellation of the proposed outing. Lalitha, the wife of Sreejith, an employee of the Trivedi brothers in their business soon approaches the sisters. She stands a step back when compared to her employer, the Trivedis. She ignores the pomp of the Trivedi sisters about their affluence. She tells them how she strongly supports her husband in his work and about her skill in creative writing and bonsai making. In between the conversation of the ladies the Trivedi mother Baa is introduced. She is a passive character in the play who often makes her presence felt by frequently calling her daughters-in-law to attend her. This picture of the women reveals the elite identity of all women who are self satisfied in every way.

As the play progresses, it glides into bitter realities of these women's lives which go neatly wrapped within the foil of false joy and comforts. Dolly is a woman whose life is terribly hampered under her arrogant husband Jiten Trivedi. She boldly hides all the troubles of her sufferings and the sorrow of her spastic daughter Daksha to make her everyday living possible. Alka is

presented as an alcoholic and childless woman who is badly blamed by the Trivedi family for her alcoholism. Unlike the Trivedi women, Lalitha is initially portrayed as a smarter woman who cleverly employs her creative skills to engage herself and who interestingly participates in her husband's job. But a closer reading of Lalitha's life gives the picture of a woman who is greatly disturbed and alienated by her husband's craze for job. The old and bedridden mother Baa lays a strong control on her daughters-in-law as she wants them to suffer as she did under her rude husband.

The playwright thus creates a false identity for these women in order to show the plight of women in a patriarchal set up. Subordination becomes a part and parcel of their lives and they accept it as natural. The women in the play confine within their households to maintain peace in their families. But at the same time Dattani also makes them bold and courageous making them straddle their hardships bravely. All the four women draw the joy of their survival from their alternative dream worlds, which in fact sustain them.

Dolly boasts about her daughter saying that she studies in Ooty and that she is a good dancer, only to hide the fact that the dance she performs is physiotherapy. She also weaves out the story of a fictitious Trivedi servant Kanhaiya with whom she has fallen in love. Kanhaiya in fact fills the space which her husband never occupies. Alka, the wife of the younger Trivedi brother Nitin takes to alcohol to forget the worries of not having a child and her husband's disregard for her. She is always in her drunken fantasy world

where she furls up her woes to make her happy. Lalitha's wholehearted obsession with her bonsai is indeed a solace for her to fill the frequent absence of Sridhar. She attributes human nature to her plants and compensates for the negligence of her husband. Baa finds an outlet for the discharge of her internal conflicts of her distorted life through her intentional tortures of her daughters-in-law. The play reveals a former incident where Baa had objected to her husband kissing the children as he would leave tobacco on their face. She does not want her sons to love their father. She says Jiten is as arrogant as his father. Even in the old age, in her bedridden state, the dark memories recorded in her unconscious of her husband torturing her and her sons come out. She escapes from her mental agonies by harassing her daughters-in-law. She wants Dolly and Alka to suffer under their husbands as she did. She makes Jiten to hit Dolly when she was pregnant which turns their daughter Daksha spastic. Baa gives her wealth to Daksha in her will to escape from the heaviness of her guilt. She wants Nitin to discard Alka as she is a drunkard.

The women in the play as very poignant characters because at the same time they fight against male hegemony and attempts to maintain peace in their families. Hence he inverts the normally perceived image of the female as weak and meek and makes them valiant like Rani of Jhansi who bravely fought against hardships. He problematizes and radicalizes the position of the female within the male/female binary and draws out the fact that, as Bulter posits, gender identity is only a performance. The "female" is a socially assigned role

for a woman to be within the household and to be under men in the gender hierarchy of the phallogocentric order. Thus, Dolly, Alka, Lalitha and Baa are forced to perform the ascribed roles of women by limiting themselves within their houses and living according to their husbands' whims and fancies. Such practices eclipse the female strength and courage, making them the "Other" in the gender binary. Dattani's achievement lies in bringing out the female strength in these women by portraying them as characters who stand far above their husbands in swimming against the torrents of life.

The act two of the play "Men," reveals chaos in men's life. The three men Jiten, Nitin and Sridhar discuss the launch of their new product ReVaTee brand of lingerie. They target the product primarily on men as it is intended to invoke the erotic desires of men even in their dullest mood. The playwright here creates a situation to highlight the oppression of women in a patriarchal set up. The scene also sheds light on the financial constraints of the brothers in running their business. They depend on Praful, Dolly's and Alka's brother, to meet their financial requirements. Praful never appears in the play but exercises a firm control on the Trivedi family. He marries off his sisters to the Trivedi brothers lying to them that their father is dead. Dolly and Alka are never let known about this game until later the Trivedis come to know of fact that their father is alive, living with his real wife and four children. Baa calls the sisters "the daughters of a whore" and blames and harasses them throughout because of their crooked brother.

The act three, "Free for All" is a platform where the characters unleash their suppressed emotions and frustrations. A vivid picture of the tattered lives of Dolly and Alka is unveiled when both of them speak about their miseries in the presence of their husbands. The speech triggers absolutely the remorse in the men for their insincerity. Dolly's torrential words strike Jiten sharply and ignite in him his image of an arrogant husband who never cares for his wife. He drives his car out of gate and hits an old woman which becomes an act of releasing his overflowing guilt. The failure of Alka and Nitin as a married couple is brought out when she says that she has not been an ideal wife and Nitin has not been a competent husband. The burning life of Sridhar and Lalitha becomes evident through Lalitha's loneliness and the couple's apprehensions of earning for a flat, the sole reason for Sridhar madly chasing his job. The couple gets terribly shocked when they see Jiten ramming his car over the old lady. They find an auto rickshaw parked at the gate and the auto driver climbing up the compound wall to reach the servants' quarters. Lalitha guesses that he would be a visitor for Kanhaiya. But later she gets puzzled about the auto driver when she realizes that Kanhaiya is merely a fiction. Dattani has carefully penned the act to rip apart the veneer to dig out the true life of individuals. The act represents the hollowness of life when individuals are reduced to mere stereotypes in society.

Dattani ends the play making the final scene the most crucial and striking. It reveals the homosexuality of Nitin and Praful which had been neatly covered within the patriarchal hegemony. The scene ends when Nitin approaches the

drunken Alka and confesses to her that he and Praful have secret gay relationship. He tells sorry to her and blames Praful for marrying his sister to his gay partner. Though Nitin was initially reluctant, Praful forced him for the alliance to maintain their relationship. He told Nitin that Alka only wanted the security of a marriage. Alka is never let known about the game behind her marriage. Nitin leaves for the auto driver to the servant's quarters and the play ends focusing on Alka.

Dattani in the play deconstructs the notion of the male as powerful and the female as weak in gender hierarchy. He portrays the male characters in the play as unable to lead a successful life. Jiten's arrogance, Nitin's and Praful's self-deceived sexual identity and Sridhar's craze for his job are symbolic of male power and ways of enforcing male hegemony on women. But the playwright vividly exposes their false pride which they think constitutes their masculinity. This false masculinity lands them on rugged terrains of failure. Dattani makes the women in the play more powerful than men; they cleverly make the unpleasant pleasant to tread experiences on the thorny mountain of their life. He also questions the accepted idea that heterosexuality is the standard mode of sexual identity by delineating the chaotic life of Nitin and Praful. Dattani thus makes *Bravely Fought the Queen* a severe critique of the notion of gender and sexual identity as stable and coherent. Dattani subverts the gender hierarchy embedded in the patriarchal social order to prove the flexibility and stability of gender identity.

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai is another play of Dattani which deconstructs the Cartesian notion of identity. The playwright brings on to the stage a group of homosexuals to loudly announce that gender and sexuality are inherently flexible. The very first scene of the play itself initiates the audience/readers to the hollowness of gender and sexual norms in society. Before the key characters are introduced, Dattani makes an additional scene where the protagonist Kamlesh and the security guard of his flat are involved in gay relationship. Though the guard initially agrees that he enjoys what they do, he soon alters his reply and says he does it for money. The guard is reluctant to live openly as a homosexual as it is against social norm. The situation emphasizes how individuals feel fettered as they are forced to limit their lives as restricted by the society.

The protagonist of the play Kamlesh is deeply anguished as he had a break up with his gay partner Prakash. The heterosexual patterning of society has forced Prakash to transform into a heterosexual on the advice of a psychiatrist. Kamlesh's attempt to build a relationship with Sharad, an effeminate man, has also failed due to his obsession with Prakash. Prakash's transformation of his sexual orientation underscores the flexible nature of sexuality. His craving for a normal life in society forces him to embrace heteronormativity. He takes up the name Ed along with his new sexual identity and is all set to marry Kamlesh's sister Kiran, who is a divorcee. Though supportive of Kamlesh's homosexuality, she is unaware of his relationship with Prakash. Kamlesh supports the marriage as he wishes his sister and

Prakash to be happy. The playwright sharply points towards the futility of gender and sexual norms in society which restrict individuals in following sexual practices according to their sexual orientation.

Each of the homosexual characters introduced in the play leads a gay life in their own respective comfortable ways. Bunny, who is a TV actor, despite being a gay leads a happy married life denying his sexual identity in public. He agrees that he is lying to himself and to his family and to the thousands of viewers who watch his serials. He lives with a heavy heart neatly covered with the mask of heteronormativity. Here, Bunny's identity, as Jenkins points out, becomes an unresolved question or an ambivalent point. Context becomes the determinant of his identity. Renjit, another homosexual friend of Kamlesh, has flown to London to be as what he really is. He feels London to be more conducive for his sexuality and he has been living there for the past twelve years with his English lover. His friends call him "coconut" for his brown skin and the white life he has taken up. He seems to be comfortable in Kamlesh's flat as it is an exclusive space for the homosexuals. He tells Sharad to close the door as the air outside (the world of heterosexuals) would contaminate the air within the flat. His suffocation when the air-conditioner fails indicates the suffocated lives of the queer for their inability to display their identities in society.

Dattani creates a character, Sharad, who boldly accepts his homosexuality and lives openly with his homosexual identity. His identity crisis dwells on the ambiguity of his gender. Being an effeminate man, he wears bangles and

sindhoor and they become part of his dressing. He takes up the role of a housewife in his live-in-together relationship with Kamlesh. He arranges the kitchen and does everything for Kamlesh. Though he admits that he is as “gay as a goose,” in the later phase of the play he too expresses his wish to be a heterosexual, the “real man.” He wants to be accepted in society as a heterosexual. According to him, embracing heterosexuality means becoming a “king” who possesses immense power. He looks at the “kings” outside and finds that they enjoy power which he calls by different names as male power, the penile power and the power with sex, which is absolutely above the power of a gay. He admits that a change in his sexual orientation is desirable to enjoy all these. His break-up with Kamlesh adds to his miseries and he becomes terribly shattered. His feminine qualities become more evident at this situation. When he realizes that Kamlesh has discarded him he moves towards Meena Kumari’s poster and utters “Prakash” thrice in a drunken slur. The first time he utters the name he rubs off his *sindoor*; the second time he utters the name he breaks his bangles and the third time he utters the name he leans on the wall sobbing uncontrollably.

Deepali whom Sharad calls Dyke didi seems to be living happily with Tina, her lesbian partner. She is perfectly happy in being a lesbian and lives an openly declared lesbian life. She is a good friend of Kamlesh who understands him and supports him throughout his emotional crisis. At the zenith of his mental turmoil she tells him:

Deepali. If you were a woman, we would be in love.

Kamlesh. If you were a man, we would be in love.

Deepali. If we were heterosexual, we would be married. (CP 65)

Despite presenting her as a good friend of Kamlesh, the playwright does not go deeper into her life to locate her among her family and society and thus nothing is known about the troubles she faces (if any) in being a lesbian.

Kiran, the only heterosexual in the play, is another pathetic victim of social norms on gender and sexuality. When she comes to know about the relationship between Kamlesh and Ed, she becomes completely shattered as both the men whom she loved dearly have deceived her. Ed then reveals his main motivation behind the marriage to Kiran which is to continue his relationship with Kamlesh. As his brother-in-law, it is not difficult for him to meet his gay partner and at the same time to live with his beloved Kiran. On realizing that Kiran is greatly disappointed with the relationship of Kamlesh and Ed, Ed attempts to commit suicide by jumping from the flat. But he is grabbed back by a group of friends and a fight takes place between Ed and Kamlesh. The play closes on us when this small fight ends and everyone leaves for their places.

The improper ending of the play suggests the improper life of the queer. Their non-accepted sexuality never offers them a peaceful life. Their craving for a proper life compels them to mask the real “I” in them. Despite the real ideal “I,” the individual, as Lacan puts it, imbibes his circumstances and derives his

“I” out of his experiences and circumstances. Though the ideal “I” remains within him, it is monopolized by the socially constructed “I.” Prakash and Bunny in the play mask their real “I” as they have derived notion that heterosexual identity is the right one in society. Hence, their queer identity gets submerged in the identity of heterosexuals. This ideal “I” is always in conflict with the socially constructed “I” which results in the turmoil of the queer life. Sharad’s agonies about his ambiguous gender and the uncertainties in the lives of each of the characters in the play indeed result from this mismatch.

Dattani in the play also questions the meaning and content of the social norms. Individuals are often reduced to mere stereotypes and thus they are hampered to complete their individual development. The characters, Prakash, Bunny and Sharad testify to the fact that gender and sexual identities are not something innate in an individual. Prakash and Bunny affirm the concept of sexuality as context bound. They switch over their sexual orientation in order to suit the contextual requirement. They very well know that their real sexuality deprives them of a normal life in society. As a result, they become passive homosexuals who live with a heavy heart deceiving themselves and their dear ones. Through the character of Sharad, Dattani questions the male/female binary and the socially prescribed roles for men and women. Hence, through the play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, Dattani problematises the notion of identity as fixed and stable portraying the instability of gender and sexual identities. Dattani illustrates that the queer identity is flexible, contingent, fractured and constructed on the margins of the society.

Do the Needful, a radio play of Dattani is another platform where he deconstructs identity as stable and coherent. The play revolves around Alpesh Patel, a gay, who is in a relationship with another man Trilok. Alpesh is divorced and his parents are busy searching for a suitable girl for their son to make a proper life for him. The female protagonist, Lata Gowda, is in love with a man, Salim, who is unacceptable to her family. The entire concern of her parents is centred on arranging a proper life for their daughter. The unusual relationship of the boy and the girl compel the families to make marriage alliances outside their respective communities. Thus, there emerges a marriage between the Gujarati Patels and the Kannadiga Gowdas. The marriage sounds tremendously bizarre in the Indian context where endogamy rules matrimonial alliances. The play points towards the urge of the parents to break the chains of endogamy to set their children on the track of the society.

Through Alpesh, Dattani portrays the powerlessness and inability of the queer to transcend the social boundaries of sexuality. The attempts of his family to arrange a normal marriage question his sexual identity. The situation problematises the essential notion of sexual identity. The play begins with a mobile phone conversation of Alpesh amidst the noise of traffic. He contacts a slim gym to meet Trilok for a massage. The slim gym here becomes the closet in which the lives of this pair of gays are plunged into. Their identity as gays gets locked within the slim gym. They are forced to “defer” their real identity in public as it does not conform to the social requirements. Being unable to live according to their real identities, the life of the queer is often caught in a web

of chaos. The noise of the traffic indeed suggests the chaotic life of the sexually marginalized community that is denied a proper identity.

Despite the boy's and the girl's lack of interest in the marriage, the parents proceed with the proposal. The Patels visit the Gowdas to discuss the wedding. Dattani introduces a plenty of pompous conversations between them to imply the families' affluence. They talk about the education of Alpesh and Lata. Though the boy and the girl do not have formal degrees, the parents boast about their lucrative wealth and general reading and knowledge of their children. The situation highlights how the external factors form the determinants of an individual's identity while the innate real identity goes submerged. Alpesh's homosexuality and Lata's relation with Salim seriously hamper the elite identity of their families. Alpesh falls sick of his flight journey and pukes when he arrives at the Gowda's place. It suggests his lack of interest for the marriage and to adopt a new sexual identity. Lata's burnt cutlets indeed indicate the futility of the proposed marriage.

The entire play is apparently filled with the joyful mood of the parents in having fixed a proper alliance for their wards. Out of the necessity to keep their affluent family identity, they construct their identity as modern people who wholeheartedly welcome inter-community marriages. Devraj Gowda speaks about corruption being rampant in government offices and staunchly states that it is not because of the presence of migrants in the city. He rather blames the local people for it. According to Gowda, their willingness for a marriage from

outside the community represents their modern outlook. To assert their willingness for a marriage outside the community, Chandrakant Patel then openly puts forward the question whether Gowda hates them for being outsiders and suggests that the Gowdas can still consider proposals within their own community. He even gets ready for an open talk with the Gowdas to discuss their reasons for going against the norms.

But Devraj, being reluctant to show his choice of exogamy, argues for progress and says that he only wants his daughter to be happy. He knows he would hurt his parents and forefathers, but he requests the Patels to accept his daughter. He disposes of Mariappa, the poor coconut vendor's suggestion to marry within the community. Mariappa laments about his daughter who has run away to Mumbai to join cinema. He beats his drum when he is angry with the whole world. The sound of his drum hints about the anxieties in the Patels and Gowdas in having chosen an exogamous marriage for the children.

Alpesh and Lata get ample opportunity to talk to each other while the parents enthusiastically discuss the marriage. Both of them find the habit of smoking common among them:

Alpesh. Teri bhi chup, meri bhi chup. (CP 142)

He puts the expression in English for Lata to understand:

“Your silence and mine as well” (CP 142).

In another context they also reveal their unwillingness for the marriage. Lata tells Alpesh about her lover. The trouble that haunts them is to say no to their

families. Late in the night Lata's thoughts unfold a lucid picture of her torn in between her individual interests and her parents' interests. Tension brews in her and there is no choice for her other than running away from her home. She begins to run away without thinking about the shame she would put on her parents. She runs, but stops when Gowri, the calf suddenly invades her mind. The sound of the drum louder than before forming the background indicates the trauma that has seized Lata. She soon reaches Gowri and strokes her until she hears a groaning sound. She moves to Alpesh's room to find out what it is and the light of her flashlight falls on Alpesh and Mali (a local boy). She sees Alpesh with Mali. The men are shocked and embarrassed.

Mali: Aiyo!

Scramble

Alpesh: What are you doing here?

Lata: You!

(Thought.) They were...doing it!

(Speech.) You are a homo! (CP 153)

Lata indeed realizes the unwillingness of Alpesh for the marriage. Mali is too scared as he thinks he would be blamed for the whole thing because he belongs to the lower stratum. He feared Lata would tell it to everyone and Muniappa would not give his daughter to him. Lata promises Alpesh to keep it a secret and discloses to them, her plans to run away. But Mali never lets her as it would bring shame to her family. Lata immediately plots a solution for this perplexity from Alpesh's expression "teri bhi chup, meri bhi chup" (your silence and

mine as well). Alpesh and Lata decide to get married to make their parents and society happy and they agree on the compromise that after the marriage both would continue with their secret relationships. The play soon showcases the splendid wedding reception arranged by the parents. Amidst the celebrations the listeners/readers get the picture of the bride and the groom completely lost in the thoughts of their respective lovers. As the play ends, the married couple Alpesh and Lata leave for outing. But once they come out of the flat both of them part each other to an meet their lovers and meet again to get back to the family.

The radio play *Do the Needful* stands different from the other plays of Dattani which focuses on the concept of queer. He usually creates a serious ambience in his plays to present the cursed and poignant life of the queer which leaves the spectators/listeners/readers with a heavy heart. But unlike his other plays, the playwright manages to detain *Do the Needful* from gliding completely into the distressed lives of the characters. He cleverly entwines the joyful mood of wedding arrangements which indeed form a comic relief for the listeners/readers. The agonies of Alpesh because of his homosexuality and the apprehensions of Lata in the pursuit of her love for Salim are submerged in the cheerfulness of their parents. Dattani hardly lifts the curtain of the protagonists' emotions. The hilarious ending of the play leaves the listeners/readers with light hearts rather than leaving them filled with perplexity and emotional embarrassments. Though it ends joyfully, it does not provide a solution for the uncertainty that drenches the life of Alpesh and Lata. The boy and girl get married as a part of social and familial pressures. The play

remains completely silent about the outcome of this mischief. It indicates the terrain of pain on which the queer life thrives. The play points to the uncertainty and contingency of queer identity. Dattani also subverts the social norms that restrict love, marriage and sexuality.

Do the Needful offers a thorough overview of identity crisis that gnaws an individual. Almost all the characters in the play are severely entangled in identity crisis in one way or the other. Despite the homosexuality of Alpesh, he is forced for a heterosexual marriage, which is the norm of society. The only concern of the affluent Patel family is to maintain their family identity in society. The deep rooted socially defined gender norms become a major hindrance for Alpesh to meet his proper development. His real sexual identity goes masked in order to please the family and society. The context makes a clear picture of the individual identities getting shaped by the stringent social rules. The sexual identity of Alpesh is moulded in the disciplinary institution of family according to the social norms. He is subjected to a sharp 'panoptic' monitoring of his sexuality as a result of which he is forced into the heteronormative marital relationship. But at the end of the play, when the marriage becomes merely an act to satisfy family and society, the rules of social conduct become meaningless. Mali is another character who is engulfed within sexual identity crisis. Hailing from the lower stratum of society, he confronts dual marginalization, the marginalization of being a lower class and the marginalization of his sexual identity. He too is compelled to hide his homosexuality in order to live in society. His sexuality is completely moulded

according to the sexual norms as he is powerless to choose an alternative life like Alpesh. As Lata discovers the homosexuality of Mali, he begs her to keep it a secret as it would bring disgrace his family and fears Muniappa would not give his daughter in marriage to him.

The Patel and the Gowda family in their attempt to keep their family reputation get deceived at the end. As a part of the game, the parents of the boy and the girl are also compelled to mask their real identities as they are also under the 'panoptic' monitoring of the society. They construct their identities as modern people who welcome inter-community marriages. They never want the society to know that their wards have gone against the codes of conduct. Though Lata meticulously plots the game, she too faces a lot of misery in her relationship with Salim. She carries her affair with Salim on the one side and simultaneously pretends in the public that she lives comfortably with her husband Alpesh.

Each character is caught within a complicated web of identity crisis to live up to the expectations of society. Though everyone seems to be happy and satisfied with their lives, their inner selves burn down due to the conflicts between the real "I" and the socially determined "I." The play begins with Alpesh's mobile phone conversation amidst the noise of traffic. The traffic noise indicates the inner turmoil of Alpesh and sets the very mood of the play. Although Dattani has made *Do the Needful* a kind of romantic comedy, tension hangs over the entire play with the characters getting screwed up between their

individuality and society. His thought technique effectively brings out the disturbed psyche of characters. He makes Alpesh and Lata speak their thoughts through which the listeners/readers figure out their cloudy lives. For instance, at Gowda's house when everyone gets introduced to each other and have light talks, Alpesh lapses into his thoughts to bring out his uneasiness. He speaks to Trilok about Prema Gowda:

Alpesh (thought): Trilok, my face hurt from smiling... That woman looked like she was sneering. (CP 129)

The radio play *Do the Needful* is a vivid portrayal of the fluidity of identity. The innate identity of an individual is strongly deprived to suit the social norms. All the characters in the play are forced to live against their innate tastes and desires to get framed within this social conformity. It presents how one's identity gets moulded according to the norms defined by society or one lives with multiple identities to match the social needs. In the play, Dattani makes a genuine attempt to deconstruct the essentialist notion of identity as fixed and stable, portraying characters who either live with multiple identities or characters whose real identities go submerged under their socially determined identities. The play strongly asserts the concept of identity as context-bound.

Seven Steps Around the Fire is a stage play where Dattani again handles the theme of identity politics against the backdrop of the notion of identity as fluid and flexible. He lifts the curtain of the *hijra* life which is dumped in the

filthy, darker and alienated areas of society to problematise the male/female gender binary by bringing forward the *hijras*. Society fixes the gender identity of an individual either as male or female and anything beyond the binary is excluded by society. *Hijras* prove the deception of this male/female gender binary. Their identity transcends the recognized gender identities and thus questions the essentialist notion of gender identity as fixed, coherent and autonomous.

The play penetrates into the investigation of the murder of a beautiful *hijra* Kamla who was secretly married to Subbu, a minister's son. The minister had her burnt to death and the body had been thrown into a pond. He arranged another marriage for his son with a socially accepted girl, in spite of his unwillingness to marry. At the Subbu, the son comes to know about the entire truth of Kamla's murder and commits suicide by shooting himself. However, the father was able to hush up the murder of Kamla and to write off the suicide of the son as an accident.

The play is propelled by the character Uma Rao, a research scholar, who is the daughter of a Vice-chancellor, the wife of the jail superintendent Suresh Rao and the daughter-in-law of the Deputy Commissioner of Police. Her research on class-gender based power implications, triggers her interest in the investigation of the murder of Kamla for which another *hijra*, Anarkali is falsely arrested. Despite her elite family background, Uma visits Anarkali in the jail and even visits the *hijra* quarter to meet the head *hijra* Champa to know more about

the murder. Through her cordial interactions with them she gets to know the real truth behind the murder and understands that being powerless the *hijras* cannot bring the truth out.

The *hijras*' identity as the third gender (neither male nor female) accounts for their menial status in society. As they do not belong to the political economy of gender categories they are deprived of proper gender identity and even proper pronouns. While everyone addresses a *hijra* as "it" Uma amazes everyone choosing the pronoun "she" for them. She very well learns about the pathetic plight of Anarkali in the prison and inquires to Suresh Rao why she is kept in a male prison. He then addresses them as "strong horses" and warns Uma not to go beyond her research. The pronoun "it" and Suresh's jibes at *hijras* suggest the society's denial of any other gender identity other than the male and the female. But the very existence of *hijras* in the world questions the male and female gender identities as fixed, stable and coherent.

The gender identity of the *hijras* fails to fulfil the sexual roles assigned in society and thus they become the marginalized genders. But ironically in the Indian context, the presence of *hijras* is preferred at the time of marriage and birth, the very two rights which they do not enjoy. They are barred from the mainstream society on all other occasions because their identity does not match with the acceptable genders. They are even denied the identity of a human being as they are referred to in the neuter gender. The society discards any kind of sisterhood between the *hijras*. But Dattani, through the character of Uma

Rao, explores *hijras* as normal human beings. She, in the course of her investigation of Kamla's murder, digs out a strong sisterhood between the *hijras* and herself. Uma's visit to the *hijra* quarter is indeed surprising to the *hijras* themselves. Champa, the head *hijra* expresses their surprise: "Please excuse me, Madam. I did not know that . . . you see us also as society, no?" (CP 254). Her compassion for them makes them accept Uma as their sister and towards the end of the play Champa gives her a locket and blesses her to have children.

The play proves that *hijras* are ordinary human beings with all human emotions and feelings. While the males and the females have got their respective sex roles for reproduction, *hijras* do not possess a sex role in reproduction, which makes up their sexual identity. Their gender is neither a complete male nor a complete female. But society does not recognize this sexual and gender identities of *hijras* and consequently they fall into a web of identity crisis. Thus, the gender identity of a *hijra* becomes only a social denial as the male and the female genders are the only recognized genders. Gender identity thus becomes a construction of the society where the socially accepted genders get recognition and the rest are ever subjugated.

Along with a sharp cut through the identity of *hijras*, the play also highlights the politics of female identity through Uma Rao. Through her Dattani cleverly brings to light the plight of upper class women in society who are generally believed to lead a cozy life. Uma, while unfolding the lives of the *hijras*, also unfolds her own subordinate positions within her family. An

incisive peep into the life of Uma, especially her life as a woman, shows how she is under a strong male domination which bears the label of “a highly supportive husband and father.” Her dependence is clearly visible when she tells Anarkali, about the bail: “my husband doesn’t let me” (244). Despite the warnings from her husband, she crosses the boundaries of her research to reach out to the hijra community. As a sleuthing researcher, she dares to secretly visit Anarkali in the jail and also visits Champa at her residence. She bravely interacts with Anarkali and Champa to draw out the truth behind the murder. She also manipulates the constable Munswamy to favour her in her audacious attempts. Uma’s childlessness is another misery of her life. Though the problem falls on her husband, it is unnatural for him to have a check up of his sperm count as he (the society) attributes impotency with the hijras and not with a full blooded man. Through Uma the playwright inverts the picture of a woman as one who completely accepts her subordination. Uma boldly straddles the restrictions imposed on her by patriarchy when she daringly explores the truth behind Kamla’s murder. The play thus problematises the identity of a woman as one who is less powerful than men. It thus emphasizes the powerless female identity as a social construct. The picture of a woman as confined within the household and as one who is dependent on men becomes naturally imbibed in society. A woman thus takes her subordination as natural and even perceives it as an honourable subordination to her husband/father/brother. This attitude of hers as well as the society forms the major hindrance for a woman to rise up according to her potentials. The

character of Uma Rao in the play cleverly breaks the chains of patriarchy to problematise the identity of the female as the second in the gender hierarchy.

The character of Subbu is another space of gender, which Dattani interestingly works on in the play. In contrast to the typical picture of a man as strong and courageous, Dattani designs Subbu as a meek and feeble male who is controlled by the whims and fancies of his minister father. Mr. Sharma, the minister arranges his son a normal wedding in spite of Subbu's mental agonies in losing his beloved wife Kamla. Subbu is completely apathetic towards all the luxurious celebrative spirits of the wedding. Realizing the truth behind Kamla's murder at his wedding he goes deep into a sea of emotions stimulated by the sight of hijras dancing and singing at the venue. His suicide shocks everyone. Neither his father nor anyone at the function could stop him joining his Kamla in death.

The play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* becomes a marvellous theatrical venture of Dattani where he brilliantly plays with his favourite theme of gender. He brings on to the stage three categories of politicized gender to emphasize gender identity as a social construction. The crust of the play comprises of the identity of hijras, the third gender. The playwright goes deep into the psyche of the hijras to explore them as a gender category like the male and the female. As the social space is reserved exclusively for the male and the female genders, the category of the third gender is denied as a gender category and is branded aberrant. Though they do not possess the identity of a male or

the identity of a female, their identity is said to be in politics. But the very existence of hijras itself solidifies their identity. As the male and the female identity form the norm, the identity of hijras stand outside the social boundary. When Dattani brings to light the politics of the identity of hijras he attempts to testify identity as largely a social construct. The hijras in fact illustrate the hollowness of male/female gender binary. Along with the identity of hijras, he also presents the politics of female and male identities through Uma and Subbu respectively. Uma, through her brave and courageous attempts to chase behind the truth of Kamla's murder, breaks the normally perceived identity of the female as the "second sex" who stands a step back to the male in every ways. Similarly Subbu's identity as a meek male is against the image of the male as strong and bold when compared to the female. Both the characters emphasize gender identity as a social construction presenting the inverted image of the female and the male in society. This underlines that gender identity is socially constructed, flexible and contingent.

Dattani sets the stage of *Seven Steps Around the Fire* to make a good overview of the identity politics surrounding the notion of gender. His presentation of the hijras, Uma and Subbu transcend and subvert the gender rules of society. The play also forms an eye-opener to society lighting up the area of the third gender which remains ever in darkness. Through Uma Rao he presents the way in which the upper-class women get confined within the patriarchal frame. They are silenced in a polished manner by the so called supportive men in their life, providing them all the facilities of a cozy living.

Subbu's inability to come against his father's decisions and to stand firmly on his interests makes him go against the image of the male as strong and courageous. Thus, the playwright makes his play a rigorous critique of the notion of identity as stable and fixed as articulated by the Cartesian principles.

Dance Like a Man is another dramatic venture of Dattani where he again transcends and subverts the essentialist notion of identity as fixed and stable. Set against the backdrop of gender, he presents another face of patriarchy where the victim of the patriarchal norms is not a woman, but a man. He makes the play replete with the intricacies of gender ambiguity of the character Jairaj, a Bharatnatyam dancer, in having chosen dance as his career. Human society has been placing men at the top in the gender hierarchy from times immemorial. The unwritten familial law keeps the male the powerful and the sole decision maker and protector of a family. The play staunchly questions the defining roles of masculinity through Jairaj who deviates from the patriarchal norms.

Dattani in the play captures a vivid picture of Jairaj who is torn between his father Amritlal Parekh and his ambitious dancer wife, Ratna. Amritlal is greatly dissatisfied with his son's dancing career as he regards dance as a prostitute's profession. He hardly tolerates when this childhood passion of his son turned out to be the latter's way of life. For him, the long hair of the dance Guruji and the way he walks are starkly against masculinity and he does not want his son to be patterned in the way of Guruji. A social reformer, Amritlal

welcomes Ratna as his daughter-in-law who is from another community and who is a talented dancer with lots of passion for her career. But he has never supported her visiting Chenni amma to learn a dying dance form from her. Ratna explains to him the pathetic condition of the old lady who lived selling flowers in the temple. For the new elite in the country like Amritlal and his group, such women are *devdasis* - the prostitutes. It is highly shameful for him to hear from his friends about his daughter-in-law's visits to a *devdasi*'s place. He says that as a social reformer he serves to shelter such unfortunate women. He also does not care in reviving an art form, but he stands against his children associating with such people. Hearing about Chenni amma, Amritlal immediately arranges a doctor to visit her and also provides a good financial assistance to her. But he cannot promote social evils in his country. The context brings forward the elite who live within a shell of hypocrisy. Amritlal builds up his identity as a social reformer who is sincerely devoted to the cause of social progress. But when the matters come to his family the veneer gets ripped apart and the hollowness of the social reformer in him gets revealed. For Jairaj, his father is a social reformer who reconstructed India with his money. Jairaj tries to convince his father that people like Chenni amma are forced to abandon their profession and resort to selling their bodies due to such people who misinterpret their dancing career as prostitution. Dattani here boldly deconstructs the hypocritical identity of the elite and asserts that the concept of identity will fluctuate according to spatio-temporal necessities.

Ratna becomes the most dominating character in the play who plays a clever game in between the father and the son to develop her career as a dancer. She chooses Jairaj as her spouse only because he lets her pursue dance. She very well knows the limitations of Jairaj as a dancer and expects that he would always stand beneath her in the career. She cleverly gets into a pact with Amritlal when she promises him to dissuade his son from being a dancer. She arranges the lightings in such a way that she is able to demoralize Jairaj as a dancer, so that he would eventually quit the profession of dancing. Ratna's sole intention is in getting the best support from her father-in-law to hamper Jairaj as a dancer. This was her strategy to establish her as a successful dancer.

Jairaj realizes the way in which he is suppressed as a dancer by his wife. He is merely her stage prop. But she always cleverly puts the blame on either Amritlal or Jairaj himself for his deterioration. Jairaj recollects in the play how she called him names that he is ashamed to say in public. She always criticizes him for being a poor dancer and as well as a poor "man." She even goes to the extent of telling that her husband is a "spineless boy who couldn't leave his father's house for more than forty-eight hours" (CP 402). According to her, he ceases to be a man when he returns to Amritlal Parekh's house. She even asks him, "What kind of a man are you?" (CP 443). A South Indian dancer, Ratna has always tamed her Gujarati husband in favour of her tastes. Her least concern for her husband's savours is apparent in the South Indian cuisine served on their dining table.

As a mother Ratna is too much concerned about her daughter's career. The unexpected fracturing of their *mridangam* player's arm worries her extremely as it would affect Lata's coming performance. She does not want Chandrakala's (a rival dancer) *mridangam* player to be invited fearing that they would plan a sabotage on Lata. She argues with Jairaj when he tries to lighten the situation telling him that he is not bothered about the seriousness. As a concerned mother she tells that she never wants her daughter to go through the troubles they faced. Before Lata's performance, she manages to influence the possible critics to prevent them from making their negative reflections in media about the performance. She even manages to butter the ministry to capture foreign performances for Lata and breaks down sadly when she gets to know that Lata is not selected for it.

The dominance of Ratna and all the troubles that she creates in Jairaj's life is solely due to her concern for her career. She is presented as a person who is too much concerned with her own achievements. Although Ratna is obsessed with her daughter's career, her act of pasting Lata's photographs in her own album tarnishes her image as a mother. She tells Jairaj that all the credits of Lata's marvellous performance go to her sleepless nights and her untiring efforts in making all the arrangements and even in manipulating the critics. Dattani presents Ratna as an ambitious career woman who would relentlessly pursue her goal.

Dattani makes the character Ratna a means by which to deconstruct the image of an ideal wife defined by society. He questions the conventional notion

of a wife as a self-sacrificing woman, who lives for husband and children, even neglecting her personal interests. But Ratna goes starkly against this principle when ambition creeps into her life spoiling her patriarchally constructed identity as an ideal wife and an ideal mother. In the marital relationship of Jairaj and Ratna, the playwright inverts the identity of Jairaj. He acts like a woman as Ratna's dominates the decision making process of the family. Jairaj becomes a powerless man who cannot cross the control imposed on him by his father and his wife. Thus there is a reversal of gender roles in the conventional patriarchal family headed by the rigorous patriarch Amritlal. Jairaj's attempts to break away from the impositions of his father to become a dancer only add to his miseries. He then becomes a source of contempt for his father, his wife as well as the society. He reveals the chaos within him while having a drink with Viswas, his daughter's fiancé. He tells Viswas how he was degraded by his father for learning an art form which the latter considers a prostitute's profession. He dismisses Viswas's comment "brave" for fighting against his father to achieve his passion. For him the applause "brave" remains only a word as he is questioned of his manliness by his wife after living for forty years with him. He is defined as a man devoid of "manliness" by his father as well as his wife as he is against the gender rules of society.

Dattani presents Jairaj as a male whose life styles are inclined to a female's in many ways. The play reveals the chaotic and traumatic life of Jairaj for being an unmanly man. The crisis of his life lies in choosing dance as his career. Dance for society is a female's profession and any man proficient in it

is always viewed with laughter. Jairaj develops as a dancer amidst these unfavorable circumstances. Towards the end of the play, the playwright introduces a silent character who never appears in the play, but plays a key role in the life of Jairaj and Ratna. The dancing couple's baby Sankar who lost his life at the careless hands of his *ayah* when his mother was busy with her performances and his father was amidst his alcohol. The guilt of their carelessness hovers around Jairaj and Ratna which becomes the only factor that binds them together.

Sankar in fact becomes the most pathetic victim of the gender norms predominant in society. Jairaj's battle with his society and with his ambiguous gender draws him to alcohol. His alcoholism contributes to the tragedy of the family. His alcoholism is largely an outcome of the gender patterning in society which forms the root cause of the tragedy. Jairaj's identity as a male does not meet the principles of masculinity maintained by society. But he proves his masculinity as he procreates two kids. Thus, the character of Jairaj illuminates the hollowness of the gender norms prescribed by society. At the end of the play the older Jairaj says: "We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God" (CP 447). The words suggest society's lack of grace and lack of brilliance to understand that social norms are only constructions of human-beings and it is not necessary that one must strictly adhere to these principles. The character of Jairaj as a powerless man and the character of Ratna as a dominating woman point towards a circumstance where personal instincts monopolize social norms and render

them meaningless and redundant. The male-female identity as constituted by society loses its meaning and significance in the play. The play marks the penetration of the female identity into male identity to make the latter meek and ambiguous.

The Girl Who Touched the Stars is a radio play where Dattani makes an astonishing portrayal of women in society. The play takes place in the twenty-first century Indian society where women, especially the middle and upper class women, seem to be freed from the age-old inhuman practices against them. The story of the play is inspired by the life of the Indian astronaut Kalpana Chawla. The protagonist of the play is Bhavna, an astronaut, who is the first Indian to go to Mars. But unfortunately the space shuttle explodes soon after the take off and the successful story of the brave woman, Bhavna, turns out to be a tragedy. The playwright makes the situation in the play unique in a postmodern style when Bhavna meets her younger self soon after the explosion. Perplexity binds them and they realize two possibilities to overcome this bizarre situation: one, it is the year 2025 and the older Bhavna is thinking about her childhood or it is the year 2006 and the young Bhavna is dreaming about her future. Most of the play comprises of the dialogues between the older Bhavna and the young Bhavna. As the older Bhavna is all involved in her journey to Mars, she is forcefully drawn to the old memories of her childhood, which make her think deeply about her dream to become an astronaut. The listeners are taken back to the childhood incidents in her life through young Bhavna. The narrative of the play loses a proper link as the childhood

memories, the conversations of Bhavna's parents and the journalists are intricately woven together.

As a woman astronaut Bhavna tells the young Bhavna how she crossed the obstacles to reach her current position. Her speculations on her childhood explore the status of a woman in the contemporary Indian society where atrocities against her take place cleverly and silently. Several incidents in Bhavna's childhood make evident that her parents expected a son more than a daughter. Her mother used to tell that her father-in-law would throw her out, if she fails to provide him with a grandson. Even after her birth Bhavna was considered a boy. The mother tells the father: "Our son is all right. The doctor said he is fine" (*Brief Candle* 73). They brought up the baby as a boy till five years with the name Bhuvan and the father wanted him to become a pilot and the mother said he would touch the stars when he grows up. But as the girl grew up and wore a skirt for the first time the father said that he never wanted her to become a pilot. He only wanted his daughter to get married off at the age of twenty two. For him educating a girl is a great work and he is satisfied that he has provided ample education to his daughter. The mother sang for the baby the lullaby "Chanda Mama" a lullaby for a baby boy and did not prepare her properly before she began menstruating for the first time. The girl thus had an awful experience at her school and remembers it even as an astronaut. Bhavna realizes that she was loved by her parents because they did not have a son.

Bhavna asks the young Bhavna whose dream was it to become an astronaut, whether it is hers or her father's. Young Bhavna strongly asserts it as her dream as her father wanted to marry her off when she attained twenty-two. But the older Bhavna makes her think about it more deeply. She makes her younger self realize that it is actually the father's dream which she has materialized now. He wanted a boy child and wished him to be a pilot. But he did not want his daughter to become a pilot. It is his wish to make his son a pilot that subconsciously worked through the little girl and she grew up to become an astronaut instead of a pilot. The little Bhavna wanted to go to the Moon and her mother wanted her 'son' to touch the stars. But the girl grew up to go to Mars. She in fact imbibed the dreams of her father unknowingly and attains it.

Unlike the usual girls Bhavna found joy in climbing up mango trees at school to fetch mangoes. The principal complains to the father and the father warns the girl to buy mangoes from shop if she wants. Her urge to climb trees is a result of her bringing up as a boy during her initial years. It is a reflection of masculinity complex, which Ashley Montagu speaks about in her *Natural Superiority of Women*. But as the girl grew up the society wanted her to behave as a girl. The principal, the father and the others found it strange when a girl climbed up trees for mangoes. The context highlights the notion of gender as performance as articulated by Judith Butler. The society prescribes norms for being a girl and for being a boy and any deviation from it is always treated with strictures. Bhavna fails to keep the norms of a girl child as climbing trees is socially attributed to a boy's activity. The girl is also influenced by her

upbringing as a boy. Her parents first made her perform as a boy and as she grew up they wanted her to perform as a girl. The bringing up of the child as a boy and as a girl made Bhavna Patel a girl who often behaved like a boy. The instance underscores the concept of gender as performance. The very training of the child to be a boy first and then as a girl is clearly evident in her. The character of Bhavna proves gender as something that can be moulded according to the preferences rather than as an essence within. It evolves from the stylized repeated acts of the child.

Bhavna grows up with her ambition to become an astronaut, an ambition that was unknowingly thrust upon her by her father in the guise of his desire for a boy child. Though the father does not want his daughter to become an astronaut, Bhavna developed the spark imposed in her by him and finally becomes the first Indian to get selected to go to Mars. Despite the training to behave as a girl, her ambition to touch the stars remains firmly in her. In the interview with the journalists she tells them that there is nothing in her being a woman and her achievement. She means that the very identity as a woman has no connection with whatever she has done. For her, the achievement is a part of her blessing. Society in fact moulds a woman out of an individual. The family takes utmost care to bring up the members as men and women according to the social norms. Normally the ambition of a pilot or an astronaut is meant for a boy child. The girl Bhavna is brave enough to break the social and familial hurdles to reach her ambition.

In her childhood Bhavna was blamed for climbing trees. But when she climbed trees, she was in fact marking her first step towards her career. When society attributes climbing trees and travelling to stars to a boy, Bhavna successfully accomplishes these things, despite being a woman. She started menstruating for the first time when she was on the top of the tree in her school. The incident becomes greatly ironic as the girl attained her womanhood when she was involved in an activity which was meant for a man. An individual may biologically belong to a specific gender, yet temperamentally might belong to the opposite gender. But the way, in which one is moulded, the circumstances in which one grows up and the personal interests one develops, make the notion of gender complex and problematic. An individual may stay away from the principles that define masculinity and femininity. Thus, gender identity of a person has nothing to do with one's character. The character of Bhavna problematises the usually conceived identity of a woman as passive, emotional, meek and weak. The character underscores gendering as a social process and gender identity as a social construct. A woman right from her birth is brought up as the "second sex," the one who stands second in the gender hierarchy. She assimilates her image as the less powerful, one who is least suitable for adventurous jobs and one who is to be confined mainly to domestic affairs. Bhavna's character proves this normally conceived attitude to be meaningless as she transcends these patriarchal borders to reach greater heights. Her initial upbringing as a boy and the desire of her father for a pilot son got deeply rooted in her and later got naturalized as her ambition. Bhavna

grew up with this strong passion in her which motivated her to break the social hurdles and becomes a woman astronaut.

The context elaborates the empiricist philosopher John Locke's argument that the human mind is a *tabula rasa* (Locke advocates that the human mind is a "clean state" with nothing written on it and that it is through sensory perceptions that one acquires knowledge) and knowledge is a result of perceptions. An individual when born naturally falls into either of the biological sexual categories, male or female. But the very knowledge he/she imbibes from society makes his/her gender. As Foucault states, discourses create the inevitable structures which fashion subjects as minds and bodies. An individual's gender is sharply shaped by the gender discourse of society. Any deviation from the gender discourse is treated an aberration. Bhavna's character is indeed shaped by her upbringing as a boy in her early ages. Later, when she is made to perform as a girl, the unconsciously initiated boyishness does not allow her to achieve that end. She is looked upon with awe by the society as her interests are inclined to that of a boy. Her character, thus emphasizes gender as a construction and performance. A female is constructed as a meek and feeble character. Bhavna proves that a woman is not less powerful than men. It is the very social upbringing of the male and female which makes a man powerful and a woman less powerful. The male/female gender binary operates on a set of concepts and ideas which constitutes the norms attributed to each gender by society. These sets of norms are purely context bound. It is therefore the context that makes a male or a female gender.

Therefore gender is ambiguous, flexible and contingent. Bhavna's life illustrates this truth.

Identity in the contemporary times is never regarded as something that is fixed and definite. Critiquing the Cartesian cogito the poststructuralist theoreticians assert that the concept of identity is susceptible to change. It is now extensively maintained as a concept that is socially and culturally constructed. Racial and gender identities are confused as visible identities evolved from social perceptions. Dattani's plays are strongly rooted in the theme of the flexibility and fluidity of gender identity. As a playwright, Dattani takes utmost care to present gender not as something that is permanent and innate in an individual. All the six plays mentioned above unfold gender as a construction of the powerful and hegemonic structures as articulated by Foucault. The powerful makes heterosexuality the sexual order of society. The plays elaborate Lacan's concept of subjectivity which postulate that individuals are positioned as subjects with reference to the symbolic order. The plays also illustrate how men and women are interpellated as concrete subjects with reference to the dominant patriarchal ideology, which according to Althusser, regulates one's desires, choices, intentions, preferences, judgments and so on.

Nitin of *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Kamlesh, Ed and Sharad of *On A Muggy Night in Mumbai*, Alpesh of *Do the Needful*, Jairaj of *Dance Like a Man* and the *hijras* of *Seven Steps Around the Fire* are victims of the hegemonic ideology of phallogentric social order. They fall prey to the norms

on which social institutions and practices operate. Trained by family to live according to the social norms, they are deeply rooted in patriarchal ideology and are compelled to lead a false life in society. These pathetic victims silently repress their innate desires for a contented life in society. The plays highlight the mental agony and the troubled lives of the queer amidst the ideology which represses their innate nature. Bhavna Patel of *The Girl Who Touched the Stars* stands unique among Dattani's characters as she could break the chains of social norms to achieve her goals. She is a girl who courageously goes beyond the socially prescribed rules/roles for a female. Despite the strict warning from her family and society, she developed her ambition to reach the skies and finally she becomes an astronaut.

Dattani moulds all his major characters to problematise the concept of identity, especially sexual and gender identities. The problematised gender and sexuality of his characters articulate the hollowness of identity as stable and coherent. The plays expose how one's innate nature is suppressed by the social norms and consequently how one loses one's unique individuality. An individual imbibes his socially shaped identity that supersedes the real individual identity. Hence, the socially constructed identity gets naturalized in an individual who indirectly makes his personal identity redundant. The queer characters of Dattani conceal their queerness to lead an apparently cosy life. But they are always in conflict with their real self as they do not live the life of their life or orientation. It is clearly evident that the characters veil their alternative sexuality and gender as they stand against the norms of society.

The plays capture the inner turmoil and the consequent disillusionment of the characters who are denied the context to construct an uncompromising identity. The playwright unfolds the predicament of the queer and their consistent dilemma with reference to their gender and sexual identities. Dattani also shows that the conventional male/female gender binary operates on a set of context bound norms which make them arbitrary social constructions. Dattani underlines that the construction of identities in the context of gender and sexuality constitutes a cultural politics of difference. He shows that the phallogentric social structures affect not only the subordinate genders like queers or women, but also the dominant gender, the men. Dattani's plays are remarkable paradigms of theatre which emphasize his borrowed vision of the poststructuralists that gender and sexuality constitute identities which are socially/culturally constructed and are context-bound, unstable, fragmented and contingent. They present alternatives to the binary structures of gender and sexuality which attempt to deconstruct and subvert the phallogentric social order and heteronormative practice.

Chapter III

Problematizing the Queer: Critiquing Gender and Sexuality in Dattani's Plays

Queer is one of the most problematic terms in contemporary cultural critique. It represents the poststructuralist position on identity as a construct, provisional and contingent, a flux or a process of becoming, a field of possibilities susceptible to mediation, appropriation and relativism. The apparently self-evident and logical claims of queer identity based on Cartesian subject have been challenged and disproved by the works of Michael Foucault and Judith Butler. This deconstruction of the Cartesian subject makes identity a cultural fantasy which insists on the representation of the self as a coherent, unified and self-determining subject. Thus, the poststructuralist position on identity makes a space for the understanding of gender and sexuality which do not conform to heteronormative conditions prevalent in societies. The conceptual evolution of queer is thus related to the development of the concepts of gender and sexuality and their interconnectedness.

Queer is an umbrella term used for sexual and gender minorities who remain outside the space of gender binaries. Though queer has been a derogatory term used to denote socially inappropriate behaviour, it was particularly used to represent effeminate gay male. In late twentieth century, the term was appropriated to use for positive self identities by LGBT people. In addition to LGBT, queer comprises of pansexual, gender queer, asexual, auto-

sexual and gender normative heterosexual people whose sexual orientations remain outside the mainstream, patriarchally consolidated heterosexuality.

Queerness is an oppositional practice to heteronormativity which rejects essentialist identity politics. Heteronormativity legitimizes heterosexuality and constructs homosexuality as its binary opposite. This prevents homosexuality from being considered as an alternative. Heterosexuality therefore operates unconsciously and foregrounds normative and discursive structures.

Individuals internalize the norms generated by institutions like family, school, clinic and media and circulated by the discourses of gender and sexuality.

According to Foucault, individuals become self-regulating subjects. In this process, institutional changes and changes in political economy of sexuality are often backgrounded and discourse existing in culture and internalized by individuals are foregrounded. Queer therefore represents a set of engagements with the relations between gender and sexual desire. In this context, Donald Hall remarks that “queer emphasizes the disruptive, the fractured, the tactical and the contingent . . . there is no ‘queer’ theory in the singular, only many different voices and sometimes overlapping, sometimes divergent perspectives” (*Queer Theories* 5). Queer therefore stands for a diverse range of discursive practices, especially critical practices on same-sex desire in creative discourses. Queer also comprises of power relations of sexuality, critiques of sex-gender system, studies on transgender identification and transgressive desires.

The concept of queerness rather than defining an identity unsettles an identity. Butler considers “queer” as a critique of identity. So she argues in

Gender Trouble: “I worry when “queer” becomes an identity. It was never an identity. It was always a critique of identity” (32). As a state or position that demands self-reflexivity, queer creates a space for reflection. According to Thomas Dowson, queer is not a state of being positive, but it is a way of standard reflection by the authority (163). Queer is a contentious term that encompasses defiance, celebration and refusal. In this context, Philip Brain Harper, E. Frances White and Margaret Cerullo observe: “Queer induces within it a necessarily expansive impulse that allows us to think about potential differences within that rubric” (30). According to them, the term “queer” is self-contained. But queer is often bracketed with homosexuality. According to Foucault, sexuality is a profusely discussed and regulated entity produced through discourse. The proliferation of discourses on sexuality gives rise to the category of “homosexuals.” Homosexual practices as a set of epistemes pre-exist the emergence of the “homosexual” as an identity. In this regard, Foucault argues that identities emerge from the ways in which knowledge is organized and power relations are defined. He establishes the politically ambiguous characteristics of the discursive formation of the “homosexual” in the *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (101). Foucault argues that homosexuality must be viewed as a constructed category of knowledge rather than a discovered identity. The concept of queer focuses on the “mismatches” between sex, gender and sexual desire. It rejects sex, gender and sexuality as stable categories and reconfigures identity as multiple, unstable positions.

In the Structuralist context, the binary of hetero/homo makes each term necessary for the survival of the other. Therefore, an understanding of heteronormativity is essential for a better perspective of queer. Queer is formed with the socio-cultural and identitarian formations of sexuality, gender and sexual desire. The queer politics is also manifested in female masculinity or male femininity, which indicates the desire for gender transitivity. This desire has broadened the areas of transsexual politics and cultural practices. Gender transitivity encompasses the areas of cross-dressing and femme identities which indicate sexual inversions. It also points to disorientation in generally accepted sexual identities and results in a critique of heteronormativity. Queer accounts for the epistemological and ontological possibilities of the non-heterosexual Other. Queer Studies creates a new discursive domain and incorporates “. . . the inveterate, gorgeous generativity, the speculative generosity, the daring, the permeability, and the activism that have long been lodged in the multiple histories of queer reading” (*Between Men* xx). Queer also encompasses that discursive zone of radical sexual politics represented by the feminists and the homosexuals of LGBT. Queer identity implies a complex web of diverse sexualities. Queer theorists maintain that a non-oppressive gender order is possible only through a radical change in the concept of sexuality where the alternative sexualities find recognition. As heterosexuality, which supports reproduction, is always revered, any other kind of sexuality is a parallel choice which remains outside the sexual customs. Queer life comes under the canon of instability. Since sexuality, especially reproductive sexuality, is

grounded by elitist and capitalist rules, queer identities are made out to be odd and kept away from the mainstream.

The term queer primarily engages with the nuances of sex, gender and sexual desire. Queer theory attempts critical readings of same-sex desires, analysis of social and political relations of sexuality, critiques of sex-gender system, studies of transsexual and transgender identification and of transgressive desires. Foucault argues that homosexuality is a constructed category rather than a discovered identity. An analysis of the shift in identities from homosexuals to gays and lesbians and then to the recent queer makes clear the possibilities and problems which result from the relationship between these identity categories. The queer subcultures of the 1950s, even though excluded in the records of the history of sexuality, have more in common with the recent queer. Though the terms queer and gay are often used interchangeably, the term queer is more elastic as it incorporates all the alternative sexual orientations. Butler also expresses concern over the extent of queer's elasticity. She argues that queer's inclusion of transgender and transsexuality is an inclusion for the queer rather than for the transsubjects. In the discourses of gender and sexuality the queer appears queerer due to its marginalized positions. In this regard, Butler observes in *Gender Trouble*: “. . . normalizing the queer would be, after all, it's sad finish” (32). The project of expansion enables queer to resist this normalization which Butler calls “the institutional domestication of queer thinking” (32). She points to the limitation in institutional space for discussing other methodologies/readings of queer

narratives. Butler does not consider the extent and context of inclusions of transsubjects. But it is necessary to address the reconciliation between sexed materiality and gendered identification, body and the world. However, some aspects of transsexuality remain outside the queer space. They include specificity of transsexual experience, the importance of body to self, the difference between sexual and gender identities and the particular experience of the body that cannot transcend the general. Butler introduces the concept of “domestication” to assign subjects and methodologies to specific categories. It is a notion that there is an institutional space to which each category belongs. Her objective is to “felicitate a political convergence of feminism, gay and lesbian perspectives on gender and poststructuralist theory” (12). In analyzing how the sex/gender system is constructed through the naturalization of heterosexuality, *Gender Trouble* performs in an interstitial space between feminism and lesbian and gay studies, producing queer feminism. Butler conceives of domestication in psychoanalytic metaphors. She fears that queer feminism is under the threat of domestication, though it enables to articulate forms of subjectivity.

The concept of queer is constructed in opposition to the institution of family, heterosexuality and reproduction. The distinctiveness of queer is explained by its existence in relation to space and time. The subcultural practices of the queer, the alternative modes of alliance, forms of transgender embodiment and the way in which these modes of living are captured constitute the frame of the queer life. The representation of queer comes within the frame of gender,

family, notions of individual freedom, the state, nature and culture, maturation, reproductive politics, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body. Queer requires confronting with these issues and challenging the general notion of gender difference. The struggle of the queer is not merely for equal status and toleration; it also challenges the social institutions within which the sexual logic is embedded. Queer explains how the knowledge of gender and sexuality interact with power. It seeks to understand how the privilege of compulsory sexuality over other sexual ways is maintained in solid relations and reproduced in cultural institutions. Queer critiques the construction of heterosexuality, challenges its cultural dominance and explains queer resistance to heterosexuality. Butler for instance, considers heterosexuality as a process of imitation and approximation of its own “phantasmatic idealization of itself” (*Gender Trouble* 21). Gender and sexual identities are regulatory regimes or sites of power where cultural meanings are contested. Queer exposes the power dynamics of gendered/sexed bodies.

Queer refers to both an identity and a positionality - that opposes the normal. The notion of queer is one of Derrida’s “undecidables,” a referent with many signifieds. Queer stands for all types of minor sexualities or genders other than male and female. Queer therefore elides differences and marginalizes specific forms of experience and oppression. Queer deconstructs conventional definitions of gender and sexuality and transgresses the boundaries of sexual identities. It foregrounds the constructed nature of sex,

gender and sexuality and resists the tendency to turn these categories into social identities. Queer inquires into the incoherence and instability associated with the way sexed bodies construct gender and sexual identities. The processes that construct the meaning of the bodies are related to the sexual practices and subjectivities. Queer focuses on the “deviant” anatomies, genders and sexual practices. Queer indicates how the dominant taxonomies fail to unravel the complexity of individual gender and sexual subjectivities and practices. It also explores the relationship between gender and sexuality and their unanticipated manifestations. It destabilizes the traditional sexual identity, accounts for all marginalized sexual identities and recognizes them as legitimate alternatives to conventional sexual identity.

Queer deals centrally with the chasm between the normative alignments of sex, gender and sexuality and the lived experiences of the individuals. Queer also explains the homo/heterosexual binary that serves as a trope of difference to structure social knowledge. Queer theory is a self-conscious and uncompromising critique or “transgression.” The transgressive fervour of queer theory is directed against the taxonomy of sexuality which centres on the homo/heterosexual binary. Queer theory attempts to deregulate the heterosexual hegemony and to challenge the stable categories of sexuality including gayness and lesbianism. In brief, queer theory is an assault against “the regime of sexuality” itself, which rests on the exhaustive binary opposition between homo/heterosexuality. The critical validity of the queer theory depends on the assumption that sexuality is essentially grounded on this

dichotomy. This can be further substantiated by Derrida's concept of "supplementarity" which suggests that meanings are organized through differences in a dynamic play of presence and absence. He explains in *Of Grammatology*: "Supplementarity, which is nothing, neither a presence nor an absence, is neither a substance nor an absence of man. It is precisely the play or presence and absence, the opening of this play that not metaphysical or ontological concept can comprehend" (244). According to him, supplementarity is a play which no metaphor can comprehend. Derrida maintains that the concept of "supplement" as a play underlines that what appears to be outside a given system is always already fully inside it or that which seems to be natural is also historical. It follows therefore that heterosexuality needs homosexuality for its definition and existence. This interdependence points to the impossibility of a well-defined difference between them and the problematics of their meanings. In her work *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories Gay Theories*, Diana Fuss also refers to Derrida's concept of "supplementarity" to explain the relation between heterosexuality and homosexuality:

The philosophical opposition between heterosexual and homosexual like so many other conventional boundaries, has always been constructed on the foundations of another related opposition: the couple 'inside' and 'outside'. To the extent that the denotation of any term is always dependent on what is exterior to it . . . , the inside/outside polarity is an indispensable model for helping us to understand the complicated working of semiosis. (1)

She contends that heterosexuality and homosexuality are mutually dependent, yet antagonistic. Queer theory explores the transgression of borders of sexual identities.

Queer theory promotes Foucault's radical view of sexuality as a social construct. Foucault regards homosexuality as a personage or as a case of history. According to him, discourses have invented the category of homosexuality. In this regard, his concept of "reverse discourse" can be relied on by the homosexuals for their legitimate demand for recognition. This concept helps them to articulate their right for the acknowledgement of their lives with their same registers with which they are medically disqualified. In this context, identity becomes visible as those who are subjugated and branded as perverse emerge as the voice of protest. They challenge the causes of their inverted and social position. Consistent attempts have been made by sexual minorities to alter social knowledge and rhetoric inversion of homosexuality. Butler relies on Foucault to conceptualize sexuality as a product of socio-cultural and historical influences. In queer theory, sexuality is conceptualized as "technological," a product of power relations which open up a diversity of possibilities.

Homosexuality is defined as the sexual attraction between those belonging to the same sex. When certain groups of men and women are branded as homosexuals, there are certain other ambiguous categories which do not fall within the delimitation of the boundary of homosexuality. For instance, whether

a man who lives with his wife and children, but has occasional sex with another man can be categorized homosexual? Many men, when interviewed for the purpose of AIDS regarding their identity denied a homosexual identity as they lead a happy life with their wives, though they engage in sexual acts with other men (Bartos et al., 27). Such contexts blur a clear perception of the concept of homosexuality. They prove the insufficiency or the deception of the sexual categories of the heterosexual and the homosexual. The mismatches between sexual activities and sexual identities problematise the essentialist strand of fixed identity categories. There is no consensus among scientists how a person develops a particular sexual orientation. Recent researches show that homosexuality is a natural and normal variation of human sexuality. Freud's psychological idea of the fluidity of sexualities and the inherent bisexuality in every individual again questions the fixed hetero/homo sexual categories. His anti-minoritizing account places his heterosexist and the masculinist concepts under question. According to Karl Ulrich, homosexuality is an intermediate condition, a third sex that combines the psychological aspects of both masculinity and femininity. This angle opens up the idea that homophobes are men who are insecure about their masculinity. The later feminist and gay movements have attempted to clarify the relevance of the male paranoid project in maintaining gender subordination. It also remains supportive for transforming lesbianism from a matter of female virilization into female identity. But the state of homosexuality can be explained in terms of sexual desire, rather than in relation to sexed bodies. The understanding of homosexuality rests on two

contradictory tropes of gender. The first one is the trope of inversion where desire is viewed as a current that runs between one male self and one female self, whatever be the sex of the bodies these selves may be manifested. The next is the trope of gender separatism under which the people of the same gender, whose economic, institutional, emotional and physical needs and knowledge are common so that they bond together on the axis of the same sexual desire. Sexual desire is only one of the factors which results in homosexuality. Socio-cultural factors also contribute to the constitution of homosexuality.

The legal definition of homosexuality often ignores various practices seen within heterosexuality. This is because heterosexuality's status as a particular "class" gets diminished due to its universal acceptance as the right mode of sexuality. Homosexuality, "the Other" of heterosexuality, is always demarcated as a special category which is deviant from the normal. But according to the poststructuralist principles, both the categories attain their respective meanings only because of their mutual co-existence. The differences within the category of the heterosexual play a key role in defining the difference between the heterosexual and the homosexual. Although heterosexuality is considered rigid and certain, the differences within it cannot be ignored. Its status of being non-homosexuality fades away when those people who are not classified as homosexuals are found within the class of heterosexuals. They are people with ambiguous sexuality who cannot be located either in the context of heterosexuality or within homosexuality. A healthy homosexual is one who chooses the sexual orientation she/he desires.

Richard. C. Friedman's *Male Homosexuality: A Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspective* maintains that adult male effeminacy is a global pathology.

Besides homosexuality, there are various types of gender non-conformities.

Friedman goes deep into the question of whether to include the “deviant sexual behaviours” under psychopathology. He states that the limited boundary of clinical concepts fails to incorporate the rich variability of human sexual behaviour. The problems of non-conformity and psychopathology can be identified in the childhood itself. Effeminate boys are those who have a passion for stereotypical female activities and cross-dressing come under the category of psychopathology. Even within the gay movement the effeminate men are ascribed a relegated position. The gay movement is an interruption in the long recognized tradition that assumes anyone, male or female, who desires a man must possess a feminine quality, and anyone who desires a woman should have a tinge of masculinity. This powerful assertion becomes subversive in the context of alternative sexualities. In order to make this subversive stand, the gay movement withdraws from stressing the links between gay adults and children with gender non-conformity. All adult gay men would always have a childhood stigmatized with effeminacy, femininity or non-masculinity. Core gender identity is formed even before the crystallization of one's sexual orientation or one's sexual object choice. The deformed gender identities result when gender identities develop incongruent with one's biological sex. The determination of the gender of a child need not clarify its sexual orientation. For

instance, a non-transsexual person with a penis is usually identified as a male. But for the feminine self-identified boys there is a gender trouble in this regard.

The essentialist homosexual identity loses its stand with the development of contemporary queer theory, focusing on queer space and practices. This expands the frontiers of the queer attempting to identify and incorporate the non-normative sexual behaviours which can be related to gay and lesbian subjects. The development and definition of queer in the postmodern context are determined by queer time and space. David Harvey, in his *The Condition of Postmodernity*, captures time as a social construction born out of the social relations. His postmodern understanding of time and space deconstructs both the concepts as natural modes of temporality. The notion of time as natural diminishes its social construction in everyday life. The everyday life is strongly ruled by concepts like “industrial time,” “family time,” postponement versus immediacy and so on. The meanings and values attributed to these temporalities of time constitute accepted mode of behaviour. These concepts of time are purely heteronormative constructs. Such constructions veil those people who choose to live outside the canons of these temporalities of time and space. They include sex workers, HIV positive bare backers, rent boys and so on. They are the queer subjects who live in those areas abandoned by others and work during that time when others sleep. They work on those activities which others confine to private lives. Queer time refers to the emergence of specific models of temporality leaving the temporal bourgeois definitions of reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety and inheritance. Eve Sedgwick

in her *Tendencias* talks about a queer time which is not limited to temporalities of time. She observes that, “Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive-recurrent, eddying, *troublant*” (iix). Stephen. M. Barber and David. L. Clark bases this concept of queer temporality on Foucault’s formulation of modernity as “an attitude rather than a period of history” (Barber and Clark 304). Queer space refers to the platform where the queer engages and describes new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counter publics. Samuel. R. Delany, in his *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, argues for a universal homosexuality which thrives on fluidity and flexibility. His work in the form of a travelogue describes the author’s sexual experiences in a variety of global locations and this supports his argument for the unstable nature of sexuality. He refers to geo-specific sexual practices among men belonging to different classes and races in New York’s porn shops and triple - X theatres. But these practices develop the assigned meanings only in the context of these darker areas. The division between urban and rural or urban and small town play a key role in the queer life. The life of the queer is considered more conducive in urban areas than in rural places. The acceptance of heterosexuality in society makes no space for the other sexual orientations. Thus, the non-heterosexuals get plunged into the closet created by the powerful in society. The secrecy thus formed establishes the binary oppositions between private/public, inside/outside and subject/object.

The identity and survival of the queer are greatly determined by the powerful subjects. Butler, in her *Bodies That Matter*, points out that objects are

the ones who have not attained the status of the subject. The formation of the domain of the subject requires the parallel formation of the domain of the abject. They are located in the “unlivable” and “uninhibited” zones of social life. The area demarcates a zone of fear for the subjects, the fear aroused by the odd genders, sexualities and desires. The subjects limit their autonomy and life within their own area, without moving into the area of those defined as the abject. Sandoval-Sanchez bases his description of the queer identity on this point. According to him, it is the abject which decides the platform of the subject. The socially subjugated abjects when mobilize themselves against their liminal existence throws a spark of threat on the subject about their assumed solid identity. This threat indicates the latent intention of the abject to undermine the static subject. The abject assigned with the search of meanings undermines the search and foils signification. The abject is therefore a threat to the construction of subjectivity. Kristeva also speaks about abject as “what does not respect borders, position, rules” (*Powers of Horror* 4). Abject confrontation threatens to obliterate meaning and resist making sense. Abject throws one to a state of radical ambiguity where the structural order of subject and object does not hold. The core gay identity as demanded by the emerging gay communities of the 1980s is insufficient in the context of the discussions of bisexuality and other non-conventional sexualities. The formation of gay culture as a site of identity largely depends on the sexual object choice. The hetero/homo division of sexuality becomes the primary concept on which gender preference is determined. Such a criterion for determining gender

preference of an individual makes no space for any other sexuality prevalent in society, other than the hetero and the homo. In their introduction to *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out*, Loraine Hutchins and Lani Kaahumanu critique sexual object choice as forming the basic notion for determining gender preference. They maintain that the hetero/homo division does not count those individuals whose sexual orientation is beyond these categories. Their sexual object choice fails to describe their sexual and intimate lives.

The binary structure of gender privileges the male over the female. The binary division makes the genders equal but opposite. Heterosexuality is not just a choice, but a construction produced through gender binaries and hierarchies that systematically organize the oppression of women. The system of compulsory heterosexuality is deeply implicated in women's oppression that social change is possible only by challenging the norm. Until 1970's when gays and lesbians began to theorize their existence, scientists and psychologists explained homosexuality and bisexuality as aberrations from the norm. In this regard, Diana Fuss explains: "For heterosexuality to achieve the status of the 'compulsory,' it must present itself as a practice governed by some internal necessity. The language and law that regulate the establishment of heterosexuality as both an identity and an institution, both a practice and a system, are the language and law of defense and protection" (2). Fuss means that the "homo" is exterior and marginal to the "hetero," yet essential to its significance. Fuss refers to Butler's comment on lesbian identity as a failure: "Compulsory heterosexuality sets itself up as the original, the true, the

authentic, the norm that determines the real implies that 'being' lesbian is always a kind of miming, a vain effort to participate in the phantasmatic plenitude of naturalized heterosexuality which will always and only fail" (Qtd in Fuss 20-21). Heterosexuality is therefore an institution and a discourse in the public domain. It is but true that a large number of heterosexuals do not subscribe to or profit from the institutions which support heterosexuality. Society privileges heterosexuality in its institutional practices. Heterosexuality is therefore part of a regime wherein sexuality is located within the identity of the individual subject. In the regime or technologies of sexuality it is assigned as a regulatory or disciplinary function by which heterosexuality is identified as positive and homosexuality is identified as negative. Heterosexuality has displaced minor sexualities from both the public and private spheres. So the LGBTs have no legitimate social location. Homosexual practices are considered pathological and hence socially penalized. Discriminatory policies exclude them from public sphere while social barriers preventing lesbian and gay marriages and formation of families with same sex couple displace them from private sphere. Sexual regulation prevents same sex sexual object choice and subordinate gays and lesbians. Lesbian and gay politics challenges sexual regulations.

The conventional trend of sex and gender binaries creates the class of sexual minorities. Sexual minority is a category that comprises of varied sexual identities that do not match the heteronormative. But there is a bond among them that fixes them on the platform of sexual politics where they demand

justice and freedom. What constitutes this bond of similarity has always been a topic of discussion among the queer critics. The critics most often rely on the psychoanalytic and historicist backgrounds to find a proper answer to this question; most often they prefer psychoanalytic to historicist context. The gay and lesbian liberation activists argue that their rights have been attributed to the fundamental psychic structures of the varieties which include preoedipal, innate bisexuality, exchange of women, reverse oedipalization, and instability of identification. But none of these are successful in recognizing the historical and cultural variations of the queer identity. Body and self-identity of a person are highly susceptible to the influence of human sciences like psychiatry, psychology, criminology and sociology. Culture, together with these sciences, customizes the human behaviour in a particular society. These cultural productions often go against individual tastes which in turn hamper the complete development of an individual. The New Social Movements of the 1970s and 80s struggle against these cultural productions. They challenge the authority of science in the construction of identities and contest the claim of science to epistemic authority. Lesbians and gays are pathologized under scientific-medical premises for their same-sex desire which is regarded as unnatural and abnormal. One of the primary targets of the gay movements is the scientific pathologization of homosexuality. This becomes institutionalized through schools, hospitals, psychiatric institutions, prisons and scientific associations which pass on to generations the oppressive picture of alternative sexuality and gender. These become the targets of the queer movements.

The Stonewall incident of June 1969 is said to have inaugurated the protest mission of the gays against their atrocities. But it was merely an open gay disclosure and rarely stirred a change in the existing social meaning. It was a self disclosure of gays but did not make the binaries collapse. The gay closet forms a feature not only of the gay life but also of society. The gays rarely emerge courageous to diminish the role of the closet in shaping their lives, and stop their protest without the support of society. The judicial formulations of homosexuality are based on the constraints imposed on the life and identity of the gays by this “closet” or “secrecy”. Eve Sedgwick posits that “the closet is the defining structure of gay oppression” (71). The attention and demarcation that homosexuality experiences now have been brought about by the secrecy and disclosure, and the private and the public, which are also problematic to the gender, sexual and economic structures of the heterosexual order.

According to Julia Creet, the “coming out” of the homosexuals is itself a performative act which is intended to establish its distinct identity as separate from the homosexual canons (181). But in Butler’s view, this coming out of the homosexuals does not disturb the hetero/homo binary. Highlighting its distinct identity in fact assists its reincorporation within the heterosexual entity. Homosexuality comes out as the oppositional “Other” of heterosexuality without dismantling the process of privileging and devaluing surrounding the sexual binary.

Lesbian and gay psychology explicitly supports the relevance of lesbians and gays on the one hand and encounters the discrimination against the

non-heterosexuals on the other. It is based on the assumption that homosexuality is part of the normal human sexual behaviour. Key topics in contemporary lesbian and gay psychology consists of lesbian, gay and bisexual identities, healthy same sex sexual relationship, homophobic and anti-gay discrimination, lesbian and gay parenting, ethnic/cultural diversity among lesbians, gays and bisexuals and flexibility of sexual behaviours. Lesbian and gay psychology deconstructs the misconceptions about sexual minorities. First, it rejects the contention that lesbians and gays have unique psychological features, vastly different from those of the heterosexuals. This is a serious challenge to the theoretical framework and knowledge bases of the discipline of psychology. In spite of the specific nomenclature, it has historically incorporated issues related to bisexuals, transsexuals and even heterosexuals. The borders of the discipline are not narrowly drawn. But it is concerned with the concept of gender. So this discipline gains by a feminist analysis of lesbian and gay identities. It can also be supplemented by the theories of race, class and ethnicity which have little impact on sexual practices. Finally, it is part of common sense knowledge that a person of any sexual orientation can practice this psychology. Lesbian and gay groups offer themselves as research subjects to generate knowledge on homosexuality. Social attitudes towards same sex sexual relationships have varied over time and place. Still lesbians are not considered women and gays are not regarded as men. This ideology makes same sex sexuality stigmatizing. Same sex sexual activities make one an inferior person. Some heterosexuals also engage in same sex sexual activities, but their

heterosexual orientation links them securely to the category of “woman” or “man.” Same sex sexual activity is culturally read as one’s failure to be either a real woman or a real man. But poststructuralist theories deconstruct the binary oppositions, showing that the distinction between paired opposites is not absolute since each term in the pair can be understood only in terms of the other. In lesbian/gay studies the hierarchy within the pair heterosexual/homosexual is deconstructed in such a way as to reverse the hierarchy and to privilege the second term rather than the first.

The failure of homosexuality to crumble down this binary is mainly due to the attempt of heterosexuality to get unified as a single sexuality with a variety of practices, norms and institutions. Though a consolidated and unchanging sexual practice, the definition and the range of acts associated with heterosexuality is always in a state of flux which expands its cultural hold. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, in the article “Sex in Public,” refers to the United States’ endeavour to construct a national heterosexuality as the heterosexual culture cannot be engraved within a single frame of unified beliefs (316-17). But this endeavour turns successful when it succeeds in convincing people about the singular and all-encompassing nature of heterosexuality. The propounding of heterosexuality as a hegemonic single entity pushes back homosexuality as deviant. The act of “coming out” of homosexuality itself is a way of consolidating the singularity of heterosexuality. When the aberrant homosexuality “comes out” and moves apart from heterosexuality, it makes the former not an element that is incorporated

within the heterosexual realms. The homosexual identity then becomes the fallen “Other” of heterosexuality. Such a context often misses out the logic of mutual exclusion with which heterosexuality prospers. These attempts also fail to incorporate the multiple and incongruent identities such as butch and femme identities. Within the femaleness, a woman may contain traits of masculinity. Such ambiguous mismatches of gender do not fall into any categories. Most often lesbian identity of a woman of colour goes submerged under the racial prejudice. Hence, a lesbian woman of colour contains more than her generally perceived identity; her identity is determined by her colour more than her sexual orientation. Such identity politics is critiqued for its inability to contain such excesses. But queer or performative pedagogies are known for its incorporation of multiplicity. In a situation where pedagogies of disclosure or “coming out” tend to favour a single identity which is closed and discreet, the queer or performative pedagogies surpass the fixed identity categories to include the ambivalent sexualities.

The liberationist politics of the gay and lesbian movements, which emphasizes the innate polymorphous and androgynous nature of the human, attempt at liberating the human beings from the hetero/homo and the gender/sex binaries. In the course of their ideological transformation these movements mark a paradigm shift in their political agenda, focusing more on identity and difference rather than on liberation. The general disillusionment with the liberationist projects and the modern understanding of the exercise of power on the body politic and its resistance initiate this transformation. But,

the ethnic model developed as a reaction to this liberationist dream posits that it can secure recognition and equal rights and legal protection within the established social system to make the gay community visible. Steven Seidman argues that by the end of 1970s, the gays and the lesbians could succeed in achieving a subcultural elaboration and general social tolerance over the cultural and political mainstream overshadowing (172). This transformed ethnic model has empowered the sexually marginalized communities in making their presence and identity visible. But, the ethnic model turns hostile to those subjects for whom the liberationist model favours a better representation. By stabilizing the minority identity, the new model narrows down the possibilities of fluid identities as emphasized by the liberationists. The ethnic model understands sexuality as framed within the hetero/homo binary and considers sexual orientation as a result of the choice of one's sexual object. This dominant understanding of sexuality is challenged and critiqued as unified sexual identity by the advocates of non-normative sexualities. They challenge the theorists of the ethnic model to account for and negotiate the issues of bisexuality, sado-masochism, pornography, butch/fem, transvestism, prostitution and intergenerational sex which challenge the hegemony of the hetero/homo binary. The attempts for the mobilization of the homosexuals have not provided organizational grounds for the other non-heteronormative populations. The materialization of the other erotic populations disturbs the very understanding of homosexuality as the same sex sexual relationships. The postmodern renderings of identity, sex, gender, power and resistance

strengthen the limitations of the bipolar divisions of hetero/homo and make the phenomena of the queer inevitable.

The new gay theory which developed after the gay liberation struggles following the Stonewall incident veils the medical-scientific argument that homosexuality is symptomatic of an abnormal physical condition of a segment of humanity. It rebuffs the notion of liberation as assimilating the alternative sexuality into the mainstream. For them, liberation means the drawing forward of the innate bisexuality and polymorphous traits in human beings. It assumes that the oppressed and the stigmatized homo and privileged hetero are the results of a male created societal regime. They argue that such a disparity is a characteristic feature of a gender system which makes the division between masculine and feminine roles. The gay liberation struggle attempts to dissolve a system that privileges the heterosexuals and men. It is an attempt to reconfigure the everyday language of sex and gender to break the conventional concepts of the gender system and to develop new visions of personal and social lives. The liberation struggle is strongly rooted in the social and historical backgrounds. A white gay from a developed country would have a different story to tell compared with a black gay from the third world. The liberation theorists ascribe greater importance to local experiences of sexual and gender oppression that is conditioned by class, race, nationality and so on. Although the gender system of liberationist regimes is constructivist, they maintain an essentialist stand when they argue for the innate bisexuality and polymorphous nature of human-beings. While presenting the struggle of the

homosexuals against their social oppression, in his *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation*, Dennis Altman argues that humanity is not naturally divided into heterosexuals and homosexuals and therefore for him the homosexual subject is a socio-historical event. Emphasizing the ontology of human sexuality, Altman acknowledges the essentially polymorphous and bisexual needs of the human beings. According to this argument, the primeval condition of the self draws pleasure from all the parts of the body and from both the genders. This polymorphous eroticism is channelized by cultural regimes of humanity. The repressive regimes imposed on it narrow down human eroticism into genital-centred norm meant for procreation which is absolutely heterosexual.

The attempts of the sexual minorities centre round creating a positive picture of them in society. In this context, the activities of Campaign for Homosexual Equality in Britain and Gay Activists Alliance in the United States stand noteworthy. They have criticized the negative images of gays and lesbians as portrayed by media and popular culture. The campaigns encourage promotion of images and narratives that capture self worth and pleasure to support the recognition of “the unacceptable gender” in the mainstream. The sexual minorities, being assigned a life in the “closet” is always out of the “home.” They challenge the world of assimilationist politics where they lead a life of outcast. Gay liberation movement is in fact the liberation of human sexuality. It strives to bring out eros which is placed under the repressed concepts of romantic, marital, genital and penetrative sexual desire. Altman proposes a libratory ideal where he supports dispersed body eroticism,

eroticization of everyday life, sexual exchanges that transcend the romantic coupling connected to the notion of procreative sexuality with play and pleasure. Gender liberation is actually a gender revolution. The hetero/homo dichotomy which forms the root cause of gender marginalization is intertwined with the sex roles in society. In the prevalent sex-role system masculinity and femininity are mutually exclusive categories of gender identity. In a gender system where heterosexuality is fixed as the normal, bisexuality is always repressed which results in the division of hetero/homo.

In the initial years of gay liberation (1969-73), the movement was unified: the gay liberation was not meant exclusively for gay men. But in the later phase lesbian identified women created the separate wing of lesbian feminism arguing that the gay liberation stood primarily for the interest of men. It also reacted against the feminist orthodoxy which favoured heterosexual women. The lesbian feminism does not support the view of lesbianism as a sexual desire or sexual orientation. Lesbian feminists regard shared female experiences and values and create a bond of female kinship. The manifesto of lesbian feminism is, "Women Identified Women." "Woman identified" is a condition of all women. A woman fails to realize this very condition of hers when she is bound within the male-imposed definition of woman which posits more her role in a heterosexual set-up. Such a heterosexual context paves the way for a patriarchal configuration which posits woman always in relation to men. The attempt of lesbianism to challenge this male domination makes the lesbian a political category rather than a sexual

category. It lights up the obligations and relationships between women which get submerged under a woman's duties towards the male in her life. By constructing an autonomous "woman's culture" lesbian feminism enhances female values and modes of being to make an independent existence of women. Adrienne Rich affirms the lesbian as a kind of archetypal image of the feminist endeavour and urges women for a dissociation of the lesbian from male gay allegiances. In her influential essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience," Rich introduces the idea of "lesbian continuum" to deny a range of experiences between women, including mutual practice and political support, bonding against male tyranny and sharing a rich inner life.

The sexual variations are discussed differently among gay and lesbian feminist circles which constitute sexuality differently. Their impact is sharply visible in lesbianism which is regarded as a counter to masculine sexuality. In this regard, Lillian Federman observes: "Lesbian represents a relationship in which two women's strongest emotions and affections are directed toward each other. Sexual relationship may be a part of the relationship to a greater or lesser degree, or it may be entirely absent" (17-18). Lesbian sex, which confronts strong challenges, is founded on three markers: couple-based, monogamous, women identified. Lesbian critics point out the need of taking lesbianism beyond the boundaries of a sexual identity category. In her essay "Towards a Politics of Sexuality," Pat Califia points out those sado-masochists, who transgress the traditional descriptions of sexual orientation, regard the sexual object choice as the prime determinant of one's sexual identity. For her, the

lesbian is a category of personal identification. She describes her personal experiences as a lesbian: how lesbianism makes her enjoy sex with gay men. In the essay "My Interesting Condition," Jan Clausen gives the account of her decision to involve with a man after being in a twelve years long monogamous lesbian relationship (12). These instances invert the traditional definitions of lesbianism as an identity category. Clausen points out the inability of the category of lesbian in representing sexualities: she suggests the limitations of traditionally demarcated identity categories. In the light of bisexuality Clausen questions the exclusiveness of heterosexuality and homosexuality. She regards bisexuality as a sort of identity which can undermine the foundations of identity politics. These debates within lesbian feminism do not find a place among the gays as these variations are already a constituent part of gay male identity.

Allen Young, in his *Out of the Closet, into the Streets*, posits that gay liberation is a struggle against sexism. Sexism is a belief or practice where the sex or sexual orientation of human beings grants some people the rights to certain privileges, powers or roles while denying some others their full potential. In most of the societies sexism is seen manifested in the supremacy of the male and the privileging of heterosexuality. Setting against the innate homosexual and the heterosexual and the feminine and the masculine, sexism posits that these roles separate us from ourselves. This leads to the oppression of the homosexuals by the heterosexuals and women by men. Gay liberation is a struggle against heterosexism and sexism. It intends to liberate the innate

homosexual and the heterosexual, the feminine and the masculine, to form a whole. For Young, gay identity is a broad platform which accommodates the inherent bisexual and androgynous nature. Seidman in his *Difference Troubles: Queering Social Theory and Sexual Politics* observes that, “to protect the power of straight men in a sexist society, homosexuality becomes prohibited behaviour” (118). Lesbians and gays pioneer sexual and human liberation in this manner. They have a better chance than the straights for building relationships based on equality as there is less enforcement of roles.

The location of the sexual minority is outside the social context and is not a necessary factor in the formulation of social theory. In this regard, Michael Warner observes: “Social theory [has] an endless capacity to marginalize queer sexuality in its description of the social world” (ix). Each citizen of the world is identified with a particular culture associated with his respective nationality which plays a key role in the formation of his identity. The concept of citizenship is always discussed at the social, political and economic backdrop of the country in which one lives. The matter of sexuality never finds a position in determining one’s citizenship. Citizenship is always attached to identity, and sexuality is a crucial component of identity. But, sexuality is invariably excluded from social theory as it is not regarded as social. Heterosexuality being the accepted form of sexuality, a citizen is generally meant to be a heterosexual. Lesbians and gays lack full and equal rights, full political participation and representation and access to welfare entitlements. Certain rights granted to them are based on their title as the minority group. A satisfactory life for them

in society largely depends on their tolerance and assimilation. It means that their sexuality, which stands apart from what is regarded as normal, has to remain within the boundaries of tolerance set by heteronormativity. With the AIDS crisis the plight of the queer turned worse. The situation was met with the emergence of organizations like Queer Nations and associated groups like Pink Panthers which worked for the betterment of the sexual minorities. The struggle of the queer is always bound with several social questions. But a sharp analysis of their struggles unfolds the hidden agenda of a welfare state. In *Inventing AIDS*, Cindy Patton examines how the organizations tackle the AIDS crisis to contribute to the nation building. Any means of confronting this menace associates with improving client relations, health-care professionalism, relations between the first and the third worlds, civil society structures of voluntary association, the privatized production of health services and goods and the disparities between the gays and other affected populations or between lesbians and gays. Such revelations of the struggles of the queer open up a context to rethink the resistance of the society towards the sexual minorities. The manifestation of the queer as the marginalized and their social ostracization veil all such social relevance. Though human beings, they are always denied the status of human beings. The major cause of their subjugation in society relies on their distinguished sexual orientation which does not support reproduction. Despite making their presence felt, the constant struggle from the sexually marginalized community also creates awareness in society. These struggles illuminate the strength of the queer community on the one

hand and reflect their fragmented nature on the other. Race, bisexuality and non-conventional sexualities form the three major sites of struggle against the unitary lesbian or gay male subject. Race plays a vital role in shaping one's identity and even one's sexuality. Thus lesbians and gays of colour oppose the notion of a unitary gay identity which is formulated by the privileged white and middleclass ideas. They dismiss the notion of a shared experience of the queer illuminating the racial variations that make the sexual oppression different among different groups. They argue that a person's identity constitutes his race, gender, sexuality, class, nation and so on; each of them being shaped and reshaped by others. These elements of variation hamper the notion of a core gay identity. The lesbian women of colour articulate against their racial and gender subordinations. The struggle against racism among the gay men came to the limelight in the late 1980s. The publication of the first gay male anthology, *In the Life* by Joseph Beam, powered the voices of the Black invisible gays. It lifted the curtain of the black gay life which made visible the life and experiences of the black gay men. The book inspired another work *Brother to Brother* by Essex Hemphill which also critiques the conception of a gay community from the white perspective.

Lesbian feminists and queer theorists are divided over the concept of identity politics, especially on the nature and boundaries of identity. Another related issue that divides the two critical perspectives is the nature and function of the sex/gender system. For lesbian-feminists, sex and gender are conceptually independent categories, best exemplified in the institution of compulsory

heterosexuality. But for queer theorists, sex and gender are conceptually distinct which open up the formality for an analysis of homophobia that excludes the role of sexism. Lesbian-feminists and queer theorists also come to heads over the meaning of sexual difference, the construction of identities through hierarchical, binary gender roles and what it means to be anti-normative. Queer theory is increasingly associated with individual sexual identities in media and popular culture. A queer analysis challenges the understanding of sexual identity by focusing not only on the historically constructed and contingent nature of homosexual/heterosexual binary but also on the many ways in which individual desires, practices and affiliations cannot be accurately defined by the sex of object choice. There has been a gradual separation of lesbianism feminism and inevitably the lesbian from woman in the last decade. The lesbian is now a part of a single corporate entity, the queer. Gender is performance and body is ambiguous in queer perspective. Therefore, power and knowledge cannot be easily allocated to the masculine in queer discourses.

Feminist contributions to the analyses of sexuality have been profound. They reveal sexuality as a site for the production of gender and the operation of power. The sexist movements of the 1980s divided feminists into those who frame sexuality primarily as a site of danger and oppression for women and those who view sexuality more ambivalently as a site of pleasure and liberation. Some critics like Gayle Rubin and Eve Sedgwick suggest that the study of sexuality need a degree of independence from feminism since sexuality and gender are conceptualized as two distinct domains of analysis. Lesbian and gay

studies and queer theory have taken up the defining challenge of theorizing sex and sexuality in an analytic framework independent of gender. This rupture with feminism has produced a sophisticated literature on sex and sexuality, allowing more focused attention on a troubling heteronormativity than the framework of feminism, with its focus on male-female relationships. This rupture has also produced a conceptual divide between feminists and queer theorists. Gender is the critical focus of feminism while sexuality is the thrust of gay and lesbian studies/queer theory. Feminism and queer theory are in turn cast in an antagonistic relationship with their incommensurable differences. For queer theorists, feminism is reduced to one side of the sex conflict with those who seek to regulate female sexuality, while queer theory presents a more liberatory politics for those who seek sexuality. For feminists, queer theory is reduced to a sexual liberation and representation politics devoid of ethics and unconcerned with the material conditions of women and other oppressed people.

Queer culture and queer theory have recently attracted a great deal of criticism from lesbian, gay and queer activists. For some, the queer moment has already passed and its transgressive gestures have transformed into fashion accessories. Queer theory has been criticized for its abstraction and fetishising of discourse. More specifically, it has been accused of not understanding the realities of oppression and the gains made by organized campaigns for rights and justice. Its political, intellectual and social interventions undermine its focus on difference and transgression as goals in themselves. A tendency in

some queer writing to present some gender and identity as almost exclusively negative has also invited criticism. Butler's model of gender performativity is regularly turned into an invitation to choose one's gender with one's everyday practice. As an academic discourse, queer theory is caught in a double movement of contesting and producing knowledge, of challenging norms yet facing a possible future as paradoxical orthodoxy. If the queer gets normalized, if it becomes just another option, then it ceases to be the queer. Teresa de Lauretis states that queer theory has quickly become a conceptually vacuous creature of the publishing industry. While the term is now deployed within distinctly unqueer projects, it is also being constantly reworked in changing social and discursive contexts. New intellectual encounters are diversifying the range of queer theory's subjects and methods. Although sexuality remains a key object of queer analysis, it is increasingly being examined in relation to categories of knowledge involved in the maintenance of unequal power relations.

Rosemary Hennesy argues that the queer project marks "an effort to speak from and to the differences and silences that have been suppressed by the hetero/homo binary, an effort to unpack the monolithic identities lesbian and gay, including the intricate ways lesbian and gay sexualities are inflected by heterosexuality, race, gender and ethnicity" (86-87). She means that the queer deconstructs the practice of categorizing sexual minorities from a monolithic assumption based on sexual practices. Sedgwick also notes how the queer transcends the boundaries of sex and gender to reach crisis created by

race, ethnicity and post-colonial nationality (*Between Men* 9). The intellectuals and artists of colour who come under the category of the queer, employs the concept of the queer to solve their fractured language, skin, migration and state. The major initiative of the queer theory centres on underscoring the unnoticed stabilities of the gay and the lesbian lives. It deconstructs heteronormativity constituted by the play of male-female roles, which are mutually dependent. Bobby Noble, in his article “Making it Like a Drag King: Female-to-Male Masculinity and the Trans Culture of Boyhood,” mentions about the concept of post-queer genders, the genders without genitals, to circumscribe all the alternative sexualities and genders. This idea of post-queer incoherence suggests how the stable genders are disturbed, how they are not mutually dependent as per the male-female roles prescribed by heteronormativity.

Identity politics, especially the politics associated with gender and sexuality, plunges individuals into deep crisis. Innumerable attempts have been made by promotion and welfare measures to augment and ameliorate the status of the sexually marginalized communities. But they fail to create a new vision of society which can trigger social transformations. Rather than interrupting the hegemonic structures of society, they are more involved in including those excluded sections among the privileged category. Queer theory makes a platform to resist and think beyond what is prescribed rather than accepting the stigma of strange sexualities. Queer theory functions as an analytical tool for impacting the ways in which lesbian and gay identities are formed through discourses formulated by people not aligned with those categories but through

discourses constructed by self identified lesbians and gays. The bracketing of queer theory with lesbian and gay studies is considered to be self-evident and unquestionable. Queer theory has become an epistemological extension of the ontological positions, with queer theory as a theory for, about and by queers. It has become “Queers Theory.”

Mahesh Dattani’s encounters and engagements as a playwright have been deeply focused on bringing forward the category of the queer. His plays brilliantly portray the hollowness of the gender rules that prevail in society. He has charted out a unique trajectory to accomplish his voluntarily chosen task of lighting up the area of the queer. His magnificent theatrical techniques combined with the torrential dialogues sharply expose the hypocrisy of the middle and upper class life. He deeply enquires into the formation of queer identity in society through his plays. He examines the ways in which the powerful formulates the knowledge about alternative sexualities and genders and how the cumulative inheritance of this knowledge governs the life of the people.

Dattani chooses a variety of gender subordinates as his protagonists. He brilliantly articulates through his characters the traumatic lives of the homosexuals, the *hijras*, the lesbians and the men who cannot conform to the rules of masculinity as prescribed by the society. Despite the clever handling of the theme of alternative sexuality and gender, Dattani also interweaves within his plays the issue of subjugation of women in a patriarchal set up. Thus, his

works deeply penetrate into the layers of gender marginalization in society. He triumphantly presents this situation elucidating on the unnoticed ways in which certain genders including women are subjugated. He vividly portrays how the patriarchal and heteronormative society spreads its reign in such a way that the subordinated genders never feel their subordination, rather accept the subordination to be natural.

Deeply rooted in the poststructuralist context, Dattani's plays stand ardently against the Cartesian notion of identity as a coherent and fixed entity. His conception of the ideas of gender and sexuality beyond the binaries as set by the society locates his works within the frame of Derridian deconstructive strategies. Hence, his theatre makes ample space for a decent representation of the gender and sexual subalterns. He carefully carves out his characters to show that gender is a cultural construct and how an individual who fails to move according to gender roles assigned to him/her is identified a deviant in society.

Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* brims with the intricacies of patriarchy and heteronormativity. The play is divided into three acts titled "Women" (Act I), "Men" (Act II) and "Free for All" (III). The very first act "Women" introduces all the female characters of the play. The act gives a typical picture of women boasting each other about their wealth. The Trivedi sisters Dolly and Alka talk about their wealth and luxury to Lalitha who stands a step behind when compared to the Trivedi family. The sisters ignore Lalitha's presence in their residence. But Lalitha cleverly rises to the level of

the Trivedi women bragging about her various skills. The act also introduces the mother-in-law of the sisters Baa who is bedridden but often makes her presence felt through her frequent calls and bells for her daughters - in - law to attend her. The act makes a vivid picture of the cosy lives of the women, settled with all comforts in their lives.

The second act “Men” brings in the male characters who are busy with the launch of their new brand of lingerie “ReVaaTee.” They are portrayed as ardent patriarchs who give meagre consideration and care for their wives. Jiten and Nitin never bother to tell their wives (Dolly and Alka respectively) about the cancellation of the proposed outing. They do not feel the necessity to inform them and want them to understand it in the course of time. The influence of patriarchy becomes immensely felt when they even make a hold on women’s lingerie by introducing ReVaaTee, which is mainly targeted on men. They want men to buy it for women. The brand is supposed to trigger the erotic desires in men however dull mood they are in. The lust of men for women becomes more evident when they fetch a woman for the satisfaction of their desires. They forget about their wives at home, who longs for the companionship of their husbands.

The third act “Free for All” brings together all the characters. This act reveals in depth the mental agonies of each character who are neatly wrapped in a covering of false joy and satisfaction of material comforts in the other two acts. All the four women are major victims of terrifying male hegemony. Their

lives are highly confined within the four walls of their houses and they also face awful physical and mental harassments from their husbands. Dolly and Alka, who are also sisters, mention about the tortures from their brother Praful. In fact he tricked the Trivedi brothers marrying off his sisters to them. He lied to the Trivedis that their father was dead. Dolly and Alka never knew about this trick until the Trivedis later realized the truth that their father was still living with his wife and children. This formed an impetus for them to put more harassment on the sisters. Baa called them the daughters of whore and made Jiten to hit Dolly when she was carrying Daksha which made the child spastic. The sisters were blamed throughout for the mistake of their brother and were often harassed for this.

Despite these dreadful tortures, they straddle their distresses by creating their respective comfortable parallel worlds. Dolly builds the story of a fictitious Kanhaiya, the Trivedi servant, with whom she has fallen in love. Kanhaiya becomes an alternative for her husband who fails to keep her happy. She tells Lalitha that Daksha studies in Ooty and is a good dancer just to hide that her daughter is spastic. The dance she performs is actually physiotherapy. Alka resorts to consumption of alcohol in order to flee from the tyranny of her husband and to forget her worries of being childless. Her drunken dance in the rain indicates the freedom she has won against the bitter realities of life in her alternative world. She is called a drunkard by Jiten and Baa wants Nitin to discard her.

A closer look into the life of Baa reveals her frustrations and her sufferings at the hands of her husband. She does not want her sons to love their father. Her annoyance with her ruthless husband is reflected in her attitude towards her daughters-in-law. She wants them to suffer under their husbands as she was in her youth. She makes Jiten to hit Dolly during her pregnancy but she does not want to harass her granddaughter. When Jiten hits Dolly's belly, Baa prevents him from it and asks him to hit on her face. But unfortunately this physical torture makes a mark on the child (Daksha) leaving her spastic. She is also burdened with the heavy guilt of her granddaughter's disability which she tries to overcome by giving her wealth to spastic Daksha in her will.

A deeper search into Lalitha's life reveals her picture as a woman who leads a broken life under her husband's craze for job over his family. All her life is an adjustment with her husband to avoid unnecessary troubles. She is always lonely and finds other ways to move her life when her husband chases behind his job. When her true picture is unfolded the hollowness of everything about which she bragged to Dolly and Alka becomes evident. She even attributes human nature to her bonsai as she feels them as companions in her loneliness.

A thorough scrutiny of the men, Jiten, Nitin and Sridhar very well gives the picture of them entangled in financial crisis. According to Baa, Jiten is as arrogant as his father. He has inherited the trait of patriarchy from his father and turns mercilessly insolent towards his mother and wife. In his mad pursuit of money, he wants to sell his ancestral house and plans to forcefully make Baa

change her will. He wants the house to go to Nitin which makes him easy to sell it. In the final act, Dolly speaks to him about how she has suffered the verbal and physical tortures of her husband and mother-in-law. Her torrential words come out of her distress evoke heavy guilt in Jiten. Emotionally wrecked, he leaves the house immediately. Out of his agonies he runs his car over a beggar woman and kills her. Sridhar pays complete attention to his work which draws him away from his wife. But his inner turmoil is indeed revealed when he says he and his wife are saving for a flat. He enjoys sex with other woman, to escape from his inner conflicts. But this also contributes to his guilt and anxiety.

Nitin, the younger Trivedi brother, is comparatively an oppressed male who is indeed within the hold of his mother and brother. Towards the end of the play Nitin speaks to Alka when she is all alone and asleep on the sofa. He tells her how Praful tricked her in another way which she is not aware of. He thanks her for being a heavy sleeper as Praful and Nitin exploit the situation to carry out their relationship, a sexual relationship which the society has never accepted. Nitin says that though he was initially reluctant, Praful forced him for the marriage. Praful tells him that Alka is aware of their relationship and that she only wanted the security of a marriage. He tells sorry to her and blames Praful. Finally he moves towards her and covers her face and tells her not to wake up as he does not want her to see the powerful arms of the auto-driver in the outhouse around him. The play ends as Nitin exits to the kitchen. The spotlight falls on Alka's huddled figure. This painful scene brings out the turmoil of the hapless queer who longs for freedom. The existential agonies of

Nitin overwhelm the spectators/readers when he apologizes to Alka and blames Praful.

Dattani makes Nitin and Alka as the most affected victims of the heterosexual and the patriarchal orders. While he acknowledges the sufferings of Nitin in a heteronormative society, he also meticulously explores how these victims of social norms turn out to be victimizers. Alka becomes a victim of the sexual decorum of society when she misses out a consummation of a married life with a homosexual husband. She remains unaware of the game behind her marriage as she never comes to know about her husband's homosexuality. A gay is never free from the clutches of patriarchy. When Praful and Nitin exercise their patriarchal power, Alka becomes a victim of it. In order to escape from her frustrations, she resorts to alcoholism and creates an intoxicated parallel world of joy away from reality. Thus, the play becomes an exposition of a queer as a victim and a victimizer in society.

Bravely Fought the Queen very well manifests the poststructuralist stand of gender as a construct, and a notion which is susceptible to mediation, appropriation and relativism. Though homosexuals, Nitin and Praful apparently lead a perfect heterosexual life. Society's intolerance towards this so called odd sexuality compels them to hide their real sexualities. Consequently, Nitin and Praful are struck with enormous inner conflicts that gnaw them as well as their families. They cannot remain true to themselves or to the society for a peaceful life. But ironically when they conceal their homosexuality to get them accepted

in society various other troubles beat them down. Nitin who is a meek character is manipulated by Praful to maintain their relationship. He meekly succumbs to the manipulations of Praful and gets trapped in the marriage to Alka. Nitin and Alka very well know about their unsuccessful married life. Alka agrees that she has never been an ideal wife and also says that Nitin has never been a competent husband. Nitin's least consideration for her as his wife is evident in his conversations with Baa, when he says, "Alka can stay here, or go away, or drink herself to death, I don't care. It doesn't make a difference to me!" (CP 305). Alka is always blamed for drinking as no one knows that she drinks to overcome her dissatisfaction in life and the problems associated with her childlessness. Praful makes a strong control on the Trivedi family with lucrative financial assistance even as he draws a source for his satisfaction of sexual pleasures from the family. He ruthlessly makes his sister a scapegoat of his socially unacceptable sexuality. His inability to lead a life of his choice forms the root cause of his rudeness.

All the characters in the play one way or the other lead awfully desperate and discontented lives. The women, despite their frustrations, manage peace in the family. The uncaring attitude of Praful and Nitin towards their family is in fact a means to combat their agitated psyche. The playwright makes the characters stagger at the edges of ideology that governs society. He makes the platform of *Bravely Fought the Queen* a perfect site to expose the ontological crisis engendered by the gender norms in society. Dolly, Alka, Lalitha and Baa accept their social status as women and never break the chains of patriarchy

that bind their lives. They fight bravely like the Rani of Jhansi against the male hegemony. A similar picture is visible in the lives of Praful and Nitin who conceal their real sexuality as it goes against the heteronormative norms of society. The characters in fact fear to break the ideology that determines their life. The mental agonies of all the characters in the play, in fact result from their inability to live according to their innate traits.

Dattnai has well crafted the play with excellent theatrical techniques which make the spectators well understand the hollowness of gender and sexual norms. The poorly maintained luxurious décor of the household implies the luxuries of the lives of the characters plunged into gloominess. The large windows of the house suggest their urge to escape their confined lives. Dolly's mud-mask and the masked ball indicate the masked lives of the characters. She fears that the mask would crack when she laughs. The musical background of Naina Devi's *Thumris* hints at the mood of resistance in the play -- the resistance to gender and sexual norms which hinder the proper development of an individual. Lalitha's bonsai indicates the stunted development of the characters - they are cut and pruned according to what is regarded as normal in society. The wretched woman at the gate of the Trivedi household suggests the mental agonies of the characters. The incomplete conversation in the first act meets its completion in the third. By doing so the playwright elucidates on the fragmented identities of individuals and the confusion prevailing in their lives.

Through the skilful employment of the theatrical techniques Dattani presents on stage the shared space of marginalization between women and homosexuals. Through the characters Praful and Nitin Dattani points out the epistemological and ontological possibilities of the non-heterosexual "Other". The play points out the disorientations in the generally accepted sexual identities and critiques heteronormativity. The playwright brings together two categories of gender subalterns in society -- the female and the homosexual to underscore gender and sexuality as cultural constructs. He has carefully weaved out the characters in such a way that they show gender and sexuality not as stable categories and refigures the notion of identity as multiple.

On A Muggy Night in Mumbai is another stage play by Dattani which locates the notion of gender and sexuality in a poststructuralist context. He brings together a group of homosexuals who are confined to their respective style of living -- a gay life amidst the awfully adverse social ambience for their survival. The characters Kamlesh, Ed, Sharad, Bunny, Renjit, Kiran and the gatekeeper of the flat are pathetic victims of the gender patterning of society. The play centres on Kamlesh, a gay who is attempting to recover from the break-up of his relationship with Prakash (Ed). Their relationship has broken down due to the heterosexual patterning of society which has triggered in Prakash the necessity to transform into a heterosexual. He has taken the advice of a psychiatrist and is preparing to marry Kamlesh's sister Kiran. He has taken the name Ed along with his new sexual identity. Kiran is indeed supportive for his brother's homosexuality, but is unaware of his former relationship with Ed.

Kamlesh favours the marriage as he wants the joy of Kiran who is a divorcee, and also of his former partner Ed. Kamlesh is anguished due to his break-up with Prakash. He attempts a new relationship with Sharad which also fails because of his obsession with Kamlesh.

In the course of the play Kiran comes to know about the former relationship of Kamlesh with Ed through a photograph. She is shattered when she finds that both men whom she loves so dearly have deceived her. Ed on this occasion reveals that his main motive behind marriage was to continue his relationship with Kamlesh. As his brother-in-law, it is not difficult for him to meet Kamlesh and he would also live with his beloved Kiran. On realizing that Kiran is greatly disappointed with the relationship of Kamlesh and Ed, Ed attempts suicide by jumping from the flat. But he is grabbed back by a group of friends during which a fight takes place between Ed and Kamlesh. The play closes on us when this small fight ends and everyone leaves for their places. The playwright cleverly creates a situation to reflect on the repression of sexuality, which points out that society is never tolerant to alternative sexualities. The central issue of the play is how it affects the individual's psyche and forces one to play the game of deceit. Dattani presents a disquieting enigma which stubbornly asserts itself for validation. It is not about licentiousness, but it is all about identity and freedom of sexuality.

Living with a concealed identity to be in track with society, the queer is often a victim of heavy mental trauma. This concealment of identity is solely

due to the queer's craving for a normal life in the society and to maintain social relationships. In the play the two suicide attempts of Prakash testify to his depressed state as his sexual orientation goes against the fundamental prohibition that prevails in society. When Kamlesh fails to live with Sharad he takes the treatment of a psychiatrist in order to liberate him from his depression and loneliness. The doctor seems to understand Kamlesh until he suggests the aversion therapy. He realizes that the psychiatrist is not a wise choice when the latter tells him that he would never be happy as a gay man. He asks Kamlesh to reorient himself as it is impossible to change society. The psychiatrist represents the so called normal man in society who adheres to the stereotypical attitudes which, according to Foucault, psychiatrize perverse pleasure. They confine within the circle of a set of actions which are registered as moral. Such definitions of moral conduct displace the alternative genders and sexualities in society. Foucault argues that "for an action to be "moral," it must not be reducible to an act or a series of acts conforming to a rule, a law, or a value" (*History Vol 2* 28). For him, the moral action is largely a product of the reality in which it is carried out and its relationship with the self. The relationship with the self is not merely an awareness of self. It is also the self formation by which an individual demarcates his perceptions on moral practice which would serve as his moral goal. There is no moral action that constitutes a unified moral conduct. It cannot be separated from the forms of self - activity.

Another queer character whom Dattani introduces in the play is Bunny, the television actor who thrives in a shroud of hypocrisy. Despite being a gay,

he lives happily with his wife and children. He knows that he is lying to himself and he admits that the person whom his wife loves does not exist. He lies to millions of people when he appears in his serials. He is, as Renjit puts it, “a closet homosexual” who laments about his plight of masking his real self in order to live in society comfortably. Dattani questions the concept of morality and the modes of subjectivation. Here Bunny represents a morally upright person in society but he cannot escape from the trauma of violating moral codes that subject him to alienation. Here the emphasis is on the technologies of the self which tries in vain to experience wholeness through the domain of moral valuation and choices.

Dattani makes Sharad and Deepali as characters who accept their alternative sexuality and gender. Though Sharad is presented as a gay, Dattani makes him appear an effeminate man. His ambiguous gender is clearly evident from his ‘sindhoor’ and bangles of a woman, which become part of his dressing. In his living together gay relationship with Kamlesh he takes up the role of a housewife. He arranges the kitchen and does everything for Kamlesh. Though he admits that he is as “gay as a goose”, in the later phase of the play, he too expresses his wish to be a heterosexual, the “real man.” He would then be accepted in society simply because he is a heterosexual. He then would have a wife and children who would adore and love him, simply because he is a heterosexual. According to him, embracing heterosexuality means becoming a “king” who possesses immense power. He looks at the “kings” outside. They enjoy power, the male power, the penile power - the power with sex - which is

absolutely above the power of a gay. He admits that to enjoy all these, a change in his sexual orientation is desirable.

Deepali whom Sharad calls Dyke didi seems to be living happily with Tina. Though the playwright presents her as a good friend of Kamlesh, he does not go deeper into her life to locate her among her family and society. Thus nothing is known about the troubles she faces (if any) as a lesbian. Renjit, popularly known as “coconut” is another homosexual friend of Kamlesh. He has flown to London as he finds the place more favourable to his erotic pleasures. He has been living there comfortably with his English lover for twelve years.

The context highlights erotic pleasures as transcultural. In this regard, as Jeffery Week remarks that society plays a key role in moulding erotic possibilities of body (*Sexuality* 18). Samuel. R. Delany’s sexual experiences across different regions underscore the unstable nature of sexuality. Renjit finds India a wretched country, a country least conducive to live as a homosexual. He admits that he cannot be both Indian and gay at the same time. The name coconut came to him because of his brown skin and the white life he has taken up. He finds comfort in the coolness of air-conditioner and does not want it to get contaminated by the air outside. He tells Sharad to close the door so that the air within the flat would not get spoiled by the air outside. He actually refers to the heterosexual world outside (the institution of marriage) when he tells the “muck outside”. He also means the muggy atmosphere in India which

does not permit the complete development of individuals, especially of those people with alternative sexuality. For him, the aversion therapy suggested by the psychiatrist is “primitive.” He feels terribly uncomfortable when the air-conditioner stops working. He feels the atmosphere too stuffy, revealing a person’s suffocation in leading a life which is not his choice. These characters represent dislocated lives and the play illustrates how the structural forms of power in society constitute their own roles and theories of sexuality. This creates ceaseless struggles and marginalizes individuals and forces them to conform to the general institutional roles and designs. Power is certainly, as Foucault points out, is a name that is attributed to a complex strategical situation in a patriarchal society.

Dattani along with a world of queer community juxtaposes a heterosexual world. The wedding ceremony is such a strategic device to mark the heterosexual world. Though he does not present any scenes from the wedding, the sound of the celebrations presented throughout the play lays the power of the heteronormative world. This juxtaposition indicates the lower position of alternative sexuality in the hierarchy. While the wedding is colourfully celebrated with music, the private controversial world of the queer (Kamlesh’s flat) also resonates with music: the music which they play for a mental relief or the blaring music as in the beginning which signifies the inner turmoil of the queer. The celebrative mood of the wedding indicates the bountiful freedom of the heteronormative which comes out of the power they enjoy in society. The so called real men and women celebrate wedding outside

while the queer community devoid of the right to marry crave for a normal life in society. Act III of the play, which begins with the discussion of marriage emphasizes the queer community's way of life. Though they differ in their ways of life, they are bonded together in the common thread of powerlessness. Some of them prefer to live comfortably with their gay identity while some others conceal it living happily with wife and children. Renjit represents that category of gays who leave for a place where there is more freedom and acceptance for queer.

The desire of the gays to transform into straight and their disguised straight lives is greatly backed by their hunger to lead a contented and normal life as that of heterosexuals. Under the social presumption that the queer is the deviant "Other" in the hetero/homo binary, people with alternative sexualities and genders are doomed to be a marginalized communities. Such circumstances compel the people like Prakash and Bunny in the play to be false hetero denying their own self. Their wish to embrace heteronormativity to become the so called normal becomes evident when Ed says:

Look around you. Look outside. Look at the wedding crowd! There are real men and women out there! You have to see them to what I mean. But you don't want to. You don't want to look at the world outside this...this den of yours. All of you want to live in your own little bubble. (CP 99)

Ed here actually points to the cloistered and the secret lives of the queer in India.

Dattani's presentation of his favourite theme of gender marginalization in the play becomes sharper and clearer through his stage techniques. The entire play takes place in Kamlesh's flat which is absolutely a cosy private space for the queer, away from the "Other" world of heteronormativity. The playwright meticulously puts a key role for music in the play to externalise the internal emotions of the characters. The blaring music becomes a symbolization of the chaotic minds of the gays. They also find music as a means of mental relaxation as they play various songs and sometimes dance to the rhythms. Sharad frequently hums the song "What Makes A Man Man," which he describes as "our anthem," the anthem of the queer. The song makes the point relevant, whether it is the individuality of a man or the social decorum that constitutes a man. When Sharad sings it, it also underscores the gender ambiguity he faces.

All the characters are well packed with experiences that are beyond the expectations of the society. Dattani skilfully manages to draw all of them together on the stage to bring out the conflicts, repressions and past secrets that burn their minds. The muggy night in the title of the play implies the damp and warm life of the queer, which they try to overcome by hiding their queer identity. The hypocrisy often fails when trauma creeps on them out of their distresses. This hypocrisy and its failure are implied by the working of the air-conditioner. The proper working of the air-conditioner suggests the success of his hypocrisy and its failure indicates his failure put on the mask well.

At the end of the play, as John McRae remarks, the audience goes through the classic cathartic emotions of pity and terror (CP 46), when the music and the festive mood of the wedding goes on in stark contrast with the music of mental turmoil within the flat. The characters become devoid of their masks and the stage brims with the emotions unleashed. There is complete degeneration for which the entire society - the one which prohibits certain sexualities and genders, denying proper identity to many and thus instigating hypocrisy - is responsible.

Do the Needful a romantic comedy is a radio play. In the play Dattani deals with the theme of homosexuality against the backdrop of Indian system of arranged marriages. The story of the play revolves around two families, a Gujarati Patel and a Kannadiga Gowda, who are arranging a marriage alliance between their wards. The marriage sounds tremendously strange in the context of Indian society where endogamy rules matrimony. As the play unfolds, it reveals that the Patel son Alpesh is a gay and he is in a relationship with another man Trilok. The Gowda girl Lata is in love with a man, Salim, who is apparently a terrorist. All the game behind the choice of exogamous marital relationship is thus a desperate attempt of the families to set their children “straight.”

Tension hangs around the entire play because of the protagonists’ strange relationships which the society cannot tolerate. But unlike *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *On A Muggy Night in Mumbai*, Dattani manages to detain the play

from gliding completely into the distressed lives of the characters. He cleverly entwines the joyful mood of wedding arrangements which indeed form a comic relief for the listeners/readers. Alpesh and Lata get ample opportunities to know each other while the parents are deeply engaged in discussing the marriage. They find in them one thing common that is the lack of interest for a married life. The only trouble that haunts the boy and the girl to withdraw from the proposal is that they cannot say “no” to their families.

A badly bewildered Lata decides to run away with Trilok during night. But before she leaves her place she discovers Alpesh with Mali (a local boy) in a baffling context which lights up in her the “queerness” of both the men. The men are shocked and embarrassed. Lata has promised to keep it a secret and tells her plans to run away with Salim. Mali never lets her go as he does not want any shame to come to her family. He strongly suggests her to marry Alpesh telling her that he is a good man. Mali’s words turn out to be a bright light on Lata to do the needful to bring an improper, but a proper solution to their perplexity. She meticulously plots a solution out of Alpesh’s Hindi expression: “Teri bhi chup, meri bhi chup” (CP 142) (your silence and mine as well). Though Alpesh is initially reluctant, they have decided to get married to please their families as well as to continue their secret relationships. Alpesh asks Lata whether she would bring Mali as dowry. Soon the play shifts to the splendid wedding reception arranged by the Gowdas and the Patels. The party takes place in a grand manner but the bride and the groom are seen lost in each

of their own worlds thinking about their secret partners. At the end of the play, after the marriage Alpesh and Lata leave for an outing. But once they come out of the flat they leave in two directions to meet their partners and plan to meet together in the evening to get back to their place. The situation makes us ponder the hollowness and meaninglessness of the so called moral values which in fact deny a proper life for the people.

In *Do the Needful*, the playwright has meticulously embedded the seriousness of the situation between the brisk ambiences of the wedding arrangements. The characters too easily hide their offbeat lives to pursue the lives of their choices. Dattani makes the listeners/readers understand the emotional crisis of the characters from the sound of hustle and bustle of the traffic in the beginning of the play. This indicates their disturbed minds and thoughts.

The homosexuality of Alpesh forces him into an abject position and thus he is completely plunged into a closeted life. He is forced to conceal his real sexual identity in order to keep his family honour. He is caught within the powerful clutches of heteronormative subjectivity. It is his family's fear of their son slipping into a socially prohibited sexual track that makes them arrange a normal marriage. The subject locates the queer life in "unlivable" and "uninhibited" zones of social life. The subjects in fact contain in them the fear of entering this prohibited area and limit their social space within their boundary. The queer is thus pushed to the periphery of the society and is

barred entry into their autonomous space. But according to the principles of deconstruction, it is the abject that makes the platform for the subject. The situation emboldens the notion of binary oppositions where the existence of the subject greatly depends upon the abject. Subject exists because there is an abject. The exclusive space for the subject is demarcated because there is an abject. The queer being an abject determines the epistemological and ontological possibilities of the heteronormative subjects. Moreover, there is always an inherent threat embedded within the unconscious of the heteronormative subjects about the abject queer conquering them - the very reason why they strongly hold the control over the abject.

In the play Alpesh wins over the subjects when he deceives his family and gets married to Lata. This indicates the latent urge in the abject to rise against the overpowering of the subject. But this victory of the queer is bound in a shroud of moral failure as uncertainty in the life of Alpesh continues. Hypocrisy rules both the subject and the abject emphasizing the hollowness of the lives pruned according to social norms. Life thus becomes a game of bluff for both the subjects and the abjects. The sexuality of Alpesh largely becomes a constructed one when he is forcefully assigned with a socially patterned life, which is starkly in contrast to his innate sexuality. The play emphasizes the notions of gender and sexuality as solely the constructions of the powerful. Dattani thus highlights the meaninglessness of the social norms of gender and sexuality, which plunges the individual lives into chaos.

Seven Steps Around the Fire, a stage play, is yet another meritorious achievement of Dattani where he probes into the politics of gender and sexuality. He marvellously lifts the curtain of the *hijra* life dumped in the filthy, darker and alienated areas of society. Eunuchs are coeval with the world. But their presence and status are marginalized by the accepted and the prominent two categories of gender, the male and the female. An attempt to destabilize the existing notions of gender is marked by internal ambiguity. Though the sexual difference is visibly marked by certain body parts, the eunuchs present incompleteness in the existing system of gender binary. The disruption and fracture in their gender make them a part of the queer.

The play testifies to the fact that if a *hijra* is loved, it amounts to his/her tragedy. Kamla, the *hijra*, who loves Subbu, a minister's son, and who secretly marries him is burnt to death by the minister. Her body is thrown into a pond and is found by a passer-by. The minister soon arranges a marriage for his son with an acceptable girl. Subbu, who loved Kamla sincerely, is not ready for the marriage arranged by his father. At the marriage he gets to know the entire truth behind the murder of Kamla and manages to get Suresh's (the jail Superintendent) gun and commits suicide shooting himself. The murder of Kamla is easily hushed up by the political forces and there is no proper investigation. The death of Subbu is written off as an accident.

The play develops through the character of Uma Rao, a research scholar, whose topic for the research is class/gender based power implications. She is

the wife of the jail Superintendent Suresh Rao, the daughter-in-law of the Deputy Commissioner of Police and the daughter of a Vice-chancellor. She becomes immensely interested in the murder case of the *hijra*, Kamla for which, Anarkali, another *hijra* of her community is falsely arrested. Despite her elite family background Uma meets Anarkali in jail and visits the *hijra* quarters to meet other *hijras* to extract more clues about the truth of the murder.

She amazes everyone with the usage of the pronoun “she” for the *hijras* when others prefer “it” for this category of blurred sexual identity. Though they are human beings, they are denied the status of human beings. She asks Suresh the reason why Anarkali is put in a male prison to which he replies: “They are all strong horses” (CP 237). He is reluctant to have a check-up of his sperm count- as part of the treatment for the couple for being childless - because he attributes impotency to *hijras* and not with a full blooded man like him. For him *hijras* are “castrated degenerate men” (CP 238).

Uma through her interactions with the *hijra* community discovers a strong bond of ‘sisterhood’ between them. They treat Uma as their sister and bless her to have children. Uma’s ability to sharply cut through the psyche of the *hijras* has enabled her to clear the smog that hides their innocence in the murder of Kamla. She asks Champa the reasons for the minister’s body guard Salim’s visits to their place. But Champa is reluctant to tell her that he has come for the photograph of Subbu and Kamla taken after their marriage. The minister has sent him to get it destroyed. Champa tells her:

Champa. I-I cannot say all that. You are the police and . . .

Uma. And?

Champa. We cannot speak . . . When we want to speak nobody listens. When we cannot speak . . . (CP 259)

The words of Champa stress the position of *hijras* as gender subalterns whose voice is strongly suppressed by the powerful. Uma, a childless woman, is the only one in the play who understands *hijras* as human beings and she finds that what she wants is what the *hijras* also long for. She in fact was able to get the throb of the shared feelings of the *hijra* community and hers. Her voice-over also elucidates her joy, despite being a lady from the higher stratum of society in having blessed by the *hijra*, Anarkali, to have children.

Venturing out into the lives of the eunuchs, the playwright aims to explore the two ways by which they are forced to live a cursed life: their inability to fulfil the sex roles assigned and their inability to develop human bonds. *Hijras'* sexual identity marks an underlined deception. By unravelling the curtain of the life of *hijras*, Dattani explores beyond the binary of male/female sexual divisions. This strange sexual identity, which keeps the *hijras* away from the centre stage, develops hatred and contempt towards this community. They are least regarded as part of society, and any kind of relationship among *hijras* is never recognized. Though an outcast in Indian society their presence and blessings are often preferred on the occasions of marriages and births, the very two rights which are denied to them. The play

comments: “Not for them the seven rounds witnessed by the fire God, eternally binding man and woman in matrimony, or the blessings of ‘May you be the mother of a hundred sons’” (CP 239-240). According to Anindya Battacharya, the play “is a tale of violated hospitality and denied justice (186). The play illustrates how sexuality is denied to the *hijras* who are treated as sexless subhuman species.

As the queer, eunuchs are always constructed in opposition to the institution of family, heterosexuality and reproduction. Thus they are located far away from the centre stage of the society. The location of the residence of Champa behind Russel Market in Shivajinagar far away from the main city indicates the position of *hijras* in society. The cramped quarters of the *hijras* and the rusty tin case symbolize the hopeless compact life of the *hijras*. In the final scene of the play the spotlight falls on Uma who is at the centre and the *hijras* are seen dancing in slow motion. They are seen in shadows at the periphery away from Uma. The scene portrays the centre space of the society which is reserved for the powerful elite who defines the life of the marginalized to be at the periphery. The technique of voice-over is another means through which the playwright brings out Uma’s contemplations on the plight of the *hijras* and the power implications in society.

Through his play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* Dattani unravels the layers of power domination that fold *hijra* lives in deep dissolution. He problematises the male/female gender binary by bringing forward the question of the gender

position of the *hijras*. He once again underscores sex, gender and sexuality as unstable categories and reconfigures identity as multiple, unstable positions. The play indeed stands testimony to the mismatches between sex, gender and sexual desire. The playwright emphasizes the role of power in the construction of gender and deconstructs the powerful, opening up their hypocrisy.

All the above four plays of Dattani are primarily anchored on the notion of alternative sexualities. A close analysis of these plays clearly reveal the odd time and space in which the queer life takes place. In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Nitin and Praful carry out their relationship when Alka is asleep. The play ends at night and it is the time Nitin chooses to meet the auto-driver who has come to the outhouse. They fix their meeting place at the outhouse, which stands separate from the main house. The entire play *On A Muggy Night in Mumbai* takes place within the confined area of Kamlesh's flat. The binoculars with which they view the world outside indicate that the queer world is far away from society. In *Do the Needful*, Alpesh and Mali involve in a relationship during night when everyone sleeps. The location of *hijra* quarters in *Seven Steps Around the Fire* away from the main area of society is another evidence for the location of the queer life being forcefully kept outside the frame of heteronormativity. The "perverse" queer is forced to conceal their real identities and lead a dampened life away from the mainstream society. Dattani's plays stand distinctive in bringing forward this concealed life of the queer, exposing the facade of hypocrisy that binds the heteronormative life. Hence, both the heteronormative and the queer lead a veiled life. Being the

accepted mode of sexual behaviour the heteronormative enjoys the privilege of the mainstream. But the queer as the cultural “Other,” is pushed away to the periphery. Thus the queer gets branded as the ugly and is driven away to the abandoned areas of time and space.

In the play *Dance Like a Man*, the playwright transpires on another aspect of the queer: the gender ambiguity. The play breaks the general presumption that gender issues pertain only to the marginalized genders – the female and the queer community. Dattani makes an incisive exploration into the construction of the “male” in society. He meticulously inverts the picture of “male” as the powerful in gender hierarchy. Patriarchy is unveiled as a frame of oppression not only for the queer and the female but also for the male. The entire spotlight of the play falls on the character Jairaj who adopts dance as his career in a society where it is regarded as a woman’s profession. He lacks the socially prescribed roles of masculinity which makes him a pervert in his family and society.

Jairaj is the most poignant character in the play. However, in his attempt to develop himself as a dancer he meets with his deterioration. He is terribly caught between the principles of “manliness” as kept by his father and the career of his wife. Amritlal an ardent patriarch ever wants his son to be a dancer. For him, dance is a “craft of a prostitute to show off her wares” (CP 406). Moreover, dance is a woman’s career and hence he does not like his son to be a dancer and resents growing his hair like his master Guruji. In this context, Amritlal’s words are noteworthy: “A woman in a man’s world may be

considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman's world is pathetic" (CP 427). Standing firmly on a gender specific stereotypical foundation, Amritlal finds his son an aberrant in society. Ratna, Jairaj's wife, is the most dominating character in the play. Her immense passion and fascination for dance makes her cleverly choose Jairaj as her life partner as he would let her pursue her career. Her least concern for Jairaj's passion for dance is sharply evident when she enters into an agreement with her father-in-law to hamper the development of his dancing career even after marriage. On Amritlal's offer to support her to stay in her career, she has agreed to gradually push Jairaj down as a dancer. She then begins to assign him items that he is incapable of handling/performing. This projects him as an unsuitable dancer. Ratna's malicious nature is highlighted when she manipulates Jairaj to dance under her shadow. She even arranges the lights on the stage in such a manner that Jairaj is spotted only as a secondary dancer on the stage. Jairaj recalls in the play that she used to call him names that he is ashamed to repeat in public. Ratna always blames Jairaj for his poor performance as a dancer and of course, as a "man." In the later stages of their life she even goes to the extreme step of telling that her husband is a "spineless boy who couldn't leave his father's house for more than forty-eight hours" (CP 402). According to her, he has ceased to be a man when he returns back to Amritlal Parekh's house. She even raises the question: "What kind of a man are you?" (CP 443).

Jairaj becomes a wretched victim of the turbulent winds of his father's and his wife's selfish interests. He reveals the chaos within him while having a

drink with his daughter's fiancé, Viswas. He tells Viwsas how he is degraded by his father for learning an art form which the latter considers a prostitute's profession. He dismisses Viswas's comment "brave" for fighting against his father to achieve his passion. For him, the applause "brave" remains only a word as his manliness is questioned of by his wife after living forty years with him. He says that the ancestral bungalow in which he lives is his world, where he spent his childhood. He removed the memories of his father removing the gardens he had maintained.

Jairaj finally takes to alcohol as a relief from his mental trauma which is also criticized by Ratna. The final scene of the play reveals the most tragic character of the play, Sankar, the son of Jairaj and Ratna, who had been silenced and ruined as a result of the over ambitious and careerist attitude of his mother and because of the lack of manliness on the part of his father. He lost his life under the careless hands of his ayah, when his mother was busy with her performances and his father was immersed in alcohol. Jairaj wished to teach him the dance of Siva, which he says is the dance of a "man". He also dreamt of making his son perform *tandava nritya* on Amritlal's head, as the lord of the dance, beating his drum and trampling on the demon. Shankar has been an ever burning topic among the dancing couple. They are haunted by the guilt of causing fatal injury to their child because of their selfishness and negligence. The guilt hangs heavily on their shoulders. Shankar's death in the play signifies the tragic consequences of a man being denied a position he deserves in society.

The play throws light on gender identity as a social construct. Society attributes dance as a female's profession and any man proficient in it is stigmatized as one who lacks the manly qualities as set by the society. Jairaj's passion towards dance and Guruji with long hairs and his feminine way of walking do not prevent them from being males. But as their living styles are inclined to the living styles of women prescribed by the society, they are viewed with despise for their socially distorted male identities. They often become laughing stocks for their feminine charms. Jairaj has well realized that his life as a social man is an utter failure. He therefore wished to teach his son the dance of Siva. Society thus compels a man to dance according to the manliness defined by it. Individuals are forced to dance according to the whims and fancies of the society and any deviant spotted is declared an outcast. Dattani in *Dance Like A Man* dismantles man as more powerful in gender hierarchy. He shatters the patriarchal constructs of "man" and "manliness". In this context Jonathan Kemp in his article "Schreber and the Penetrated Man" also observes:

. . . neat and stable confines of the concept of 'man' - no longer a universal, unmarked and neutral monolith but a flux of radical jouissance, a surface shot through with holes into which and out of which sensations flow, deterritorializing masculine subjectivity and locating the penetrated/penetrable male body as a condition of territorialized male subjectivity. (*Deleuze and Queer Theory* 150)

He means that the male body is the territory of male subjectivity. But the protagonist's masculine subjectivity is challenged and subordinated to the feminine subjectivity of his wife. The resultant effect of the play is a reversal of gender role bordering on gender ambiguity. The feminine gender has penetrated into the masculine gender making the male protagonist a victim of gender ambiguity.

The patriarchal and the heteronormative society form the sole factor for the formation of the category of gender subalterns. Foucault posits that the powerful in society determine the social norms and the individuals are trained to live according to these norms. As Butler argues, gender and sexuality become performances as the life of each individual gets moulded according to the gender norms in society. Thus, a female is trained to be a female repressing the masculine traits in her. Similarly, heteronormativity being the accepted mode of sexuality, the homosexual traits of every individual is repressed in the course of his/her moulding into a socially fit individual. Any deviation from this gender and sexual norms is regarded abnormal/taboo. Those who cannot stick to the norms are branded deviants in society.

Dattani's plays - deep rooted in the deconstructive strategies - critique the essentialist notion of gender. Replete with characters who mask their homosexuality for a proper life in society, his plays throw light on the absurdity of gender norms. Such individuals live as self-exiled outsiders from their own self. They confine themselves to stereotypes, deprived of the

complete development of their self. They embody the futility of patterning gender and sexuality of an individual to suit the societal interests. The playwright with his simple language suitable to all walks of life and cleverly manipulated stage techniques channel his plays to trigger a more democratic gender system. He marshals his plays to challenge the totalizing gender norms in society, bringing onto the stage the realities of the gender subalterns. Portraying the queer as at once a victim and as a victimizer, Dattani's plays enlighten the society on the meaninglessness of gender/sexual binary.

Chapter IV

Discoursing the Queer:

A Study of Power, Knowledge and Hegemony in Dattani's Plays

Minor sexualities refer to the practices of sexual minorities who are discriminated on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. An understanding of these people as minorities has gained prominence in the West since the nineteenth century. The term minority is resented by progressive groups as it invites some inherent implications of legislation and is vehemently opposed by political governments guided by phallogocentric world views. The queers or LGBTs prefer the term alternative sexualities which point to a political alternative to the hegemonic and patriarchally-oriented heterosexuality. The resistance to heteronormativity and the political alternative to its hegemonic structures are conveyed through the term alternative sexualities. It conveys the idea that such forms of sexualities are counter-hegemonic wherein the sexual relations are based on equity or at least political expediency. As an alternative to mainstream sexuality, alternative sexualities followed by minoritarian groups have been marginalized in discourses and cultural critiques. But as forms of sexuality, minor/alternative sexualities are discursively produced and circulated challenging the epistemic structures of heteronormativity.

The queer is increasingly accepted in the discursive realm with the emergence of postmodernist discourses. The modernists view discourses as

natural products of common sense or progress. Therefore, in the modernist view the queer is hardly receptive to practical life. Moreover, in the modernist view truth or reality is unipolar and is represented in terms of certainty and predictability. Thus, in modernist discourses manifold forms of truth or myriad versions of reality are excluded. It is therefore natural that modernist discourses cannot reproduce alternative forms of sexuality as politically expedient or as forms of counter-culture or resistance. With the emergence of postmodernist discourses in the 1960s unipolar truth claims, absolute reality, singular subjectivity and integrated texts are challenged. The postmodernists contend that truth and knowledge are plural, contextual and historically produced through discourses. The postmodernists have proved this by analyzing discourses like knowledge, history, power, culture and ideology. They explore the ideological and ontological contexts of discourses and relate them to power and knowledge which have analogous structures.

In the poststructuralist view, discourse is a regulated system of statements, ideas and practices. It provides modes of representing particular forms of knowledge which are used to shape a subjective sense of the self. According to poststructuralists, the social organization of discourse is based on identically structured paradigms of power and knowledge. Language is also a semiotic system which is related to analogues like power and knowledge. In poststructuralist view, discourse not only attempts to structure reality/truth, but also explores to identify patterns of power in them. In the discursive construction of gender, gender/sexual identity is represented in terms of power

relations. In Foucault's view discourse is connected to consciousness. The truth claims of gender/sexuality are filtered through the consciousness of the writer and mediated through discourses.

Poststructuralism deconstructs the bipolar structure of signs. It deconstructs the binaries by unravelling their hidden referents in which one is emphasized and the other is denigrated. Poststructuralism reveals that the binary opposites do not have any real basis in biology, nature or reason. Michel Foucault has made significant contributions to the study of discourse. He has challenged the preconceived notions of gender, sexuality, subjectivity and language through his study of discourses. Foucault has formulated three different but interrelated approaches to the study of discourse. The first is archaeological method which discusses historical changes in discursive systems in relation to consequent changes in the culture's perception of reality. He has explained this method in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Order of Things*. In these works, Foucault explains how epistemic structures have historically evolved. The second approach is genealogical where he has explained changes in discursive systems in relation to changes in non-discursive systems of social power structures. Foucault sees the changes in non-discursive practices as caused by a number of minute and unconnected facts evoked by Nietzsche in his concept of genealogy. The genealogical approach emphasizes the essential connection between knowledge and power. According to Foucault, bodies of knowledge are not autonomous structures; rather, they are connected but not reducible to systems of social control. This

essential connection of power and knowledge reflects Foucault's view that power is not merely repressive, but is a creative and a dangerous source of positive values. Although systems of knowledge can express objective truth, they are always connected to the structures of power. This connection can produce bodies of knowledge about the objects they control. But this knowledge may go beyond its objectivity and even threaten the system of domination from which it arises. Foucault explains this approach in his works like *The History of Sexuality, Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish*. The third approach is technological and it deals with the relationship between power, knowledge and subjectivity. Power becomes a problematic subject of study when Foucault makes an extensive analysis of power in relation to knowledge and subject positions. Subjectivity is determined by positions of power within discourses. Foucault explains this approach in *Power/Knowledge* and articles like "Technologies of the Self" and "Of Other Spaces."

Foucault's study of discourse is essentially related to the concept of discipline as a branch of knowledge and as an institution of social control. It is therefore obvious that his key ideas power, knowledge and discourse are interrelated. Foucault thinks of discourse in terms of bodies of knowledge. His use of the concept deviates from the conventional concept of discourse as a linguistic construct and gravitates towards the concept of discipline. In *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault specifically differentiates his conception of discourse from that of "speech-act theory," which is an extreme version of formalism. He argues that a discourse constrains or enables textual practices

within specific historical limits. In this context, Foucault observes in *The Order of Things*: “Once the existence of language has been eliminated all that remains is its function in representation: its nature and virtues as discourse. For discourse is merely representation itself represented by verbal signs” (90). Foucault emphasizes the indispensable position of language in discourses. He argues that there is an identifiable and distinguishable mode of discourse for each institution or each practice.

According to Foucault, the most productive way of conceiving a discourse is as a textual practice that systematically forms the object which it represents. Foucault observes that discourse refers to the “structuring of knowledge, modes of thoughts, social institutions and fields of practice in ways that reinforce particular relations of power and forms of subjectivity” (qtd. in Mills, Foucault 60). Foucault means that any textual practice that consolidates certain relations of power and certain forms of subjectivity can be called a discourse. In *Order of Things*, Foucault concedes the difficulty to specify the terms “discourse” and “statement” and resolves it by considering statement as a unit of discourse and/or a unit of language (80). Foucault argues that a statement is not strictly a unit, but a function that operates vertically in relation to various other units. It enables one to signify through a series of signs present or absent in the discourse. He explains in *The Order of Things*: [Statement is] not itself a unit, but a function that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space” (86). Therefore, statements can be understood not as fixed components, but only through the rules which govern their functioning as

“historically variable bodies of knowledge (86). According to Foucault, discourses always function in relation to power and there are different forms of discourses depending on the disciplines, institutions and contexts.

In contemporary cultural critique, discourse is an ideologically or culturally institutionalized mode of representation. According to Foucault, it is essential to consider the factors like truth, power and knowledge while analyzing discourse as a practice of an representation. As a poststructuralist, Foucault rejects the view of truth as an ideal, abstract quality. He observes that truth is not singular but plural. Society produces truths through discourses. Foucault points to the practice of excluding certain forms of knowledge from the realm of truth. He cites the example of alternative medicine. He observes that a great deal of epistemological exercise and discursive practice are wasted to construct alternative medicine as an inferior discourse. Similarly, in the discourses of gender and sexuality the male gender or heterosexuality is constructed as the dominant discourse, marginalizing other genders and other forms of sexuality. Thus, Foucault illustrates the mechanics through which one system of knowledge is constructed as the dominant discourse and another as marginal discourse. The latter is treated with scepticism and driven to the peripheral space of epistemological practice. This process may be called the mechanics of subversive signification wherein a discourse is signified and subverted for political ends. America’s war on terror declared in the context of 9/11 terrorist attacks exemplify a perfect process of subversive signification. Here the discourse and discursive practices are subordinated to political authority

outside the discourse and textually unrelated to the discourse. Political appropriation of the discourse is carried out through trans-disciplinary practices like media and advertisement. For example, on the eve of the American invasion of Iraq in 1990 *The Washington Post* carried on its front page the image of an American marine rescuing a seagull affected by oil spill in the Pacific. It indirectly signifies a contemporary version of the colonial discourse of white man's burden which legitimizes military interference and physical violence against the Orient.

According to Foucault, discourse is structured like any other intricate concept. Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace observe in *Foucault Primer* that any discourse has four identifiable components: objects, operations, concepts and theoretical options. This four part division is an approximation. So, Foucault argues that a discourse is identified by the criteria of formation, transformation and correlation. He sees archaeology as a discourse of the rules of formation which provide conditions that make possible the objects and concepts of the discourse. The rules of transformation are the limits of a discourse's capacities to modify itself, whereas the rules of correlation are the ensemble of relations which a discourse has with other discourses. Foucault sees episteme not as a theme which unites discourses, but rather as a space where discourse is located: "a space of dispersion . . . an open field of relationships" (*Order* 68). Foucault posits the episteme as a non-unified, multiple and complex field of play (of signifiers). Foucault has also identified three main discursive changes: derivations, mutations and transformations or redistributions.

Foucault's conception of discourse is indispensable for understanding the nature of power and its role in the production of knowledge. Foucault argues that the question of subjection and political struggles associated with identity are the most important problems of contemporary times. He thinks that political practice can never be separated from the philosophical questions of being and subjectivity. In this regard, Alec McHoul underlines Foucault's unrivalled position in explaining discourses in contemporary political contexts: "By studying subjection in terms of its imbrications within power relations, Foucault was unrivalled in drawing out the full political and historical dimensions of this philosophical concern" (57). It is therefore essential to highlight the link between power relations and their capacity to produce the truth we live by. The systems of knowledge, Foucault scrutinizes have immediate and solid social relations which he calls "human sciences." They rely on "the densest and most complex field of positivity" (*Order* 20). The conditions required for the production of truth within these systems of knowledge are much less stable and far more difficult to control.

Foucault considers discourse as a highly regulated set of statements. The study of discourse includes the analysis of institutionalized forms of statements. It is at once concerned with the internal structure and truth claims of discourse. Foucault terms the analysis of the discourse's structure as archaeology. It maintains the epistemological status of discourse. Foucault thinks that discourses are connected to reality. He discusses the construction of reality in relation to discursive structures. According to him; discourse is not

merely a mode of representation of reality, it is rather a mediated representation of reality. Therefore, reality is constrained by discursive practices. Signification of reality is a semiotic process which constructs meanings based on discursive structures. According to Foucault, perception delimits the establishment of discursive practices. In other words, discourses narrow down the speed of perception. According to Foucault, the structures intrinsic to discourse include epistemes, statements and archives. Historical changes in discursive systems are the result of changes in culture's perceptions of reality. Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* explains these changes. He tries to map out the discursive limits of episteme in this work. Foucault begins by defining the episteme: "By episteme, we mean in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give to the epistemological figures, sciences and possibly formalize the systems . . . it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities" (*Archaeology* Vol. 1 191). He means that episteme consists of the sum total of the discursive structures which evolves as a result of the interaction between the range of discourses circulating and authorized at a particular time. Foucault proposes that systems of knowledge are constituted of current epistemes. Epistemes are constructed and categorized into different discourses. He also makes a distinction between discourse as a practice and discourse as a group of statements. Foucault asserts that discourse is a set of institutionalized forms of sanctioned or authorized statements. He describes the archive as a set of unwritten rules which determines the limits and forms of

expression, conversation, memory and re-activation at a given period in a given society. According to Foucault, the archive “. . . reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is the general system of the formation and transformation of statements”

(*Archaeology* Vol. 1 130). An archive may be defined as a set of discursive mechanisms which limits the content and form of the statement.

In “The Order of Discourse,” Foucault analyses the different ways by which discourses are controlled by the social institutions. It also explains how certain discourses are excluded and how the entry of the subject into discourse is determined. In this context, he underlines the relation between discourse and subjectivity, and discourse and disciplinary control. He observes: “. . . in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers to gain mastery over its chance events to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality” (Young 52). Discourse is an object of desire, a power to get hold of, not simply a medium. According to Foucault, “. . . discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but . . . discourse is a power which is to be seized” (Young 53). Thus discursive structures are related to the power structures of the society. Therefore discourse textually constructs analogous relation between knowledge and power, subjectivity and ideology.

Foucault also explains the various methods which he calls “procedures of exclusion” through which institutions try to control discourses. This is particularly

relevant in the study of sexuality. The process of exclusion operates in a discourse in such a way as to remix the perception of knowledge. The first procedure of exclusion is prohibition or taboo. For example, certain subjects like sexuality were prohibited from discussions in Western societies. The second procedure Foucault considers is the opposition between the discourses of madness and reason. The speech of the mad person is considered irrational and therefore any discourse of madness has been rejected. The third procedure is the division between truth and falsehood. People in positions of authority are experts who can speak the truth. Therefore, statements by the people who hold no authority are not considered as truth. Foucault argues that truth must be materially supported by a range of practices and institutions. These practices and institutions work to exclude statements which are false and circulate those statements which are true.

According to Foucault, there are four internal procedures for controlling discourses. They include the commentary, the author, the disciplines and the rarefaction of the speaking subject. The main function of the subject is to distinguish between those who are authorized to speak and those who are not. In other words, they differentiate between the authorized and unauthorized discourses. The first internal exclusion, commentary, means writing about author's statements. Discourses which are commented on by others have more validity. The best example is that of the *Bible*. The commentaries on the Bible help it to gain more popularity, circulation and importance.

Foucault's analysis about the author is significant in the study of the structure of discourse. According to him, the author is not a ratifier of a meaning of the text. He argues that the author is a form of organizing principle for a group of texts. Foucault considers the author "as a principle for the grouping of discourses, a principle of unity and origin of their signification, as a focus of coherence" (Young 58). Foucault finds that there are discourses with authors and discourses without authors. For example, a legal discourse has no author because its authority originates from an institution. In this regard, Diane MacDonnell states: "the concept of an 'author' as a free creative source of the meaning of a book belongs to the legal and educational forms of the liberal humanist discourse that emerged in the late 18th and early 19th centuries; it is not a concept that exists within discourses that have developed recently" (cited in Mills *Discourse* 66). Foucault challenges the construct of the author as a real person who introduces his views in a text. He considers the author as a set of functions related to the structure and meanings of the text.

Foucault interrogates the conventional notion of the individualization of authors in the article "What is an Author." He argues that the author is a set of functions connected to the structure and meanings of a text. According to Foucault, "the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation and operation of certain discourses within a society" (Bouchard 124). In discursive practices author-person has transformed to author-function. According to Foucault, there are four characteristics of author-function. The first characteristic is related to the legal and institutional systems that determine,

articulate and control a discourse (Bouchard 130). The second characteristic of author function underlines the fact that its operation is seldom uniform in all discourses at all time in a given culture. The third characteristic attributes a text to its creator. In this regard, Foucault remarks that “it [author function] results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity we call an author” (Bouchard 127). Foucault refers to St. Jerome’s argument that authorship defines an author function by a process of attribution. Jerome explains that a text can be attributed to an author if it has: (1) the standard level of quality; (2) a coherent idea represented in other works by the author; (3) a uniform style of writing and (4) excluded historical events after the author’s death. The fourth characteristic refers to multiple egos and subject positions (Bouchard 130). Foucault has established that the author is a set of functions defined by a series of precise and complex procedures.

According to Foucault, disciplines limit knowledge within particular discourses. Discipline determines what can be said and regarded as factual within a given domain. Discipline permits people to speak the truth which is considered true only within that discipline. Foucault considers rarefaction of discourse as an internal constraint. Though a speaker can produce an infinite number of utterances, there may be repetition and the discourses may be restricted within the margins of social control. The topic of discussion or conversation and the words chosen need be approved by societal and personal norms. According to Foucault, people speak and act within the limits set by

discourses. Therefore, social norms and personal needs restrict the development of discourses.

According to Foucault social appropriation of discourses takes place through educational systems. He remarks: “. . . any system of education is a political wave of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses along with knowledge and power which they carry” (Young 64). He views educational systems as a regulatory mechanism of discourses. Foucault thinks that educational systems with their institutional hierarchy restrict the pursuit of truth. He argues that all the procedures for the subjection and authoring of discourses are mixed and it would be difficult to separate them. Institutional hierarchy of educational systems make enquiry of truth dysfunctional.

Foucault also enumerates certain strategies for the analysis of truth. The first strategy is the reversal of analytical tradition. Foucault is suspicious of what is currently valued as the source of creativity, ideals or morals. The second strategy is related to discontinuity of discourse. Foucault argues that marginal discourses should not be idealized because they do not form a coherent whole but discontinuous practices. The third strategy is related to the specificity being attributed to a discourse. Foucault denies specificity to any discourse. He challenges the pre-established signification of discourse. Therefore, according to him, a discourse is an active principle of signifying practice. Foucault views the process of order in discourse. He thinks that chaotic world is not discursive in nature. Foucault also suggests two types of

analysis for discourse: critical analysis and genealogical analysis. Critical analysis is related to processes like: (i) the opposition between madness and reason; (ii) the emergence of the sciences of observation; (iii) the study of foundational acts of modern sciences and (iv) positivist ideologies. According to Foucault, genealogical analysis is not much different from critical analysis. He argues that, “any critical task. . . must . . . analyse the discursive regularities through which they are formed” (Young 72). In genealogical analysis historical perspective is essential. Critical analysis involves the mechanism for the control of discourses. Genealogical analysis fills with domains of objects by means of which truth claims in discourses can be identified.

According to Foucault, discourses operate in four basic ways: discourses create our world, they help us to shape our perceptions of the world, they generate knowledge and rules, and they constitute the world in which we live and where all forms of knowledge and truth exist. He argues that knowledge and language are interrelated. Knowledge is organized through linguistic structures. Discourse provides knowledge about the speakers and the intended meanings of language. Therefore, the speaker’s race, class, gender, sexuality and so on can be identified by analyzing the discourse. Constructs like gender identity or sexual orientation can be determined through the analysis of discourse or its representative strategies. If language is excluded from discourse, it loses meaning and becomes a floating chain of signifiers. Language, therefore, is an integral part of discourse.

Foucault's most significant contribution is the intricate relation between discourse and power. Foucault views power as intrinsic to discourse. Power is conceptualized as the capacity of dominant agents to enforce their will over subordinate people. Power involves the strategy to force people to do things which they do not wish to do. Foucault is critical of the traditional notion of power as something which can be processed or concerned with oppression and constraints. According to Foucault, power is dispersed through social relations. Power produces those possible forms and restricting forms of behaviour. According to Foucault, power is positive; it produces forms of pleasure, systems of knowledge and discourses. Its function is not limited to restriction, prohibition and repression. Foucault views power not as mere suppression of the powerless by the powerful. He examines how power operates within society in everyday relations between discourse and institutions.

Foucault views power as a network of relations. He deconstructs power as a set of relations between the oppressor and the oppressed. Therefore, Foucault's view of power is opposite to that of Marxist or Feminist model of power which is a form of oppression or repression. Thus, Foucault challenges the hierarchical or pyramidal structure of power relations where the powerless is continuously oppressed by the powerful. He observes in *Power/Knowledge*:

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in a position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only inert or contesting target, they are also the elements of its articulation. In other words, the individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (98)

Foucault points to the paradox apparent in the operation of power. Individuals at once exert power and are exerted on by power. They are called the agents and subjects of power. According to Foucault, individuals are not recipients of power; they are the sites where power is enacted and restricted.

According to Foucault, power is pervasive. He means that power is present at every level of the social body. Foucault observes in *The History of Sexuality Volume I*: "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (93). He means that power is omnipresent. Everything and everybody is a source of power. Power is present in all relations; silence, subservience or even subjection does not signify lack of power. For him such models of power are part of repressive hypotheses. He views power as productive. He argues that even the most radical forms or

measures are not limited to repression and censorship. On the contrary, they are productive, causing new behaviours to emerge. In this regard, Sara Mills refers to Foucault in her *Discourse*: “. . . if power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say know, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?” (36). He means that power is not entirely suppressive. There must be something else apart from suppression which makes people to conform. Foucault cites an example of the productive nature of power in *The History of Sexuality Volume I*. In the 19th century there was a great concern about male children’s sexual desires and practices. This resulted in full scale surveillance of boys and the publications of numerous advice manuals. He argues that the discussion of children’s sexuality and the walking, advising and punishment of children in relation to sexual practices actually brought in a set of sexualized relations and the construction of perverse sexuality. Thus, the exercise of power over children became repulsive producing what was intended to be eliminated. He means that the exercise of power often becomes counter-productive. In this regard, it may be pointed out that repressive acts related to queer are likely to produce similar consequences.

Foucault has deconstructed the conventional notion of power as the possession of an individual or a group or an institution. Foucault criticizes the conventional views of power in *The History of Sexuality Volume I*. He argues that power cannot be owned; power is something that acts itself as manifest in certain ways. He views power as a strategy rather than a possession. He observes in *History of Sexuality Vol I*: “Power is not an institution, not a structure, neither

is it a certain strength we are endowed with, it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular situation” (93). He means that power is a state that manifests itself. Foucault underlines its material nature. He also contends that power operates in manifest forms and exists in the form of concrete structures.

Foucault makes five significant propositions in respect of power in *The History of Sexuality Volume I*. Foucault’s model of power is concentric and not pyramidal as in the conventional concepts of power followed by the Marxists or the Feminists. He observes in *The History of Sexuality Volume I*: “Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relation” (94). Foucault means that power is always exercised in all points in any relationships. Power is not simply applied externally to relationships; it is immanent in these relationships. Foucault argues that the relations of power are immediate effects of the divisions and inequalities which occur in these relations. Foucault also contends that power does not fully come down from above, not all power relationships are formed according to a ruler/ruled model. In this regard, Foucault remarks in *The History of Sexuality Volume I*: “Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary all encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations” (94). He means that power relations are generated at all levels of a society independent of the ruling powers that control the society.

Foucault means that the power relations are more intentional and non-subjective. No power is exercised without aims and objectives. It is possible to identify the designs and strategies in power relations. But no individual subject exercises this power. It means that power is not the result of any choice or decision of the individual subject. It also follows that power is not the choice of a group which controls the state apparatuses or the economic systems. These agencies do not control the network of power relations. In this regard, Foucault makes the most controversial and problematic statement about power in *The History of Sexuality Volume I*: “Where there is power, there is resistance and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (95). Foucault converts power to resistance in a strategic manner. Power is not coercive in the sense of direct threat of violence. Therefore, power must be viewed as an asymmetrical set of relations which entails the possibility of resistance.

According to Foucault, power relations between individuals cannot be always reduced to master-slave or oppressor-victim models. Foucault considers power relations as productive relations since they involve resistance. For Foucault, no power relation can be conceived without possible resistance. Power is therefore coextensive with resistance. That is, power is productive of and produces positive effects. Power exists in every kind of relationships as the condition of the possibility of relationships. Foucault argues that resistance is always possible, however oppressive power is. He also contends that the relation where there is no resistance cannot be regarded as power relations.

According to Foucault, the function of power relations should not be limited to the oppression of individuals. He is of the opinion that resistance to oppression is much more frequent than one would imagine. The conventional perception of individuals as passive is now replaced by the new perception of individuals as capable of resistance. Therefore, resistance is an integral part of power relations. Resistance is intrinsic and not external to power relations. Resistance emerges as a dynamics of power changes. Power relations depend on the multiplicity of the points of resistance which are present everywhere in the power network.

Foucault classifies power into two categories- regime power and disciplinary power or penal power. Regime power is always accompanied by disciplinary power. Disciplinary power is an invention of bourgeois society. There are variants of regime power like systemic power and institutional power. The sovereign often uses state apparatuses to exercise power through various systems or institutions controlled by the sovereign. In contemporary societies, the life and death of the people depend on both the regime power and the disciplinary powers which regulate people's behaviour and cultural practices. Disciplinary power is considered as a standard by which modernity is determined. In pre-modern societies there was a direct exercise of power through the threat of punishment. In many pre-modern societies punishment was a spectacle. But in modernity and post-modernity, power is exercised indirectly through surveillance systems like panopticon. In many postcolonial societies power is exercised indirectly through strategic systems. Even unpopular decisions of the government are enforced indirectly by manufacturing consent

among docile individuals through disciplinary apparatus. The dominant groups appropriate disciplinary power to control the subordinate classes and neutralize their resistance. For example, heterosexuals try to control the queers through the disciplinary systems.

According to Foucault, discourse is connected with the relations of power. Discourse links knowledge to power. Foucault argues that discourse must be analyzed as a series of discontinuous segments, the functions of which are neither uniform nor stable. There are dominant discourses and dominated ones. There is not a simple dominant/dominated relationship in a discourse. According to Foucault, discourse can act as both the means of oppression and the means of resistance. In this regard, Foucault argues in the *The History of Sexuality Volume I*:

. . . discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and the unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (100-101)

Foucault points out that discourse at once produces power and resistance that undermines the power. Therefore, the discursive process moves from the state of an instrument of power to that of an effect of power.

Foucault argues that the intricate connection between power and knowledge is made possible through discourse. He observes in *Discipline and Punish*: “. . . power produces knowledge . . . power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without a co-relative construction of a field of knowledge or any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (27). Foucault consistently develops his arguments on the complex relations between power and knowledge. In his argument he stresses the function and economy of discourses in the permeating relation between power and knowledge. In this context, Foucault observes in *Power/Knowledge*: “. . . there are manifold relations of power which permeates, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of disassociation” (93). Foucault’s objective is quite practical. His concept of development of “human sciences” is related to the question of power approached from the angle of discourse practices. Foucault exposes the political and strategic nature of the ensembles of knowledge previously thought of as independent of power or as inadequately linked to a political institution, as in the case of criminology, madness or sexuality.

Discourse is connected to concepts like hegemony, ideology and interpellation. Though discourse and ideology can be analytically separated,

ideology is a product of discourse. A writer produces ideology through his discursive practices. Where discourse is used to reinforce systems of social power, it functions as ideology. Discourse is not necessarily ideological, but ideology is always discursive. Discourse consolidates the structures of power in society, thereby becoming ideological. There is an affiliation between Gramsci's concept of "hegemony," Althusser's concept of "interpellation" and Foucault's concept of "discursive practices." All these concepts are concerned with the way power is internalized by those who are disempowered. In such conditions, power need not be enforced externally or directly.

The term hegemony was originally introduced by Antonio Gramsci. He used the term to refer to the moral and intellectual leadership through which subordinate classes of post-industrial European nations consented to their domination by the ruling classes. Hegemony is not a simple coercion into the acceptance of their inferiority by the subordinate classes. According to Gramsci, hegemony is a form of control exercised primarily through society's superstructures. For this purpose, Gramsci divides superstructure into two: the civil society and the state. The civil society includes organizations like churches, schools and trade unions, which are regarded as private and apolitical. Gramsci argues that civil society corresponds to hegemony whereas the state corresponds to direct domination. Gramsci classifies these two as distinct forms of control called social hegemony and political government. Social hegemony means spontaneous consent given by the masses through the direction imposed by the dominant groups. Therefore the consent is a result of

the privilege enjoyed by the dominant groups. Political government refers to the apparatus of the state's coercive power. It is largely used to enforce discipline on the groups which refuse to consent to their subordination. The state apparatus is material and is structured into systems like police, military, judiciary, bureaucracy and so on. According to Gramsci, civil society's ways of organizing human relationships are deeply political and integral to class domination. Hegemony can therefore be described as a process of struggle through which certain social relations are naturalized or coercively enforced. It refers to the cultural, political and intellectual practices by which domination of one class over another is achieved. Hegemony is made possible through non-coercive means like the dissemination of knowledge structures that are constructed with the consent of the socially normative subject positions through institutionalized discourses like law, religion and medicine.

Raymond Williams has provided new insights into the concept of hegemony in his work *Marxism and Literature*. According to Williams, hegemony offers concrete and situated methods by which particular groups dominate in any social formation. He argues that hegemony constitutes a lived experience and therefore provides a sense of lived reality for most people in the society. Williams regards hegemony as a process, not a system or structure. He observes: “. . . it is a realized complex of experiences, relationships and activities with specific and changing pressures and limits” (112). He means that hegemony is a synthesis of experiences, relationships and activities. Williams argues that hegemony operates beyond the concepts of culture and

ideology. He is of the opinion that hegemony is not a passive form of dominance. It is the process of political and social control in the domination of certain groups by others. Hegemony exists as a dynamic process. In this regard, Williams remarks: "It has continually to be removed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all of its own" (112). Williams points to the kinetic procedures of hegemony. He also argues that hegemony is not necessarily total. He also contends that it is a wrong practice to reduce all political and cultural activities to forms of hegemony. In this regard, Williams refers to the chaotic state and violent outburst at a time of revolution. He explains: "Authentic breaks within and beyond it in specific social conditions which can vary from extreme isolation to pre-revolutionary break-downs and actual revolutionary activity has often in fact occurred" (114). He means that the confusion and disorder before the revolution or the violence and control exerted by revolutionary forces cannot be equated with hegemony.

Williams argues that hegemony attempts to neutralize oppositions. The most decisive function of hegemony is to "control or transform or even incorporate" alternatives and oppositions (Williams 113). Even when accepting domination by the ruling class, the subordinate classes contemplate alternatives through political resistance. Williams connects the emergence of resisting forms of counter culture to the alternatives sought by the subordinate class. He states: ". . . a prominent culture . . . at once produces and limits its own forms of counter culture" (114). Therefore, the dominant culture provokes the

emergence of counterculture while the sub-cultures of subordinate classes offer the form of resistance. Hegemony spreads knowledge and ideologically loaded values to convince the subordinate classes about the ethical truths of such views, systems and organizations. It invites the creation of a particular spectre of knowledge and system of values. Hegemony is also a means by which dominant social groups manufacture a system of stable consent to legitimize a prevailing social order.

The operation of ideology involves the constitution and patterning of life as a conscious reflection set in a structured and meaningful world. Ideology has been discussed in literature since the time of Plato. Plato means by ideology those ideas capable of radical social changes. There are hundreds of definitions of ideology. It is better to cite a few definitions drawing from different schools of thought. Foucault, for example, defines ideology as the ways in which the society is organized. He argues that ideology is evident in the attitude of the masters and the world views of the subjects. He means that ideology is reflected in the structural organization of society (Bouchard 205). Foucault connects ideology with the notion of truth. According to him, truth is produced and reproduced by the adherents of ideology. In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault uses ideology in the sense of “general politics of rules.” By ideology he also means the type of discourses which function as true or the mechanisms which enable one to distinguish between true and false statements (131). But in his later career, Foucault prefers discourse to ideology. Foucault often connects ideology to power, especially to the role of intellectuals as agents of power.

Foucault argues that intellectuals have a responsibility for consciousness and discourse forms a part of this system. Foucault thus connects knowledge, truth production, consciousness and discourse in a telescopic view of ideology (Bouchard 206). Foucault uses ideology as a construct in the perpetuation of power and extends it to discourse and the way knowledge is produced.

For Marxists, ideology is the most important construct of literature. They consider literature an ideological superstructure. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams has provided a few definitions of ideology: (i) “a system of beliefs, characteristic of a particular class;” (ii) “a system of illusionary beliefs, false ideas or false consciousness which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;” (iii) “a general process of the production of meanings and ideas” (55). Williams emphasizes the production of meanings related to ideology on the one hand and the class characteristic of ideology on the other. But Terry Eagleton considers criticism also as a form of ideology. He connects ideology as a legitimizing force that confronts with the interests of the ruling class; ideology refers to “ideas and beliefs which help to legitimize the interest of ruling classes specifically by distortion and dissimulation” (54). Eagleton has a limited view of ideology as something that serves legitimizing strategies of the master classes. In the case of gender and sexuality, ideology legitimizes the interests of the heterosexuals in the phallogentric social order. Therefore the ideological contribution of the queer in discourses of sexuality is in conflict with the dominant forces of heteronormativity.

Louis Althusser provides greater insights into the functioning of ideology in his article “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus.” He regards ideology as the system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of an individual or a social class. Althusser connects ideology to the unconscious. He views ideology as a set of ideas in the unconscious that makes one represent reality in a particular way. Althusser therefore agrees with Pierre Machery that ideology is unconsciously assimilated by society. Althusser defines ideology as a “representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Storey 153). Ideology is conventionally thought of as a world view, even though ideological relations are “largely imaginary and do not correspond to reality” (Storey 154). According to Althusser, ideology makes allusion to reality and by interpreting ideology one can discover the reality beneath the imaginary representation of the world.

Althusser argues that ideology has a material existence. According to him, ideology operates through a material state apparatus which demands ordered material practices from the subjects. He remarks: “. . . ideology always exists in an apparatus, and is a practice or practices. This existence is material” (Szeman and Kaposy 215). Althusser argues that a sovereign or a political government like the state does not directly enforce the dominant ideologies or the ideologies of a ruling class. Instead the state regulates the dominant ideologies through material apparatuses endowed with systemic power. The state apparatus is divided into institutions of civil society and systems of government. The ideological state apparatuses enable the realization of an

ideology. They indirectly operate to manufacture consent and adherence to dominant ideology. Ideological superstructure like art or literature constitutes a material embodiment of ideologies. Althusser also contends that ideology in general has no history of its own: “it is endowed with a structure and functioning such as to make it a non-historical reality, i.e., *omni-historical* reality, in the sense in which the structure and functioning are immutable, present in the same form throughout what we can call history” (Szeman and Kaposy 212) [emphasis there]. Ideology presents itself as constantly valid and therefore has no history.

Althusser also introduces the concept of interpellation in the article “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus.” By interpellation he means the ways in which subjects are placed in positions of knowledge by discursive networks of ideology. According to him, interpellation is the process by which an individual is constituted as a subject within society. He remarks: “. . . the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology in so far as all ideology has the function . . . of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” (Storey 158). Althusser argues that interpellation works by recruiting subjects from individuals or transforming individuals into subjects. He regards interpellation as a form of hailing (Storey 159). Althusser explains that interpellation works in a manner like giving a name to a person. It is an act of ideological recognition. The ideologies address people to offer them a particular identity which they accept as subjects. Ideologies then play a crucial role in constituting ideologies of individuals in society. Therefore, interpellation enables subjects to accept certain roles willingly. Interpellation

operates at different levels like politics, religion or family, which co-exist and circulate within a society with a relative unity.

Political or ideological interpellation is the most complex one. In *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology*, Therborn Goran refers to three modes of ideological interpellation. According to Therborn, ideologies interpellate by telling them, relating them and making them recognize: (i) “what exist and what does not”- about who we are, what societies, what men and women are like; (ii) “what is good,” right or beautiful and its opposite through which desire becomes structured and normalized; (iii) “what is possible” and what is impossible through which our hopes, ambitions, fears are given shape. (Therborn 93-94). But Althusser argues that the process of interpellation functions best when it is invisible, when individuals are natural. Althusser argues that naturalizing of cultural notions takes place through repressive means which use power or through ideological means which use state apparatus. According to him, there are different apparatuses of the state to ensure interpellation like Ideological State Apparatus and Repressive State Apparatus.

A meticulous analysis of discourses and ideologies reveal that the truth and world views created and propagated by the agencies are controlled by the dominant groups or ruling classes. They maintain and regulate these discursive agencies to strengthen their authority and consolidate their position by continually subjugating the subordinate classes. The subordinate classes are

driven to the margins of power, culture, history and language. The dominant discourses follow exclusionary measures to prevent the subordinate classes from getting represented in discourses. The denial of representation foils their attempts to construct their own identities. These subordinate classes are marginalized on different aspects and therefore they are victims of multiple oppression. These marginalized groups can articulate their voices and construct their identities by challenging and deconstructing dominant discourses and ideologies. As marginalized groups the queer can articulate their ideology as identity by interrogating dominant phallogentric and heteronormative discourses.

The queer can be discursively constructed. The queer identity or the queer self gets stabilized in institutionalized forms of discourses like drama or fiction. The queer theatre as discourse can be analyzed in terms of political ideology. Discourse, like any intricate concept, is structured. McHoul and Grace observe in *Foucault Primer* that any discourse has a number of components which are easily identifiable. They include objects, operations, concepts and theoretical options. Objects include things studied in or produced by discourse. Operation means methods, techniques or ways of treating the object; concepts constitute terms and ideas routinely found in discipline and constitute its language; theoretical options comprise assumptions, theories and hypotheses (44). This fourfold division is a first approximation. These criteria can be used in the analysis of queer dramatic discourses like Dattani's plays. In the discourse analysis of the queer, the objects include the queer body, queer space

and queer time; the operations include the queer gestures, queer expressions, queer dressing and queer language, the concepts include queer, queerness, transgenders, transsexuals, LGBT and queer transform. Options include the basic concept of gender and sexuality.

Queer drama is a marginal discourse. Deconstruction of the dominant discourses is the first step towards the emancipation of any marginalized groups. The subordinate classes seldom get the assistance of dominant discourses controlled by the ruling classes. Moreover, dominant discourses always attempt to homogenize subcultures, level and control differences, neutralize resistance and erase cultural identity. It is therefore absolutely essential for the marginalized groups like the queer to innovate marginal discourses to articulate their identity and resistance.

Dattani's plays/texts exalt the queer and highlight a queer discourse that forces us to defend their lives lived in agony. The weaving of voices of the queer in the play questions the powerful hegemony of knowledge and power dominant system. Their voices become a powerful discourse which destabilizes the stereotypic space and conformed roles that are constituted for individuals in society. The queer has no allotted space in the existing society and are unable to lead a 'normal' life that society configures. They are made strangely "abnormal" devoid of a voice. Queer lives are separated from the mainstream by the most inflexible barriers of power. Their body and their sexuality become scandalous. Their bodies become the loci for a headlong fight with themselves

and with society. They become sites of conflicts and erasures. Dattani's plays thus question the dynamics of power involved in the physiological stereotyping that fragments the queer. Transgression of barriers becomes a matter of life and death for the queer. In this context, it is essential to explain how a queer discourse is constructed and how the queer gets represented in the discourse

Dattani's theatre forms the illustration of the marginal queer discourse. He explores the theme of minority genders and sexualities to establish the paradigms of a queer discourse through his plays. He makes his plays a platform of resistance to the hegemonic patriarchal structures and of deconstructing the dominant heteronormative social order. He introduces a variety of queer characters who cling on to their respective ways leading a queer life. In his discursive practices, Dattani establishes the queer as people with alternative sexualities and genders, leading a normal life. Dattani seldom treats them as a minority leading an aberrant life. The queer is marginalized in discourses and cultural critiques. However, Dattani's theatre repeatedly asserts the position that the queer is an alternative sexual and gender characteristic that is counter-hegemonic and oppositional to heteronormative practices. His plays capture the queer life as another way of living which is not recognized in the heteronormative frame. They elucidate that any strangeness and abnormality attributed to the queer life is solely because of its construction as the aberrant by the powerful heteronormative discourses. The playwright deliberately makes the queer his protagonists to unravel the closet to which the queer is pushed into.

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai is one of the perfect plays of Dattani where he brings onto stage the closeted life of the queer. Kamlesh, the protagonist of the play, has invited all his gay friends to his flat to overcome his turmoil in having a break up with his partner Prakash, who has transformed into a heterosexual. He is all set to marry Kamlesh's sister Kiran. Apparently, all the gay friends seem to be living happily with their respective style of gay life. But as the play progresses, Dattani unveils their closeted lives. The spectators/readers are then initiated into the painful life of the queer. Each of the characters seems to be caught between their innate sexual desires and the stereotypical sexual mores of society. Bunny, the television actor veils his gay identity with the identity of a married man living happily with his wife and children. The heaviness of the burden of his false identity hangs heavily on his shoulders. But he manages to neatly wrap his anguished mind with his joyful face to live in society. As a normal human being he craves for a normal life. But he knows well that he cannot be entitled to a peaceful life. He is thus forced to lead a life of false identity. Renjit finds India not a comfortable place for gays and lives with his gay partner in London. He is often called "coconut" because of his brown skin and the white life he has opted for. It also suggests the false identity which he is forced to live in his country and the alternative identity (which is his real identity) with which he lives in London. He is often much disturbed when the air-condition fails as he does not want the air outside to get in. When he tells the "muck outside" he actually means the heterosexual world outside.

After having broken-up with Prakash, Kamlesh attempts to develop a relationship with Sharad, an effeminate man. But after living with him for a year, Kamlesh finds that he cannot continue with him as he is too much obsessed with Prakash. Sharad who loves Kamlesh is deeply shattered when he gets to know that Kamlesh cannot love him. He has accepted his homosexuality and openly leads a gay life. Deepali, the only lesbian in the play is another character who lives comfortably with her socially unacceptable sexual orientation. She lives with her partner, Tina. Dattani does not reveal much about her and thus nothing is known in depth about her lesbian life. She is a good friend and a safe shoulder for Kamlesh to lean on at any moment of his great distress.

Despite his friends' suggestions, Kamlesh is never ready to tell Kiran about his former relationship with Ed. Ed and Kiran visit Kamlesh's flat during the get-together of the gay friends. Kiran, who is supportive of Kamlesh's homosexuality, gets to know about his break-up with Sharad and thinks that it might be the cause of his distress. Later on she gets to know about the relationship between Kamlesh and Ed through a photograph. She is greatly depressed as both the men she loved dearly deceived her. The situation gets worse when she comes to know the real intention of Ed, that is, to marry Kiran. As his brother-in-law he gets ample chance to meet Kamlesh, while he can also live a socially normal life with Kiran. He attempts to commit suicide by jumping from the flat when he realizes Kiran is deeply disappointed. He is grabbed back by his friends and a small quarrel takes place between Kamlesh and Ed. The play ends as this fight ends.

In the play Dattani creates a situation to bring forward the hollowness of the modernist view of truth or reality as unipolar. He introduces a group of queer characters in order to emphasize the truth of gender/sex/sexuality as something that is not certain, fixed and stable. All the queer characters in the play live in heavy mental trauma as they cannot live according to their sexual orientation. The false robe of happiness falls down as the very truth of their lives comes to the forefront. Homosexuality is always regarded as a flaw. When Dattani presents the queer characters on stage, he asserts the notion of gender and sexuality beyond the binaries of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. As the powerful keeps anything beyond this gender binary and any sexuality other than heterosexuality as unnatural, the queer never gets a decent space in society. Ed transforms into a heterosexual as the psychiatrist tells him to do so. He aspires for a decent life in society which he knows he would not get as a gay. On his break-up with Ed, a deeply anguished Kamlesh says that he would not be so depressed, if Prakash had left him for another homosexual. Kamlesh meets a psychiatrist to find a solution to his problem. He trusted the doctor until he suggests him the aversion therapy. He wants the doctor to treat him to come out of his depression but does not want the doctor to change his sexual orientation. Kamlesh stops meeting the doctor as he considers him a gay and not a normal human-being. The doctor is merely a stereotypical man in society who never thinks beyond the sexual discourse prevalent in society. In the very first scene of the play, the security guard accepts money from Kamlesh for involving in gay relationship with him. When Kamlesh asks him whether he

enjoys what they do or whether he does it for money, first the guard says he enjoys it but soon he alters it and says that he does it for money. The guard knows that he cannot survive properly as a gay. Thus, he unwillingly sticks to heteronormativity and becomes a stereotype in society.

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai is one of the best plays of Dattani where the discourse analysis of the queer as suggested by McHoul is clearly possible. The platform of the play unveils the closeted space into which the queer life is dumped into. He fills the stage with homosexual characters to portray the queer bodies. The entire play takes place within Kamlesh's flat. It is a private space of the queer which is secluded from the world outside. This confined space of Kamlesh's flat points to the confined queer space in society, which is away from the mainstream. The picture of Meena Kumari in the flat is another expression of the queer. According to Hoshang Merchant, "Either gay men love older women (Liz Taylor/Rekha) or impossibly unavailable women (Madhuri Dixit/Marilyn Monroe) or women martyred like themselves, their mothers, or Meena Kumari, or again, Monroe" (*Yaraana xiii*). When the world outside resonates with the celebrative spirit of the wedding, the flat becomes a space where the lives of the queer melt down. The flat of Kamlesh becomes a perfect space for the queer where the life takes place differently from the world outside. Sharad's dance to the music "Eena Meena Deeka" reveals a good picture of his as a cool easy going gay with an ambiguous gender. He frequently hums the song "What Makes A Man Man," which he describes as "our anthem" - the anthem of the queer. The song makes relevant the point, whether it is the

individuality of a man or the social decorum that constitutes a man. Being an effeminate man, Sharad takes up the role of a house-wife in his live-in-together relationship with Kamlesh. When he realizes that Kamlesh is not interested in him anymore, he sobs like a woman. He moves towards Meena Kumari's poster and utters "Prakash" thrice in a drunken slur. The first time he utters the name he rubs off his "sindhoor"; the second time he utters the name he breaks his bangles and the third time he utters the name he slides down the wall sobbing uncontrollably. The bangles he wears and his "sindhoor" make him more effeminate and a perfect representation of queer expression and queer gestures. Queer language becomes evident in Deepali's conversations with her partner:

Tina: Deepali (*on the phone*): No, sweetheart, you have to mix it with honey. Is she still coughing? (CP 62).

Besides Deepali, Sharad and Renjit also use queer registers like "darling," "sugar," "buggery," "hunk." Moreover, Dattani has meticulously penned the play in such a language that one has to dig deeper into the text in order to wrest out the actual meanings of the words and sentences. They indicate the camouflaged life of the queer. For instance, when Kiran speaks about Bunny's serials, she says that he is an ideal husband and father. Sharad then responds to this:

Sharad: Oh, he is a very good actor for sure! (CP 76).

He means Bunny more than a serial actor; he is an actor in real life too. He is a gay by natural instinct, but he pretends to be an ideal husband and an ideal

father in his family and society. The first scene of the play suggests that Kamlesh and the guard of the flat meet together during night and they leave apart in the morning. It points out that the queer wakes up as the society sleeps. Deprived of a space within the mainstream society, the queer lives their natural life in the night.

The play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* draws its success from the variety of queer characters: Gays, lesbians and effeminate men. They are people who are normally looked at with scorn and contempt. Dattani has well crafted the play with these socially discarded people to unearth the meaninglessness of gender and sexuality as defined by society. He vividly portrays the living styles of the queer- their expressions, their gestures, their attire, their living space/time and so on to open the eyes of the society about the existence of a queer discourse that remains marginalized in society. The play indeed becomes a platform of resistance as the playwright attempts to present a queer discourse which normally goes submerged within the heteronormative discourse. He makes the characters resist the heteronormative hegemony through making their presence strongly felt on the stage.

In *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, Dattani brings onto the stage another group of gender and sexual minority – the *hijras* or eunuchs, referred to as the third gender. The conventional discourse on gender and sexuality, which bars any gender other than the male and the female, keeps the *hijras* away from its boundary. The very ambiguity in their gender, neither male nor female,

politicizes their gender and sexual identity. Though *hijras* are a reality and they exist in the world, the hegemonic discursive construction of gender and sexuality does not accommodate them. Discourse, which mediates the representation of reality, takes into account only the ideas of the powerful. As the powerful in society accepts the male and the female as the only standard genders, the third gender is always viewed with contempt and is ostracized from the mainstream.

In the play Dattani reaches out to those darker areas of society which the *hijras* occupy. He makes his character Uma Rao, a brave and sleuthing research scholar to unveil the life of the *hijras*. Researching on the class-gender-based power implications, she gets much interested in the case of the murder of a beautiful *hijra* called Kamla. As the wife of the jail superintendent Suresh Rao, daughter of a Vice- Chancellor and the daughter-in-law of the deputy commissioner of police, Uma Rao hails from an elite family background. Her status has never fettered her from interestingly stepping onto the platform of the *hijras* to find the truth behind the murder. She visits Anarkali, a *hijra* falsely arrested for the murder, in the jail. Despite her husband's warning not to cross the limits of the research, Uma begins to develop compassion towards these cursed souls, realizing their innocence in the murder. She is indeed disappointed to see the rash behaviour towards Anarkali in the prison. Anarkali is physically and verbally harassed by the police jail wardens as well as other prison inmates. Moreover, she also learns

that Anarkali, being a hijra, is sexually abused by the fellow prisoners. She tells her husband about the plight of Anarkali in prison. But Suresh has no compassion for Anarkali as she is a *hijra*.

Uma manipulates to gain the support of the constable Munswamy in her adventurous journey to meet the *hijras*. He visits the head *hijra* Champa in the *hijra* quarters to extract more hints about Kamla's murder. The interactions with the *hijras* open up before her the picture of a strong sisterhood among them. She sees the *hijras* as her sisters and being a childless woman identifies a shared desire between both of them – the longing for children. The presence of Salim, the bodyguard of the Deputy Chief Minister, at Champa's place makes her more suspicious about the murder. Uma concludes that the *hijras* know who the real murderer was and the story behind the murder. They were too reluctant to speak about it openly as they felt powerless in the society.

Champa's words are relevant in this context:

Champa: We cannot speak . . . When we want to speak nobody listens (CP 259).

Uma, through her compassionate and clever interactions with the *hijras*, realizes that Kamla was in love with the minister's son, Subbu and got secretly married to him. The minister who could not accept this strange relationship of his son arranged a proper marriage for him with an acceptable girl. Salim's wife burnt Kamla to death at the command of the minister so that she would not be a disturbance in Subbu's later life.

The context highlights the role of power in society. The way of society is indeed in the hands of the powerful. The minister represents the stereotypical individual in society who cannot go beyond the social norms surrounding gender. For him, any gender beyond the boundary of male/female binary is not normal and thus he does not want his son to have an alliance with a *hijra*. He abuses the power of a minister to get Kamla murdered and to conceal the truth behind the murder. The body of Kamla was thrown into a pond and was discovered by a passer-by. The norm of male/female binary is sharply imbibed by society. The *hijras* thus accept their subordination as natural and know that they are doomed to lead an ill-fated life. They purposely keep away from mingling with others as they know it brings unfortunate consequences to them and to the others who stand with them as well. When Anarkali comes to know about Kamla's relationship with Subbu, she warned her to avoid it. She even injured Kamla's face to keep Subbu away. This shows the strong sisterhood among the *hijras*. But as an unacceptable category of gender, any kind of human relationship among them or between the *hijras* and others is also not accepted in society. Thus, they are denied of any kind of decent life which forces them to resort to practices like prostitution for their survival. Society blames them for creating nuisance in the public, demanding money. But society forgets that it has denied them a decent status which prevents them from entering into decent means of their survival. Society hardly realizes their pathetic plight and the *hijras* are always alienated in society. The very reason for their gender to be branded as unacceptable is that it does not fall into either of the categories of the

male or the female and thus cannot involve in the process of reproduction. Society fails to realize the gender of *hijras* as it is not meant for reproduction. The male and the female have got their respective roles in the process of reproduction, which make their positions socially strong. But a *hijra* always remains a *hijra* as she cannot change herself to the accepted categories of male or female. So the society doesn't even recognize the existence of such a category and is never willing to accept them within the hegemonic heteronormative patriarchal system.

In the play, while presenting the emotions of the *hijras*, Dattani also blends them with pictures of their daily life. In doing so he attempts to bring forward the queer discourse that gets suppressed within the gender norms of society. He vividly brings in the play the components of queer discourse as suggested by McHoul. The queer body he presents in the play is the *hijra*, who is neither a male nor a female. This ambiguity in their gender often makes them an object of scorn and ridicule in society. Uma's visit to Champa gives a fine picture of a queer space demarcated for the *hijras* in society. Ostracized from the mainstream, the *hijras* live in the peripheries. In the play the *hijra* quarters is located behind Russel Market in Shivajinagar, a place alienated from the main city. Munswamy hesitates to take Uma there as he does not want a woman from a respectable family to visit the place. The cramped quarters of *hijras* symbolize their cramped lives.

In order to highlight the operation of the queer discourse, Dattani brings in instances of queer expressions and queer gestures in the play. *Hijras* are

normally spotted in groups and live together under a “guru.” The *hijras* in the play live together under their “guru,” Champa. There is also mention about the next heir for the position of the “guru” as Champa retires. The play captures the scene of a group of *hijras* approaching Uma for money when Munswamy stops the car in traffic. They sing and dance clapping their hands and Uma throws some coins out of the window. The group of *hijras* then picks them up. Fight among the *hijras* is a part of their life, but it does not crack their relationship. They fight for coins that are hurled at them. The dancing and singing of the *hijras* are also brought in the play on the occasion of Subbu’s wedding. Though the society debar *hijras* from the mainstream, their presence and blessings are preferred at the time of marriage and birth. Unlike the homosexuals, the *hijras* openly live as queer. Homosexuals often lead a passive queer life as their sexuality mostly gets concealed with a heteronormative robe. Their sexual ambiguity and sexual ambivalence get dissolved in the façade of happiness provided by the mainstream heterosexual society. As the *hijras* openly live as queer, they are prohibited from the centre-stage. Therefore, they create their own world which is different from the mainstream life. They sing, dance and clap their hands creating annoyance. Champa says in the play:

Champa: There is no world for a hijra other than the one we make
for ourselves. (CP 261)

Hijras live together under a “guru” and their dancing and singing in groups forms the queer expression and queer gesture in the play.

Another instance of the queer gesture in the play is where Anarkali asks for a cigarette to Munswamy in the prison. She goes near him lifting her sari in a provocative manner. Queer gesture is also visible in the *hijra* quarters like the *hijras* combing each other's hair and Champa reading Femina magazine which is exclusively meant for women's fashion. These expressions show the inclination of *hijras* towards a feminine life. The social exclusion of the *hijras* dampens them mentally and therefore they behave in a very strange manner. Their language is often crude and abusive which society cannot tolerate. For instance when Uma meets Anarkali in the prison, Anarkali says:

Anarkali: After servicing all these sons of whores, my mouth is too tired to talk. (CP 236)

Anarkali hints at her pathetic plight in the prison; how she is sexually exploited by the male prisoners. She cannot use a refined language because she is not considered a part of the refined society. She is far away from the mainstream and is not used to its life styles. Moreover, her damned life makes her speak such language. The *hijras*, who cannot think about a good life, naturally slip down to crude life-styles. Dattani, through the technique of voice-over, brings out Uma's contemplations regarding the "third gender." She mentions about the origin of the *hijras* in *Ramayana*, one of the pillars of Indian society. Despite their Puranic roots, the *hijras* never find a decent space in Indian society. The only two places where their presence is encouraged are on the

occasions of marriage and birth, the very two rights denied to them by man and nature. Uma's statement in the voice-over is appropriate:

Uma: Not for them the seven rounds witnessed by the Fire God,
eternally binding man and woman in matrimony, or the blessings of
'May you be the mother of a hundred sons'. (CP 239-240)

Her voice-over highlights the very irony in the gender norms of society.

Another voice-over of hers reveals the singing of the *hijras*. They sing and dance but do not take any formal classes on any of these. It points to the exclusionary nature of the society where the *hijras* are systematically deprived of their right to enter.

The play closes with the suicide of Subbu at his wedding arranged by the minister father. He cannot withstand the scene of the *hijras* dancing and singing at the venue. An emotionally wrecked Subbu feels like Kamla standing in front of him. He manages to snatch Suresh's gun and shoots himself. There is not much investigation into the murder of Kamla later. It is hushed up using the political forces and Subbu's suicide is written off as an accident. The incident evokes the picture of the *hijra* as the meanest in the society. The murder of a *hijra* or one *hijra* less in the world is not a matter of concern for anyone. The *hijra* community in the play mourns the death of Kamla. But there is hardly anyone in the society to understand this sisterhood among the *hijras*. Although people like Uma Rao understands them well, they cannot do anything as the *hijra* exists against the norms. At their quarters the *hijras* themselves tell Uma

not to visit them again as they know it is dangerous both to them and to Uma. Kamla's and Subbu's life stand a testimony to this.

Through the portrayal of the *hijras*, Dattani elucidates how power works in the society. Despite their existence, the *hijras* are not accepted in society because the powerful keeps the male and the female as the standard mode of gender. Power spreads over the actual truth and makes truth according to the will of the powerful. Truth thus gets submerged under power and justice is often denied at the right place. Dattani boldly brings onto stage the *hijras* and the truth of their existence. He deconstructs the powerful construction of the male/female binary by representing the *hijras* in the world. The play illustrates the undercurrent of the patriarchal and heteronormative sexuality and gender which govern the thoughts and actions of the society.

Do the Needful, the radio play of Dattani, is another platform where he unravels the layers of power that bind the society. The play affirms power as worthless and brings forth the meaninglessness of heteronormativity as the standard mode of sexuality in society. The play takes place within the frame of an exogamous marriage (between the Gujarati Patels and the Kannadiga Gowdas) in Indian society. The parents of the protagonists Alpesh Patel and Lata Gowda are forced to do the needful to make a proper life for their children. Thus, they choose a marriage alliance outside their communities under the banner of broad-mindedness. Alpesh is thirty plus and is divorced due to his relationship with another man Trilok. Lata, the twenty-four years old notorious

girl has fallen in love with a man Salim, who is apparently a terrorist. The parents, out of their shame, fix the marriage under the banner of their broad-mindedness.

Alpesh, who is in love with Trilok, is not happy with the Kannadiga bride chosen for him by his parents Chandrakant Patel and Kusumben Patel. Though he tells them about his unwillingness to marry, he cannot break the obligations of a son in front of his mother's feelings. Lata too does not find any other alternative in front of her parents' wish to get her married off. The Patels soon visit the Kannadigas to proceed with the alliance. The boy and the girl get ample opportunities together, during which they understand each other. They discover that neither of them is interested in the proposed marriage and the only problem they confront with is to say "no" to their parents. They also get to know that they share in common the habit of smoking which both of them promises not to disclose to the respective families. Alpesh says: "Teri bhi chup, meri bhi chup" (CP 142). He puts the expression in English for Lata to understand, "Your silence and mine as well" (Collected Plays 142). Later in the play, Lata plans to run away with Salim. But before she leaves, she finds Alpesh with Mali, a local boy and discovers that Alpesh is a gay. She soon weaves out a solution to their problem out of Alpesh's Hindi expression "Teri bhi chup, meri bhi chup." At the end of the play, Alpesh and Lata, get married. When the play closes both of them goes for outing as happily married husband and wife in front of the family and society. But once they come out, Lata leaves for Salim and Alpesh leaves for Trilok. They have clear plans as to when they should meet

together to get back to the family. Both of them once again promise to keep their secret throughout their life.

The context of *Do the Needful* highlights Foucault's "procedures of exclusion." The social institutions indeed play a key role in shaping discourses through the "procedures of exclusion." Homosexuality, which is excluded from the mainstream, makes Alpesh a misfit in his family and society. Despite being a divorcee, he is compelled by his family for another marriage. The family adheres to heteronormativity as the norm and cautions its members against deviating from it. It always cherishes to keep the discourse of sexuality as already set. According to the second procedure of exclusion, homosexuality is not normal and thus it is not rational. The Patel family wants their son to get married in order to get him to the right track. They find a proper marriage as a mode of correction for their son's strange sexual behaviour. They even skip the norm of endogamy followed in India as they somehow want Alpesh to be within the heteronormative frame. Despite being an upper middle-class family, Kusumben even says if the Gowda proposal does not work out, they would find a suitable girl for Alpesh from a poor Patel family who is willing to live with him. The context emphasizes the shame of the family in letting Alpesh live according to his sexual orientation. They are ready to discard their otherwise pompous identity of the upper middle-class in order to shape Alpesh according to accepted sexual norms. The third procedure which creates a distinction between truth and falsehood makes heteronormativity the truth and brands homosexuality as false. The truth behind homosexuality is hardly

supported by any institution. Hence, it is not socially valid. The people with alternative sexuality and gender are pushed to the peripheries, hiding the very truth of the prevalence of such a category. They are the powerless and therefore their statements are regarded as false. The fact of their existence purposely goes unnoticed in society. Those who possess power carefully prevent the queer's entry into the mainstream. Discourse is always defined according to the will of the powerful and their statements make the truth. Alpesh and Lata finally get married to please the society. But the play remains silent about the fragile life of the boy and the girl. In such a context, the institution of family, which is normally considered to be the sole protector of an individual turns out to be a villain in one's life.

Foucault also speaks about the educational systems as regulatory mechanisms of discourses. Educational systems, which adhere to the norms to keep the social values, restrict the operation of real truth. Thus, the educational systems imbibe in the individual the concept of heteronormativity as the right way of sexual life and any other mode of sexual orientation as perverse. While fixing the marriage alliance at the Gowda's place, the parents talk about the education of their children. Though Alpesh and Lata do not have much formal education, the parents boast about the prestigious schools in which both of them studied. They affirm that despite the proper upbringing in the family, their children have received the right training from the school and that they would not go astray.

A thorough analysis of the play illustrates the components of a queer discourse embedded within it. It contains the queer concept of homosexuality, represented by the queer bodies of Alpesh and his gay partner Trilok. The play begins with Alpesh's telephonic conversations. He contacts a Slim Gym to get Trilok. The conversations brim with queer language from which the homosexuality of Alpesh and Trilok can be gleaned out:

Alpesh: . . . Is Trilok free? . . . Oh. Then I guess I will take whoever is free. It shouldn't really make a difference. . . . Er, when will Trilok be free? He knows exactly where my tight spots are . . . (CP 119)

The Slim Gym where the gay partners meet is exactly a queer space, an exclusive space for them where they live as homosexuals. Amidst the conversations with his mother regarding the marriage with Lata, Alpesh speaks to Trilok in his thoughts and it is again an instance of queer language in the play. He tells to Trilok in his thought: "Yes, touch me . . . hold me . . . That feels good, Trilok" (CP 125). He speaks to Trilok passively as he is forced to wear the mask of heteronormativity in his family and society. Later, at Lata's homestead, Lata finds Alpesh and Mali together at night. It points towards a queer time, a time when the society is asleep. The queer, the so called aberrant in society, becomes active during this time as they cannot live the life of their instinct during the day. The concept of homosexuality is vividly discussed in the play which deconstructs the hetero/homo binary. The queer language, the queer space and the queer time which Dattani has meticulously incorporated in

Do the Needful justifies a proper queer discourse articulated and represented in the play.

Bravely Fought the Queen is the first play of Dattani to handle the theme of the queer. The crust of the play reveals the pathetic plight of women in upper class families. Through the characters of Dolly, Alka, Lalitha and Baa, the playwright renders how the 'female' is determined by the dominant patriarchal orders. The patriarchal discourse constructs women as always subordinate to men, whose life ought to move as men direct. The male characters in the play, Jiten, Nitin, Sridhar and Praful, see the essence of masculinity in laying control over their wives and sisters. The female characters are seen rotting within the frame of patriarchy.

The play very well pictures how Dolly's life is greatly hampered under her arrogant husband Jiten. In the depths of her heart she carries the grief of her spastic daughter Daksha, who turned spastic under the cruelty of Jiten and Baa. Dattani makes her a strong woman who fights her miseries strongly under her alternative world where she believes her daughter is a dancer. However, the dance which she performs is ironically physiotherapy. She creates the fictitious Trivedi servant Kanhaiya with whom she has fallen in love, who fills the space of her husband. Alka, the younger sister of Dolly and the wife of the younger Trivedi brother Nitin, is always in the gloom of an unhappy married life. She resorts to alcohol to forget her worries of being childless and the indifference of her husband who never turns to her. Lalitha, initially depicted as the

smartest woman in the play, involves in a variety of activities when compared to the Trivedi women. But later on, the joyful rob of hers falls down to bring forward her picture as a woman who is lonely in life as her husband is madly behind his job. She engages herself in different activities to hide her woes. The Trivedi mother Baa, harasses her daughters-in-law as she wants them to suffer as she did under her husband. She unleashes her frustrations by troubling Dolly and Alka.

The male characters, who are madly behind the pursuit of their business, never consider the presence of their wives at home. Their entire life is centred on profit making and there is least concern about family life. For them woman is merely an object of sex which is clearly evident from the layout of the advertisement of their new product, the ReVaTee brand of lingerie. They go through the photographs of models to be selected for the advertisement. This indicates the men's desire to be on top of women even in controlling their lingerie. The campaign of their advertisement is purely geared towards sex and they do not even consider whether women are satisfied with the product or not. Towards the end of the act the men's lust for sex becomes more evident when Jiten asks Sridhar to fetch a woman for him. Jiten's and Nitin's conversations also hint at their financial crisis and their dependence on Praful for necessary assistance. They also discuss the selling of their ancestral property to solve their problems. Jiten tells that Baa would agree to this if he discards Alka as she is a drunkard. This shows Jiten's least concern for Alka and his entire focus on money.

The final act of the play unveils the masked lives of the characters and the bitter realities of their lives. Dolly and Alka emotionally break down as they speak to their husbands about their miseries for which the sole responsibility lies with the men in their lives (Jiten, Nitin and Praful). The powerful and touching words of the women make the men guilty of their crime. Jiten unleashes his emotions by running his car over an old lady and the couple Sridhar and Lalitha soon leave the Trivedi household after witnessing the fearful incident. The final scene of the play opens up the shocking reality of the life of Nitin and Alka. Nitin finally speaks out to Alka about his homosexual relationship with her brother Praful though she is completely immersed in alcohol and is fast asleep. He says that the very reason behind his marriage with Alka was to continue his relationship with Praful. Though he initially restrained from continuing his homosexual relationship with Praful, Praful was least bothered about the plight of his sister. When the play ends, we find that Nitin makes an exit to the kitchen to reach the servant's quarters to visit the auto-driver who is waiting for him.

Although the play makes only oblique references to alternative sexuality, an incisive analysis of it lights up the components of queer discourse in it. Nitin leaves for the auto-driver in the servant's quarters during the night when Alka sleeps. It points out night as the queer time, a time when everyone sleeps, and thus an apt time for the queer activities to be carried out. They meet in the outhouse which is at the back of the house. This location indicates a space for the queer that is placed away from the main section of the house so that there is

limited entry of the mainstream. Earlier in the play, Nitin mentions about the auto-driver while narrating an instance of Jiten's reckless driving to Sridhar. He tells Sridhar how the powerful arms of the auto-driver were put around Jiten when the latter tried to speed his car after toppling the driver's parked auto-rikshaw. The driver was not willing to take his hands and he looked violent in that situation. The instance suggests the erotic pleasure of the auto-driver when he put his arms around Jiten. The action is an evidence for the queer gesture in the play. Towards the end of the play the same auto-driver climbs up the wall of the Trivedi household to reach the outhouse. Nitin leaves for him telling Alka, "...You mustn't watch ...those powerful arms ..." (CP 315). Above all, the silence regarding the alternative sexuality in the play till its concluding scene itself is a queer expression. It indicates the passive homosexuality of Nitin and Praful. They cannot lead openly a gay life as it is against the norms. Nitin's least concern for his wife, Praful's rudeness and the violent look of the auto-driver are other instances of queer expressions of the play. Their odd behaviour is a result of their dissatisfactions in life. The gender ambiguity and the gender ambivalence of the gay characters Nitin and Praful remains concealed in the patriarchally conditioned heterosexual marriages.

In *Dance Like a Man*, Dattani again testifies the discursive construction of gender and sexuality in terms of power relations. Through the character of Jairaj, a Bharatnatyam dancer, he unravels the fact that the construction of male/female binary does not have any basis in biology, nature or reason. The play penetrates deeply into Jairaj to problematise the notion of masculinity as

defined by society. Jairaj proves that a male choosing dance - usually attributed as a female's art form - as his career is fraught with enormous troubles. The play swings between the time present and the time past to capture the challenges in the lives of the dancing couple Jairaj and Ratna during their younger days and a couple of decades later. As young couple Jairaj and Ratna live with Amritlal Parekh, Jairaj's father, a renowned freedom fighter and social reformer. An ardent patriarch, Amritlal is strongly against his son becoming a professional dancer. For him dance is the craft of a prostitute. It is difficult for him to accept that the childhood passion of his son has developed into his career. He says that he would have been happier to make a cricket pitch for his son. He is starkly against his son clinging on to a platform meant for women. Amritlal represents the stereotypical men in society who adhere to the male/female gender binary as the norm. Dattani here points to the meaninglessness of the truth of the notions of the male and the female. A person may be biologically born a man but it does not mean that he would not develop interests towards those areas which are attributed to women. Moreover, dance is basically an art; it is meant for anyone despite any gender difference. But its social construction makes it an art meant for the female. The playwright brings forward the practice of keeping away certain forms of knowledge away from the realm of truth. Focusing on a male dancer, the play sticks to Foucault's postulation that truth is not singular but plural.

The play begins with Jairaj and Ratna, the middle aged couple who anxiously prepare for their daughter Lata's dance performance. Lata brings

into their house her fiancé, Viswas, the son of a rich mithaiwala. She brings Viswas to the Parekh mansion built by her late grandfather, Amritlal Parekh. Though not alive, the house resonates with Amritlal Parekh's strong presence. In between the conversations of Jairaj and Viswas, Jairaj unleashes the miseries he confronts with as a dancer - son of a father who turned bitter against his son's dancing career. The stark contrast between the notion of masculinity as he keeps and the one which his father always maintains, creates a friction in the father-son relationship. Jairaj tells Viswas that Amritlal Parekh made his life from the houses and bungalows which he bought cheap. He sold them when the British left India and spent the money by giving personal loans to his friends and relatives. But he never gave his son a rupee. For him, his father is a social reformer who reconstructed India with his own money.

As a man with progressive ideas Amritlal accepted Ratna, who is from another community, as his daughter-in-law. But he never encourages her visits to Chenni amma to learn a dying art form. Amritlal, a New elite in the country, degrades the old woman as devdasi, a prostitute. He is ashamed of his friends telling him about his daughter-in-law's visit to such a woman. He makes arrangements for financial assistance and medical check-up for the old lady, but does not want his children associating with such women. Jairaj argues with him that people like Chenni amma miss out the dignity of a dancer and resort to selling their bodies due to such people who misinterpret their dancing career as prostitution. A man of high esteem, Amritlal belongs to the powerful category in society who decides what the norm is, what is accepted and what is

not accepted. The powerful creates the knowledge about devdasis as women of loose morals. The context highlights how certain categories of people are forcefully drawn to the peripheries. They lack the power to create knowledge in society and is forced to accept their lower status in society.

Ratna, the most dominant character in the play, is extremely passionate about her career as a dancer. Amritlal who does not want his son to stay in his dancing career cleverly enters into an agreement with her. He would provide all the necessities to develop her career so that Jairaj, an average dancer, would get eclipsed under her. Amritlal would then make his son as worthy as Ratna. Ratna thus always makes Jairaj dance under her shadow and uses him as a mere stage prop. Jairaj is thus a pathetic character who is crushed between his father, an ardent patriarch, and his wife, who is too much ambitious about her career. He very well realizes how he gets wretched between them. He finds solace in alcohol, which again deteriorates him.

The play reveals towards its end another character Shankar. He is the son of the dancing couple who lost his life as a baby under the careless arms of his ayah. The alcoholic father and a mother who is too much obsessed with her career failed to provide him proper care. Though Jairaj was present in the house he could not pay attention to his son under the intoxication of alcohol. Shankar never appears in the play, but he forms a strong factor which binds Jairaj and Ratna together. Despite the friction between the couple, the guilt of losing their son hangs heavily on them. Shankar becomes a pathetic victim of

the gender norms as defined by society. Jairaj wanted to teach him the dance of Siva, tandava nritya, which is identified with the male. He would make his son perform it on Amritlal, as the lord of the dance, beating the drum and trampling the demon. It is highly symbolic as Amritlal, who adheres to the stereotypical gender norms in society, is equated with the demon. Jairaj wants his son to be trained in a manly dance because it makes him a man defined by society. He does not want his son to rot amidst the hollow gender norms of society.

In the play, Dattani offers sights of queer life to emphasize the existence of a queer discourse. The character of Jairaj as a feeble male, suppressed under his father and wife, stands odd in a patriarchal frame. He starkly goes against the general picture of the male as the sole authority of a family. He has chosen dance as his career, which is normally not a man's choice. His character makes him a queer body which is an essential component of a queer discourse. The dance Guruji, who does not appear in the play, but whose presence in the Parekh mansion is often mentioned, is another example of a queer body in the play. His long hairs and effeminate walking form queer expression and queer gesture in the play. The concept of the queer that Dattani elucidates in the play is of the people with ambiguous gender, those who cannot stick to the governing rules of masculinity and femininity. They underscore gender as a social construction by the powerful and a performance as posited by Butler.

Dattani, through the portrayal of gender ambiguity in *Dance Like a Man*, resists the gender norms in society. Through Jairaj he shows how individuals

are degraded and made imperfect in society if one fails to dance like the male or the female as defined by society. He makes evident in the play that the gender of an individual is greatly influenced by the social patterning. The character of Jairaj deconstructs the social patterning of gender as he proves that there are mismatches between this social patterning and one's individual choice of gender. The play underscores the fact that the socially patterned gender is a construction of the powerful and the powerless ambiguous genders naturally become submissive to this patterning.

Foucault maintains that discipline within a discourse plays a key role in controlling the behaviour of the people. The people speak and act according to what is regarded as discipline in a particular discourse. Thus, in the heteronormative discourse, anything beyond heteronormativity is not discipline. People are compelled to fix them within the frame of what is regarded as discipline. Anyone who cannot conform to it is not regarded as the normal. The five plays of Dattani discussed above portray people who cannot conform to the accepted roles of gender and sexuality in society. The discourse of gender and sexuality maintains heteronormativity as the discipline. Dattani's queer characters represent the categories in society who swim against the current of heteronormative discourse. But through the portrayal of the queer in the plays the playwright also asserts the prevalence of the discourse of the queer in society. The discursive analysis of the plays makes evident the factors mandatory for the formation of a queer discourse as posited by McHoul in *Foucault Primer*. Almost all the plays comprise of the queer components of

objects, operations, concepts and theoretical options which make Dattani's plays a mirror to the queer discourse in society.

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai well represents queer space, queer time, queer expressions, queer bodies, queer language, queer gestures and queer attire through a variety of queer characters it brings onto the stage. The story of the play, the dialogues and the location of the play capture the portrayal of the queer components. The play is the best of Dattani where he incorporates almost all the components necessary to highlight a queer discourse in society. *Seven Steps Around the Fire* is another platform where Dattani unveils a queer discourse in society through the queer body of the hijras. The presentation of the queerness of the hijras through apt queer gestures, queer expressions, queer language and queer space sharply points towards a queer discourse. However, the playwright does not mention about a queer time, which is a remarkable factor that constitutes a queer discourse. Despite being a radio play, Dattani in *Do the Needful*, transcends the limitations of the visual impact of a stage play to represent the existence of a queer discourse. He beautifully presents the queer body of homosexuals through suitable queer language in the dialogues. The queer space about which the queer characters talk about and the queer time depicted in the play make it perfectly represent a queer discourse. However, being a radio play, it does not comprise the elements of queer expression, queer gestures and queer attire. *Dance Like a Man*, although an attempt from the playwright to emphasize a queer discourse, does not incorporate all the

components necessary for the discourse formation. The play offers an insightful peep into the queer body through the character of Jairaj. Though the dance Guruji does not appear in the play, Dattani, through the references made about him brings in elements of queer gestures. He also makes an excellent portrayal of the queer space through the location of the play. But he does not bring in the play any other elements like queer expression, queer language, queer attire and queer time. However, the concept of gender ambiguity he depicts in the play indeed dismantles the gender binary prevailing in society and emphasizes the queer discourse. *Bravely Fought the Queen* is the first play to handle the theme of alternative sexuality. But at the same time, the play mostly remains silent about the theme. Though Dattani meticulously incorporates good evidences of queer space, queer time, queer gestures and queer expressions in it, he has not touched upon the queer attire as the queer characters strongly lead a passive queer life. But this passive existence of the queer combined with the other components necessary for the formation of a queer discourse make the play highlight the clandestine life of the queer.

In all the five plays mentioned above, Dattani depicts the marginalization of gender and sexuality operating in society. He represents the poignant survival tactics of various categories of gender and sexual minorities like the gays, the lesbians, the *hijras* and the people who cannot conform to the gender norms of society. By portraying these marginalized categories, Dattani does not merely represent them on the stage. He crafts his plays with those elements necessary for the formation of a queer discourse. He attempts to retrieve a queer

discourse which goes submerged under the dominant heteronormative discourse in society. His is an arduous attempt to deconstruct the dominant heteronormative discourse which always drives the queer to the peripheries. Dattani's plays not only articulate the complex queer life but also functions as a platform of resistance for the queer. He depicts in his plays the queer as a victim and as a victimizer in society. The disapproval of society for the alternative sexuality and gender compels the queer to often cloak the realities of their queer instincts in the façade of heterosexual family life. Dattani portrays how the pseudo identities of the characters bring uncertainty and trauma to their life as well as to the people associated with them. He makes his characters resist the social norms which hamper the individual lives. Thus, Dattani's plays form an active platform for illuminating the queer discourse as a resisting site that combat the hegemony and oppression of the mainstream discourses. As a resisting discourse the queer functions as a counter-discourse and as a counter-culture. It offers an alternative and counter-hegemonic choice to the individuals and groups who cannot conform to the norms of sexuality fixed by the phallogentric social order. Through his dramatic art Dattani illustrates Foucault's view of how certain discourses are constructed as inferior; how the discursive energy is wasted to construct the discourses on homosexuality as inferior. Thus, he deconstructs the phallogentric construct of the male/female binary to emphasize that sexual and gender identities are fluid, unstable and contingent. Dattani's dramatic discourses subvert and deconstruct the phallogentric discourse of heteronormativity.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Politics, often synonymously used with ideology, can be defined in manifold ways. Politics is most often related to the unconscious and the assimilation of ideas. But a different form of politics can be identified in the practice of everyday. Cultural theorists like Henry Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and James C. Scott have formulated their resistance theories in connection with the practice of everyday. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson have illustrated the perceptible link between rituals and resistance in the context of the everyday practice. Politics as an everyday practice is a conscious strategy used by the marginalized to resist hegemonic power structures. In this regard, politics can be related to the production and realization of new knowledge regimes. The new knowledge produced need be verified through the discretionary power of the individual. Politics consists in the discretionary use of new knowledge. In everyday practice this new epistemic structures are obliquely applied to the advantage of the marginalized communities. Lefebvre, de Certeau Scott, Hall and Jefferson assert that the practice of everyday is a silent form of resistance.

Homosexuality or the queer experience is a new epistemic practice rather than an identity or a state. The queer is required to realize the new knowledge produced by its experience and apply it with discretion in life. The queer politics consists in transforming the objective knowledge of their experience into knowledge tested by discretionary power. This can be accomplished in

several ways. The most obvious ways include the construction of the queer identity, the problematising of the queer identity and the discursive production of the queer identity. These are different ways of articulating the queer identity. Articulation is an inevitable consequence of struggle and resistance.

The concept of identity has undergone radical changes in poststructuralism. Identity as a rigid state of being or a fixed state is challenged by post-structuralist theorists. Identity is now regarded as a contingent and unstable state, a process of becoming, a flux of space and time, something perpetually evolving and transforming. The flexibility and instability of identity or rather its contingent nature makes the very conception of identity complex and problematic. The fluid nature of identity also makes its representation intricate, making its textual construction complex. The representation of fluid and contingent identity questions the concept of reality discursively or textually represented in cultural products. This problematic of identity construction subverts hermeneutic practices. Therefore, cultural products like drama elude interpretation on account of the flexible identity structured in the semiotic level of the text. In this context, signification itself becomes a subversive process. Therefore, the art of interpretation of cultural products as semiotic systems becomes complicated.

The conception of identity has undergone a sea change with the emergence of cultural studies. Cultural studies has adopted cultural studies paradigm to interpret cultural productions. Any cultural product is a representation

of cultural identity of the artist. A reading or interpretation of a cultural text is a recreation of the cultural identity. The reader or the spectator tries to find his/her cultural identity in the text. But cultural identity is not a singular or monovalent construct. It is a matrix of relations based on several cultural construct like race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality and so on. Cultural politics deals with the construction and representation of cultural identity. Cultural politics is defined as a politics of difference. Identity and difference are the key words which explain the operation of cultural politics. In cultural politics, identity is defined in terms of difference: one's identity is defined as one's difference from others. Thus, cultural studies has further complicated the construction and representation of identity already unsettled and destabilized by post-structuralist theories.

Gender and sexuality are two interrelated cultural concepts that constitute the cultural identity of an individual. The concepts of gender and sexuality have evolved from fixed, stable categories to fluid and contingent ones. The second wave feminists argue that gender is a social/cultural construct which is a product of institutional and cultural practices. They are criticized for their concept of monolithic gender identity. They construct female identity as the cultural "Other" of the male identity. The binary structure of the male/female makes the other forms of gender invisible or redundant. But post-structuralist thinkers like Foucault challenge the binary construction of gender. Following the argument of Foucault, third wave feminist like Butler and de Lauretis attempt to identify other forms of gender. Butler has made a radical proposition

that gender is performative. She defines performance as “repetition of stylized acts.” Butler has thus dissociated gender from the sexed body. In this regard it is worthwhile to recall the statement by De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*: “Every female human-being is not necessarily a woman” (1). The sexed body and gender have no one to one correspondence. Gender is performed by the sexed body through the repetition of stylized acts. De Lauretis has attempted to represent gender based on Foucault’s technological perspective where he defines social relations in terms of power structures. In “Technologies of Gender” she tries to represent gender as a set of power relations. Therefore masculine and feminine genders and their relationships are explained in terms of the paradigms of power which they are subjected to. Power structures act upon individuals in political conditions like patriarchy making them masculine and feminine. Thus gender is conditioned by power structures to which the individual is subjected to.

Like gender, sexuality is a cultural construct defined in terms of desire. In its simplest definition sexuality is the expected sexual behaviour of an individual. Sexuality becomes a problematic concept with Foucault’s three volume comprehensive study, *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault has made two important contributions to the study of sexuality. He explains how human sexuality has transformed from collective sexuality to individual sexuality. The modern form of individual sexuality is a contribution of capitalism. Foucault also explains how sexuality is discursively constructed in cultural products like art and literature. He also illustrates how sexuality is repressed in ancient and

medieval cultures, connecting it with taboo and incest. He explores the repressive hypothesis to show that sexuality has been repressed in the social unconscious and has been conspicuous by its absence in cultural products. Foucault connects sexuality with heteronormativity which is the foundation of patriarchal social order. While endorsing the Freudian concept that homosexuality is not an aberration, Foucault argues that homosexuality is embedded in heterosexuality. The binary heterosexuality/homosexuality operates on the Derridian concept of supplementarity. According to Derrida, a supplement is at once a substitution and an addition. Therefore, homosexuality is a possible replacement and a new addition to heterosexuality. But Foucault is silent about the range and variety of homosexuality. Contemporary feminists like Butler argue that, unlike heterosexuality, homosexuality is not monolithic. According to her, sexuality like gender is performative. She proposes a variety of homosexuality based on the performance of the sexed body.

Butler's concept of gender and sexuality as performative leads to the possibility of multiplicity of gender and sexuality. But sexuality is centred on desire. In a phallogocentric perspective heterosexuality is the norm or the mainstream sexuality. Since there is no one to one correlation between sexed body and gender, and since performance is based on desire, there is the possibility of a mismatch between sexed body, gender and sexuality. This situation leads to the existence of what is called queer. Queer is a broad category that stands for all sub categories of minor forms of sexualities. In other words, queer stands for all forms of gender other than the gender binaries and all forms

of sexualities other than heterosexuality. Heterosexuality is characterized by unequal power relations between the sexual partners and is therefore hegemonic. But the queer consisting of minor sexualities are counter-hegemonic since they are characterized by equality of power relations between the sexual partners. Therefore, minor sexualities are always counter-hegemonic. Heterosexuality is considered as the only form of reproductive sexuality. Until recently, the sole objective of sexuality was procreation. It is for this reason that heterosexuality became the normative and mainstream sexuality. But heterosexuality is never essential when sexuality is intended as a form of pleasure. Therefore, homosexuality is always a substitute or an alternative to heterosexuality. This is especially true in contemporary societies where the same sex love is legalized and the conventional concepts of family, marriage and love are redefined. Thus, in the contemporary context, the queer or the minor sexualities are alternative and counter-hegemonic replacements for heterosexuality.

Queer consists of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, transsexuals, transvestites intersex, butch, femme and drags. As already stated, it consists of several forms of minor sexualities which are potential replacements for heterosexuality. Queer identity is the most representative of contingent and fluid form of gender and sexual identity. The queer is different from masculine and feminine identities on the one hand and is representative of a wide spectrum of subtly varied and meticulously differentiable form of sexual and gender identities on the other. Each subcategory of the queer is different from one another. The queer also accounts for gender ambivalence and gender ambiguity

shown by individuals. The queer also represents dual identities: a socially acceptable heterosexual identity in the public sphere and a socially unacceptable homosexual identity in the private life. The queer is also conditioned by queer space and queer time, which are odd and unnatural. The queer also represents everything that is not heteronormative. Therefore, the queer is often treated as the cultural/social “Other” of the heteronormative. But the queer can be fairly represented as a subtly defined cultural identity. Therefore the representation of the queer is a cultural politics of gender and sexuality.

Dattani’s plays represent the paradigms of alternative gender and sexuality. His plays represent the homosocial desire of the upper class urban Indians who confront the conflict between conventional concepts of family and marriage and the unconventional but psychologically desirable concepts of love and sexuality. The plays selected for study are *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Do the Needful*, *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, *Dance Like A Man* and *The Girl Who Touched the Stars*. They represent different aspects of queer identity and the contingent nature of gender and sexuality, especially of the urban middle class Indian. The plays show that the queer or homosexuality is not monolithic or homogenous. It is a conglomeration of several minor sexualities. Dattani also emphasizes that, unlike heteronormative relations, the queer represents relations defined by equality of power and responsibility. Dattani thus projects the queer as sexually ambivalent but devoid of hegemony and oppression which are the characteristics of heteronormativity. His is an attempt to represent the queer as counter-

hegemonic to the heteronormative regimes. The dramatic platform of Dattani becomes a space where the voiceless queer emerges out with their own voice. His plays vividly present the hegemonic power that silences the queer and validates heteronormativity as the right form of sexuality. The plays portray Foucault's concept of power which makes Joseph D. Lewandowski to posit the modern human subject as Janus faced. With one face Foucault sees power as that "produces or objectifies human-beings;" that is what makes an individual. With the other face, Foucault looks forward and sees the possibilities of individual subject's capacities for self-making, thereby perceiving subjects as bodily sites of resistance to various networks of power and truth regimes (221). Power objectifies human beings into individuals and individual subjects into bodily sites of resistance. He suggests that agency is inherent in every individual subject. Dattani's plays are thus a mirror to the suppression of the queer within the powerful heteronormative framework and a manifestation of their infringed instincts of resistance.

Dattani's plays selected for study are successively interrogated from the perspectives of the queer identity, the problematic of the queer and queer discourses. These are interrelated perspectives that can be illustrated from poststructuralist theoretical positions. These perspectives are also typically Foucauldian in origin. Study of the evolution of gender and sexuality from genealogical and technological perspectives unravels the problematic as well as the discursive construction of the queer. Study of the queer from the archaeological perspective brings new forms of knowledge of sexuality. What

transpires from these studies is that identity is problematic and the queer identity is all the more problematic and is discursively constructed.

Identity is a product of articulation. Therefore, identity is related to subject positions and is always defined in terms of the Self and the Other. When identity is defined in terms of the Self and the Other, the Self is treated as the norm and the Other is deemed as the deviant. But in poststructuralist thinking, identity transcends the binary structure of the Self and the Other. In the case of the marginalized groups like the queer, identity is more a marker of collectivity than a characteristic of individuality. In this context, identity is often defined as the collective ways of expressing social relations. But this does not mean that individual identity is inconsequential, rather the individual experiences conform to the collective experiences. This identity often oscillates between its collective manifestation and individual expression.

All the schools of poststructuralism destabilize the notion of an essential and stable identity and challenge the binary structure through which identity is constructed. Foucault deconstructs the notion of fixed, stable, autonomous and definite identity and interrogates the ways in which subjectivity is formed. Foucault argues that subjectivity is the product of dominant discourses and subject positions and identity formations are context bound and controlled by discursive agencies. Derrida also deconstructs the way identity is constructed. In the binary structure of identity construction, identity is defined in relation to the "Other" which again context is bound. By introducing the concept of

supplementarity and the unique position of the supplement as at once a substitute and an addition, Derrida undermines the normative mode of identity formation. Lacan also challenges the rigid, definite identity through his concepts of the three stages and the Symbolic Order. In Lacan's view identity is a position arrived at through misrecognition and fragmentation. Lacan also emphasizes identity as a manifestation of subject positions defined in terms of proximity to the Symbolic Order called phallus. Lacan stresses the role of language in the construction of identity and endorses Jakobson's views of metaphor and metonymy as devices capable of locating identity in the structures of a text. Lacan insists that identity is a linguistic construct conditioned by a phallogocentric social order. The French feminists challenge Lacan and formulate the possibility of an identity which transcends the Symbolic Order of language. They propose an alternative semiotics in which the Symbolic Order is replaced by the Semiotic Chora, which is a receptacle of feminine experiences. They propose a subjectivity constructed through mapping the gendered body within the text. Thus, for the French feminists, identity is a product of textual practices and text or textuality is inevitably connected to gendered body and sexuality. The arguments of all poststructuralist schools converge in the problematic of identity.

In Foucault's critique of genealogy, he considers genealogy as a critique and resistance at the same time. In genealogical perspective, identity is formed as a critique in the social context in which the subject is positioned to articulate. Articulation itself is an inevitable response to oppressive structures manifested

in the form of binary, stable and centred identities. Therefore, articulation is a form of resistance. It is in this sense that subjectivity often becomes a form of resistance. When the subject responds to cultural contexts the articulating identity becomes a form of counter culture. Thus, in Foucault's genealogical perspective, subjectivity, identity, critique, resistance and counter culture are all interrelated. The queer is the best category which can illustrate Foucault's critique of Nietzschean genealogy.

In contemporary cultural critique, identity is a contested category. Cultural theorists like Hall, West and Clifford argue that identity formation is a problematic and complex process. They view subjectivity as a contested territory. Identity is a product of identification which is a perpetually evolving process. Identification involves historicizing, contextualizing and pluralizing the contingent, fluid and flexible self. The cultural theorists make the study of identity multifaceted and poly dimensional. They look at identity as the process of negotiating between one's social self and individual self. Since identity is a product of subjectivity, its heterogeneous nature constituted by the voices of enunciation cannot be ruled out.

Dattani's plays analyzed in the study vividly articulate of the notion of identity as fluid and contingent. He unravels the fluidity of gender and sexual identity through his queer characters. The power dominant structures construct heteronormativity as the right form of sexuality so that any gender outside the male/female gender binary is treated aberrant. The gender and sexual identity

of the queer characters of Dattani is as seen fluctuating. The queer is aware that it is not possible to lead a peaceful life in society with their strange sexuality. They are forced to veil their real sexual identities in the public sphere. Though queer by nature, they may simultaneously lead a normal joyful life in the public. They maintain their homosexual relationship with their partners without the knowledge of society in their private places. Such contexts undermine the concept of identity. The queer individuals often live with a dual identity: a heteronormative identity in the public sphere and a homosexual identity in the private sphere. Therefore, queer identity is fractured or fragmented and context bound. Thus, Dattani's plays maintain that identity of an individual is a contextual.

The queer constitutes sexual minorities. As a marginalized group, the narrative voice of the queer is a conglomeration of heterogeneous identities and subjectivities. The queer narratives like Dattani's plays selected for study differentiate between individual identity and communal identity. The queer belongs to the sexual subalterns. The gendered self of the queer seldom finds expressions in the mainstream narratives. Since the mainstream narratives conform to heteronormativity, the queer has to articulate their identity or subjectivity in marginal discourses. They have to dissociate themselves from the mainstream hegemonic narratives on the one hand and heteronormative discourses to express the queer identity on the other. But the best alternative is to invent a new queer narrative which synthesizes the sexual politics of the queer and the new aesthetic of their queer politics. As this is a distant dream,

the queer has to borrow the mainstream narratives, appropriate and adapt them in such a way as to truly express the queer identity. In other words, they have to adapt and appropriate the heteronormative discourses or narratives into derivative discourses or narratives of the queer.

Butler has deconstructed the essentialist nature of the sexual identity of the queer. The queer becomes problematic when the individual performs sexual/gender identity as a repetition of stylized acts. So a sexed body cannot ensure a pre-ordained gender or sexuality. In this context, the queer itself is the outcome of an intricate mismatching between sexed body, gender and sexuality. The subtlety of the queer is evident as the queer itself consists of a variety of minor sexualities. The queer thus deconstructs the popular notion of homosexuality as monolithic, oppositional practice. Thus, several factors have contributed to the complexity of the queer as a sexual and gender category. The queer is a fractured, fragmented and multivalent subject.

Foucault points out that homosexuality is an epistemic practice rather than an identity. The archaeology of homosexuality has existed prior to homosexual identity. The constructed nature of homosexuality as an epistemic structure undermines the manifestation of homosexuality as a form of identity. The queer therefore also stands for epistemic and ontological possibilities. But queer is an outcome of institutional and cultural practices. The possibility of the queer as a non-oppressive and non-heteronormative gender provides a unique position to the queer in the study of gender and sexuality. The queer is

an attempt to reconcile materiality of sexuality and gendered identity of the body conditioned by homosocial desire.

The queer is constructed in opposition to the institutions of love, marriage and family. The phallogentric social order approved only reproductive sexuality and therefore heterosexuality became the basis for heteronormativity. The patriarchal structure of society is entrenched on heterosexuality. Patriarchy has colluded with religion to maintain heteronormativity. The gender difference is constructed in such a way as to exclude all forms of gender and sexualities beyond gender binaries and heteronormativity. Knowledge structures on gender and sexuality have come to be represented in terms of power structures. These power structures also exclude the queer from the social and institutional hierarchy. The sexual logic of the queer is treated as irrational to exclude the queer from acceptable social and cultural practices.

The queer is an identity and a subject position. Like the identity in the postmodernist context, the queer cannot be precisely defined. The queer is an example of the Derridean “undecidables,” a referent with many signifieds. Queer represents all forms of genders and sexualities other than the male and the female. Therefore, the queer transgresses the boundaries of genders and sexualities. The queer identity is characterized by instability and incoherence. The queer deviates our attention from deficient anatomies to alternative genders or sexual practices. The queer explores the unanticipated manifestations of the relations between gender and sexuality. It also

destabilizes conventional sexual identities and endorses fragmented, fractured and amorphous sexual identities and recognizes them as legitimate, alternative sexual identities.

The queer deals with the incongruence or incoherence between sexed body and sexual desire. Since sexuality is performative, gendered body cannot control sexuality. The queer represents sexual/cultural practices that transcend the nature of the gendered body. The queer identity is therefore uncertain and often ambivalent. Hegemonic heteronormative practices compel the queer to live a life of multiple identities. Many queer people at once live different lives in their social and private lives. They may conform to heteronormativity in the public sphere with a heterosexual family and children. They may also continue a clandestine non-heteronormative life in the private sphere of their queer life. This is because the queer identity is conditioned by queer space and queer time, which subverts the Cartesian coordinates of space and time. Since the same sex love or homosexual desire is not sometimes fulfilling and the queer successfully negotiates with social identity, their identity is said to have been conditioned by homosocial desire. What is unique about the queer world is the subtle and meticulous categories of genders and sexualities other than the gender binaries.

The queer is a contested zone of radical sexual politics. The queer identity is a complex web of diverse sexualities. The queer resists phallogentric and capitalist canons of gender and sexuality. Reproductive sexuality as a system controlled by bourgeois social structures is challenged by the queer. The

contemporary perspective of sexuality as an object of pleasure sanctify and legitimate queer relations. The queer considers gender and sexual identities as regulatory mechanisms endowed with contested cultural connotations. The queer negotiates the cultural gap between normative connections between sex, gender and sexualities and the practical individual life. What is most important about the queer is that it offers a possibility for the individual to choose a gender of one's choice and a sexuality of one's desire.

The major preoccupation of Dattani as a playwright has been to foreground the category of the queer. He legitimizes the alternative sexuality and gender portraying them as normal gender and sexual categories. He unveils the hollowness of the male/female gender binary and the construction of heteronormativity as the right mode of sexuality. His plays spread the search light towards the formation of queer identity in society. They genuinely investigate the play of power in the making of queer identity. Homosexuals, transgenders and the people who cannot stick to the gender norms of society usually become objects of scorn and ridicule in society. But Dattani makes them the protagonists to elucidate them as normal human-beings. He also entwines in his plays the issue of subordination of women in a patriarchal set up. He examines the ways in which the sexual and gender minorities accept their subordination as natural and never feel their subordinated status. In his plays Dattani deconstructs the essentialist notion of gender and sexual identities portraying the bitter realities of the queer life. He emphasizes on the futility of

gender and sexual norms in society which force the queer to live with a false identity.

The queer is a discursive realm of power and knowledge. Discourse is generally a body of knowledge which follows a common approach and a common methodology. Discourses combine to make disciplines which are subject to social control. Social or cultural practices institutionalize discourse. Therefore, discourses become ideologically or culturally stabilized or institutionalized modes of representation. Discourses connect power and knowledge. The queer is at once an epistemic structure and a power structure. These two aspects of the queer are represented in queer discourse. But in all societies certain discourses become dominant and hegemonic while certain other discourses are marginalized. The queer is a marginalized discourse. Dominant discourses treat the queer knowledge as negative and the queer as subservient to the dominant power structures.

As knowledge and power are analogous structures, discourse, power and knowledge are interconnected. The discursive zone is a space where knowledge and power structures can be located. As culturally structured form of knowledge, discourse forms a highly regulated set of statements. Foucault's third method, the archaeological approach, can be used to analyze the epistemological aspect of discourse. The study of any discourse takes place at three levels: institutions, practices and statements. In Foucault's view, discourse is subject to social control. Social institutions and political systems often control

discourse. Every society designs its own procedures to select, organize and control discourses. Discourse is not a single uniform medium. It is a set of power structures that textually construct the relation between power and knowledge. The queer as a discourse is controlled by social institutions and cultural practices. The queer is repressed by institutions like family and religion and is excluded by educational systems.

The relation between power and knowledge can be explained through discourse. Foucault regards power as positive and productive. According to him, power is a network of relations in a society. Power is neither a possession nor a state. Power is pervasive and acts on individuals and spaces. Foucault rules out the pyramidal or hierarchical structure of power as a unidirectional or unipolar relation between the oppressor and the victim. In his view, even in the most oppressive system power is accessible to the victim. Foucault envisages a state in which there is no individual without agency and no victim incapable of resistance. Though the queer is the marginalized of the marginalized, it is endowed with agency and is capable of resistance.

The queer as a discourse is subordinated by the appropriation of educational systems. Education is a regulatory mechanism to control discourses. The queer is controlled by didactic systems like essentialism. The repressive practices related to the queer produce undesirable consequences in the realm of sexuality. There is also an intricate connection between hegemony, ideology, interpellation and discursive practices. Hegemony is

often regarded as an intellectual or moral leadership that controls discourses. The queer is subject to hegemonic practices of heteronormativity. Hegemony is usually divided into social hegemony and political government. The social hegemony marginalizes the queer and political government oppresses the queer. Both types of hegemony subject the queer to objective violence: social hegemony uses epistemic or symbolic violence and political government uses systemic violence. Discourse inscribes ideologies on subjects and in discursive spaces. Discourse also interpellates subjects. Queer discourse interpellates the queer as subjects and enables them to articulate.

The function of discourses is conditioned by ideological structures. Ideology is a system of ideas and representations that dominate the unconscious. Althusser and Williams argue that ideology has a material existence. This materiality of ideology enables interpellation: converting concrete individuals into concrete subjects. It is through interpellation that discourses construct subject positions and identities. In other words, subjectivity and identity are products of textual practices. The queer identity or the queer self get stabilized through literary discourses like drama or fiction. Interpellation is a form of naming the subjects and operates at different levels in a society. There are four identifiable components in any discourse: objects, operations, concepts and theoretical options. When the queer discourse is analyzed from this perspective the analysis involves queer body, queer space, queer time, queer expression, queer dressing, sub-categories of the queer like transgenders, transsexuals, transvestites and theoretical concepts like gender and sexuality.

Dattani does not merely represent the queer in his plays. He makes an arduous attempt to retrieve a queer discourse in society which goes submerged under the heteronormative discourse. The plays light up the ways in which the queer discourse is pushed to the peripheries, denying its existence in society. The playwright also makes his dramatic platform a space to reveal the resistance of the queer against their marginalization. The queer is often forced to conceal their sexual identity for a normal life in society. Dattani depicts how trauma creeps on them with their fragmented existence. He also shows how this false life of the queer affects the people associated with them. Thus, he makes the queer as a victim and victimizer in society. While he examines how power makes knowledge about the powerless, he also elucidates how power can be fruitful. He lifts the curtain of the power of the queer to resist the heteronormative hegemony through his plays. He makes the queer discourse counter-hegemonic to the patriarchal regimes.

The select plays of Dattani establish the theoretical proposition that gender and sexuality are cultural constructs that constitute the queer identity. The study also illustrates Butler's conception of gender and sexuality as performative and therefore there is no correlation between sexed body and sexual practices. This fact justifies the emergence of alternative genders and sexualities. In Foucauldian view of genealogy and technology, gender and sexuality as manifest in the queer can be constituted as power structures. In Foucauldian archaeological approach, the emergence of the queer as a knowledge practice can be represented as an epistemic structure. The

poststructuralist view of fluidity of gender and sexuality legitimates the significance of the queer as an alternative to fixed binaries of gender and sexuality. Thus, the radical sexual politics of the queer constructs the queer as a discursive space of alternative and counter hegemonic sexual practices. Dattani's plays illustrate this radical queer politics in the context of urban Indian middle class.

Dattani's plays construct the queer identity as a contingent, fluid and unstable category. In this process, the plays subvert the structuralist conception of identity as stable and fixed, and establish the construction of identity as an unstable flux. The queer identity appears as flexible and unstable as it is characterized by gender ambiguity and gender ambivalence. Dattani's plays problematize the queer as a cultural construction. The problematic is constituted by the epistemological and ontological possibilities associated with the queer as a gender/sexual category. The greatest aesthetic achievement of Dattani rests with his art of problematizing the queer. The plays also illustrate how the queer is discursively constructed in the plays selected for study. Dattani seems to endorse the coherent relationship between discourse, power and knowledge in the matter of the queer. The relationship between discourse and power validates the queer resistance. Likewise, the interconnectedness of discourse and knowledge legitimates the alternative epistemological practices explored by the queer. The fourfold queer analysis of Dattani's plays shows that the queer constitutes an alternative and counter-hegemonic discourse to heteronormativity.

Dattani's plays are structural paradigms of queer identity problematised at epistemological and ontological levels. They subvert and undermine heteronormative discourses to emphasize the queer discourse as a textual practice. The study results in the logical understanding of a striking analogy between the queer and the postcolonial identities. The queer and the postcolonial are culturally heterogeneous and hybrid identities formed against the possibilities of assimilation. Both the queer and the postcolonial are characterized by a double articulation and double consciousness. In the case of queer, it is the result of gender ambiguity and gender ambivalence. The double consciousness of the queer is conditioned by the paradoxical position of the queer as the subject and the object at the same time. The postcolonial is characterized by a "colonial ambivalence" and universalism which Homi K. Bhabha speaks about in his *The Location of Culture* (104- 105). The postcolonial is also defined by the cultural hybridity produced by the interactions between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized. The double consciousness of the postcolonial is constituted by the experiences as oppressed subjects in the colonial period and a sense of emancipation in the postcolonial period. The linguistic dilemma of the postcolonial manifest in the form of a schizophrenic split is equally applicable to the queer. The split of the self in Jameson's view is a form of linguistic disorder of fragmentation and discontinuity (Foster 114). The queer expressions, the queer registers and the queer speech conform to the fact that the queer also undergoes some form of linguistic disorder emblematic of schizophrenia. Benedict Anderson's concept

of the imagined community is applicable to both the queer and the postcolonial (4). The members of the queer community are bound together by the cultural politics of identity and difference. The postcolonial subjects are connected through the cohesive force of a national culture. Like the postcolonial, the queer also undergoes a conflict between the spatial and the temporal elements, the inside and the outside, the centre and the margins. As subjects, the queer is confronted by the threat of displacement and dislocation, a similar experience undergone by the postcolonial subjects. Like the postcolonial, the queer also confronts a cultural chaos: this has a parallel to the postcolonial encounter with the home as an imagined space. But the queer's longing to transcend the cultural chaos in the imaginative landscape is realized through a convergence of queer space and queer time. The postcolonial transforms the liminal space of in-betweenness into a zone of cultural resistance. In a similar manner, the queer transforms the imagined landscape constituted by queer space and queer time into a cultural zone of resistance. Thus, there are several parallels between the queer and the postcolonial. The explication and critique of these parallels form the scope of another doctoral thesis. It can be concluded that, Dattani's plays present a brave new world where the postcolonial and the queer intersect. Dattani's dramaturgy creates a kind of rational theatre where he proceeds with the most innovative act of queering the postcolonial.

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Appendix

My Interview with Mahesh Dattani

G.P.J: *I have read almost all your plays and I find that you have a special interest in the theme of gender, especially, the subjugated genders – the women and the gays. What do you think is the cause of this subjugation? How far can we see drama as a tool to limit this subjugation or is it possible to erase this subjugation as a whole?*

M.D: These subjugations or these conflicts in society are timeless. Drama cannot change society. What drama can do is to put the spotlight where society refuses to think. Society classifies male as the first gender, female as the second gender and the third one as the transgender. The second and the third genders become the oppressed. These conflicts exist in society. They are indeed difficult conflicts which society does not normally look at. Where society is concerned about ignoring progression, where society is concerned about value systems, where society is concerned about preserving and maintaining family, the job of the theatre is to throw the spotlight on these things to show that these are the areas where society needs to look at and change. It holds a mirror to society. It looks at the conflict between who we really are and what the society want us to be.

G.P.J: *In almost all your plays family and society often become a villain in the lives of the characters. Could you elaborate on the influence of family and society on an individual's identity?*

M.D. Conflict between individual and society is very apparent in our time of cultural transition. The values that need to be preserved and the values that are being preserved are what I represent through family in my plays. In the play *Dance Like a Man*, the family is opposed to Jairaj as he is a Bharatnatyam dancer. The family expects him to join the family business and does not want him to be a dancer, as in society dance is a female's art. Jairaj's conflict is with his gender identity. The conflict is between the aspirations of an individual and what the society expects from an individual. The family shapes an individual's identity according to the tastes of the society.

G.P.J: *When you deal with sexual marginality do you have any intention of critiquing the hegemony of heteronormativity?*

M.D: Absolutely yes. Society thrives on an assumption that whatever belongs to the majority, the powerful is the right and whatever belongs to the minority, the powerless is the wrong. Earlier the concept of a good society depended on a good king ruling over his subjects. But now things have changed. In the 20th and 21st centuries egalitarianism is the backbone of the concept of a healthy society. Every individual deserves dignity and respect. That is what makes an ideal society. Keeping that in my mind, it is not the matter of sexual minority or any form of minority that I deal with. It is more of a self, a dignified self of an individual.

G.P.J: *You are a Bharatnatyam dancer. Does it have anything to do with the play Dance Like a Man?*

The inspiration came after I studied Bharatnatyam. Dance is a popular art form in the initial post-independent India and at the present times. At the same time, being a dancer for a women then was a stigma because it was associated with devdasis. For men it is double problematic as it is a seductress's dance and an art form socially meant for women.

G.P.J: *Is the protagonist of this play a victim of patriarchy?*

M.D: Yes. That is what the play is. The play is opposing the patriarchal order which keeps men at the top of the gender hierarchy. Any man who diverts from the prescribed norms of being a man is viewed with scorn. Dance being an art form prescribed for female, it is not encouraged for men. *Dance Like a Man*, through the character of Jairaj critiques patriarchy as its norms are social constructions which go against innate individual tastes.

G.P.J: *Theatre is a mirror to society. It makes people aware about various social issues. You have written radio plays as well as scripts for films. Films and radio plays are more accessible to people than dramatic performances. So how far theatre is successful in bringing awareness to the people?*

M.D: Theatre has the power to go the peripheries. That is the job of the theatre. It may only have a limited audience. But the impact it makes on the audience is far greater. That is what I believe.

G.P.J: *Of course, theatre creates more impact on the people. But the dramatic performances are more expensive. Does that mean theatre is confined to the elite class?*

M.D: Sadly this is a serious problem we have because the production costs are rising. The only thing I can think of, regarding the question is, about the kinds of theatres. You can have theatre for social awareness with NGOs to sponsor. Then you have street performances, performances that go to all walks of life. These are the ways in which theatre can be brought to everyone in society.

G.P.J: *You have written screen plays, radio plays and stage plays. Where do you think is the social issues best manifested?*

M.D: I think stage. Films require huge investments from the producers and thus it may not be a good medium for social awareness. The play *Dance Like a Man* was made into a film. The play has had hundred performances but the movie is less popular.
