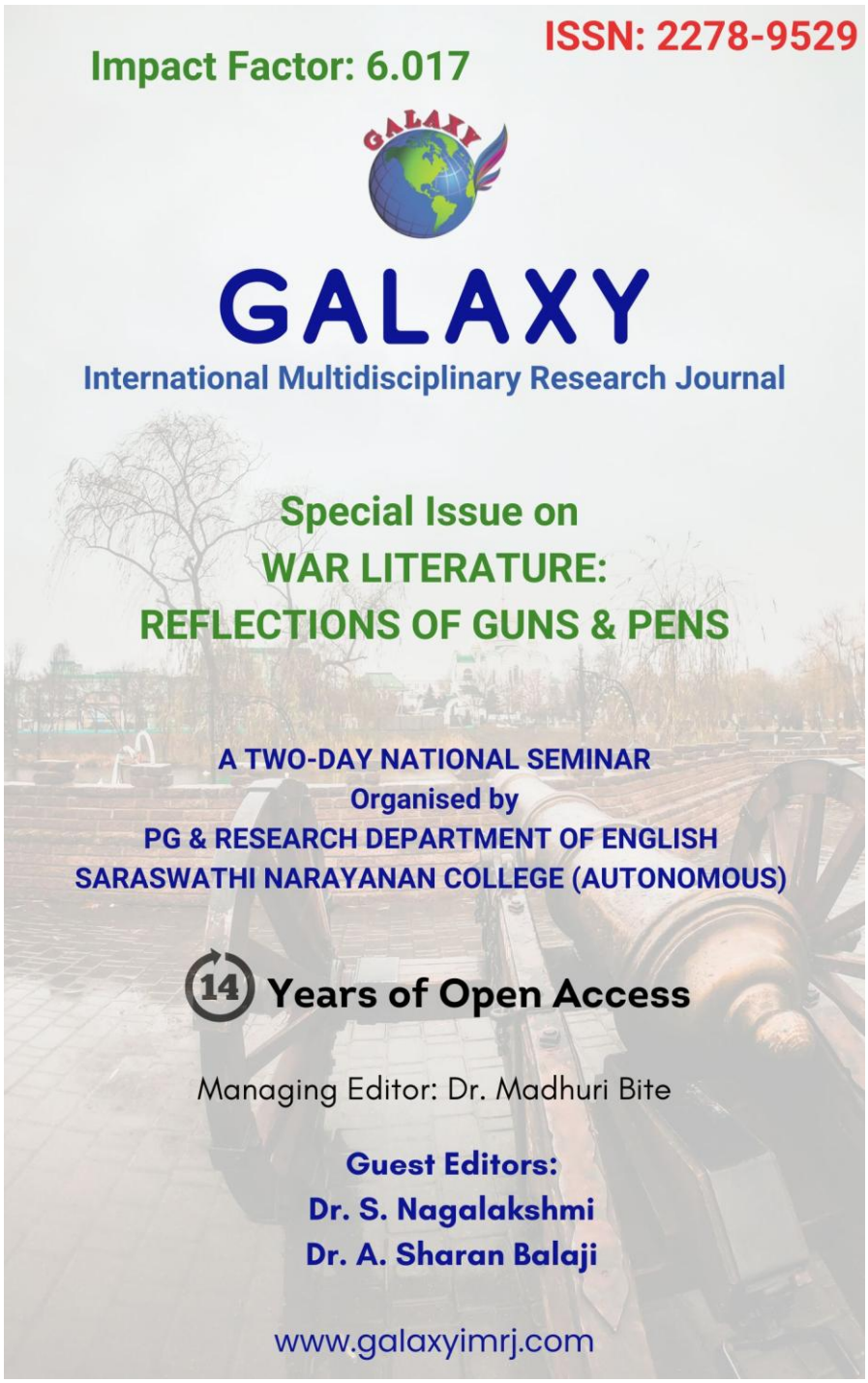


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A Psycho-Cultural Perspective on Gender Issues in Mahesh Dattani's *Do the Needful*

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Abstract:

This research looks at Mahesh Dattani's radio play *Do the Needful* from a psycho-cultural point of view to show how gender problems are shown in a complex way. Because he is a well-known writer in modern Indian English drama, Dattani breaks down the barriers that exist between social norms and individual needs, especially when it comes to sexuality and gender issues. It is important to note that the radio show Do the Needful takes a critical look at cultures that have strict ideas about what it means to be male or female, marriage, and sexuality in the Indian community. The study looks at how cultural factors, such as patriarchal systems, planned marriages, family honour, and heteronormativity rules in Indian society, affect the mental health of the characters, especially Alpesh and Lata. This study looks at the psychological tensions that arise from strict gender expectations and stifling atypical wants. It also looks at the defence mechanisms that people who are going through identity crises use. When people take on social pressures personally, they have mental health issues that cause broken relationships and force them to play gender roles that go against who they really are.

This study looks at how society sets gender roles through performance rituals that hurt people who don't fit these roles. As generations change, relationships go through power battles and identity formation. At the same time, people in the same social group keep up a subtle exchange of power. In their letters to each other, Alpesh and Lata reveal gendered

views, psychological interpretations, and hidden truths. Through the thoughts and feelings of its characters, the text shows how cultural barriers against gender identity exist in Indian culture. The study combines psychological and cultural aspects to show how Indian society affects how people create their own identities and their mental health. It also shows how important Dattani's work is in this literary talk about gender.

Keywords: Mahesh Dattani; third space; in-betweenness; marginalization; psycho-cultural; hegemony.

Introduction

Throughout its history, theatre has been an important way for society to look at itself. It does this by questioning social norms and bringing to light stories that have been kept secret. Mahesh Dattani is one of the most important figures in modern Indian English theatre because he writes plays about sensitive themes that most Indians would rather not talk about. In his dramatic works, Dattani looks at how people interact with each other and how established social norms clash with people who want to be themselves. In his radio play "Do the Needful," the author looks at gender roles, sexual desires, and how society in India puts a lot of pressure on people to live up to their identity standards. The basic correspondence between two characters, Alpesh and Lata, who are to get married through an arranged marriage, is what Dattani uses to show hidden desires, culture expectations, and strong social influences.

Using psycho-cultural methods, this study goes into great depth about the gender issues in Do the Needful. The study method takes into account that people's psychological traits are shaped by their cultural environment. The framework explains how cultural norms, such as values and beliefs, and social structures shape how people think, feel, act, and perceive themselves, as well as their habits of interacting with others. Personal psychological

experiences affect both how culture patterns stay the same and how they change. By looking at both psychological theories and Indian cultural elements in Dattani's work, we hope to see how the play deals with gender identities and shows how they clash and act.

The study looks at traditional Indian culture expectations about gender norms and heteronormativity, which have very negative psychological effects on the characters, as well as expectations of family honour. The study looks at how Alpesh acts and shapes his manhood before he feels pressured to stay straight because that's what his society wants him to be. Lata shows how rigidly women are expected to act as women while dealing with expectations and many lies in her situation. This study looks into how gender-based social rules affect our deepest thoughts and how we deal with them by ignoring and separating conscious parts of ourselves while feeling nervous about disclosure and going through the pain of acting like someone else while following gender-based social rules.

This study looks at how Dattani uses his characters in *Do the Needful* to make a psychological point against gender rules in Indian society that lead to bad situations. Do the Needful is a play that shows how traditional cultural rules about marriage and sexuality can lead to mental suffering that breaks up a person's identity, separates them from their feelings, and changes how they connect with others. Psychocultural analysis is used in this study to get a deeper understanding of what drives characters, their unspoken mental pain, and how cultural patterns shape the mind. However, the analysis shows that Dattani makes a significant addition to theatre by showing how strict gender norms can hurt individuals emotionally.

As part of her work *Do the Needful* Mahesh Dattani does a great job of looking at the complicated times when cultural gender and sexual norms clash with people's own personal behaviour in modern India. A acted talk about an arranged marriage creates a social structure

that places strong limits on the characters' feelings and greatly impacts how they feel. A psycho-cultural study lets us look further than what's on the surface and find out how strict social norms about heteronormativity and patriarchal gender systems affect people's minds, how they protect themselves, and how their identities change over time. The conversation between Alpesh and Lata is a good example of how external cultural pressures and real individual wants can come together to show how hard it is to live in a society that controls your gender and sexuality.

Most of the arguments for *Do the Needful* are based on arranged marriage. In a traditional family and society, getting married is based on what is good for other people, not just what the parents or possible spouses want for themselves. The institution is a major way to keep traditional heterosexual lineage rules in place and protect patriarchal power structures. For people who don't agree with social rules, traditional marriage is very stressful. Overwhelming societal pressure makes people either accept these conditions or face serious personal effects. For example, people are expected to marry in certain ways, play their gender roles, and have children as heirs.

Alpesh shows how this method for matching people up is affected by the huge pressures of society. Because of strong social pressures, he decided to give information about his marriage even though he is gay. If someone isn't married, they are open to social exclusion, harsh family criticism, and social question marks. In Indian culture, marriage is the most important way to show that you are an adult and fit in with society, especially for men who need to carry on the family name. In the beginning, Lata's job is to find good matches for her hidden brother as a family agent. Through her character, the book shows how women serve the marriage market by helping to make connections, but they don't have much say in what choices family heads make. The social rules about weddings set an outside framework that helps characters' inner psychological fights play out through disguises and staged

behaviour. Because of traditional expectations of what it means to be a man, Alpesh has to hide the fact that he is gay, which is bad for his mental health. Indian culture shapes men's identities by making them be in charge, act in a straight way, and have children. This is how Dattani describes the environment. Because Alpesh was raised with heterosexual gender ideals, his sexuality is a complete contradiction. His inner self is at odds with what society expects him to be like on the outside, which causes him a lot of mental pain because he has these contradictory thoughts.

The correspondence shows how this struggle affects people's minds on the inside. Readers of his letters can feel the terrible loneliness and deep fear that drive him to write. The author talks about how nervous he is about making new friends, but his fear of being judged keeps him in doubt all the time. His choice to tell "Trushant" about his sexuality was his most important reveal because he needs someone besides his family's close watch, and he thinks a man might understand him better, even though they both have a lot of wrong ideas about each other. He feels like he has lost a whole layer of skin when he tells the truth about his secrets. The weight of keeping them hidden is lifted from his mind. It feels like I either lost or gained an important part of myself that I never had before. Because he doesn't want his surroundings to be heteronormative or possibly mean to non-heterosexual expressions, he believes that the space around him supports male disclosure.

By agreeing to get married, Alpesh acts in a way that is typical of men. This fits with culture norms and keeps him from falling out of social grace. When you accept social judgements, your psychological reaction shows up as a protective behaviour. Because of how he was raised culturally, he has bad thoughts about himself that make him feel homophobic inside. His mental illness makes him feel stressed about the future, hateful towards himself, and cut off from other people. His mental state is a direct product of the psychocultural environment that doesn't allow for non-normative identities. This environment forces him to

make compromises that break up his identity. Through his one failed attempt at friendship, he shows how the need for closeness is a problem in traditional cultural settings.

Lata's journey in *Do the Needful* shows how women have to deal with traditional expectations that limit their choices and the choices that are available for how they should act. As a first step into the dominant system, her father gives her the job of writing letters for her brother. Cultural norms from the past say that girls should help their families by mediating and taking care of household duties. In the first few emails she sent, she used standard arranged marriage matchmaking language to talk about marriage suitability and family history. Through her writing, she had to act like she was a guy in a plan that began as a lie set up by her father.

The letters that Alpesh and Lata write turn into more than just work letters. Lata's relationship with Alpesh starts to change when he lets himself be himself. She changes from a scribe to a loyal friend through this conversation, but she gets private information that goes against the core values of the planned marriage. When she responds to his texts, something changes inside her. The letter keeps going between them, showing that they care and that she is getting smarter without cutting off contact with her father. She goes from being official to making thoughtful suggestions, which shows that she is learning more about Alpesh's position. She might write a few lines that show how deeply she is thinking when she wants to listen gently or be there for her during this change ("Tell me more... if you want to").

As Lata's empathy grows, it shows that she has some power over her life. Even though she has to deal with problems like lying and family demands, Lata chooses to listen and understand Alpesh instead of rushing to finish her work, which makes her stand out from the start. By letting herself see how Alpesh lives as a gay guy in a straight marriage, she might find out how the gender system she lives in limits and tricks her. Lata starts to question

whether the basic ideas of planned marriage are in line with her reality after hearing the truth from Alpesh. They have a meaningful relationship with each other that goes beyond gender norms and first lies. Kamla has to choose between taking care of her family and starting to feel what she might think is love for Alpesh. However, these feelings are very different from each other. From her point of view, we can see how female characters interact with each other psychologically to quietly break heteronormative rules by using them against them from the inside. From what she's been through, we can see that in this setting, women have to balance following gender roles with taking their first steps towards critical thinking.

The way people talk to each other in the play, either through letters or emails, is very important to the flow of the story. Writing letters in this particular script form lets you get to the bottom of people's lives while keeping them safe from both physical contact and social surveillance. Writing letters makes the two main characters think about themselves and share personal information that they would be embarrassed to talk about in person because of culture norms. Alpesh's belief that he can't talk to anyone in person makes him feel safe, but it also lets him share secrets he has kept hidden in his everyday life. Writing turns into a therapeutic place for him, and it shows how desperately he wants to connect with others and prove who he is.

The main trick works on many levels, both psychologically and culturally. Lata insists on claiming to be Trushant because her family is dominated by men and made the man the official negotiator so she could speak for him. The reason Alpesh hides his sexual orientation is because of heteronormative cultural norms and the social danger that comes with it. He uses "deception" to do this. By lying, he gains the courage to tell the truth because he thinks he talks to a different man when he first thought it was a male friend.

Lata is facing a moral and emotional struggle because she found out the truth in a dishonest way. Even though she got this information dishonestly, the things she learnt from making up situations make her truly compassionate. The play looks at how wrong ideas about where information comes from can change the realness of human relationships. The most exciting part of the story is when the characters are faced with the dangers that come from Lata hiding who she really is. If Alpesh finds out that his confidante is a woman, it will destroy him emotionally and make his trust problems even worse. She faces instant consequences at home and with Alpesh after her choice. This process shows how cultural barriers to talking about gender and sexuality drive people to lie and hide who they really are, which makes natural connections very dangerous. According to Dattani, society's rules screw up relationships because they make it so that people can only say what they really think in vague ways.

Do the Needful is an important study because it looks at psychological and cultural factors. The emotional growth of his characters, Alpesh and Lata, shows how harmful it is when strict gender roles and arranged marriage are enforced by traditional society structures. Every strange thing that characters do that shows they are anxious or lying is caused by the social norms that shape their behaviour. The play says that cultural gender identity stresses make people's emotions run wild, which leads to psychological scaling and relationships that fail painfully, as well as a feeling of being alone all the time. People should think about how these rules hurt people, as the research suggests.

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