

**A STUDY OF PATRIARCHY, HELPLESSNESS, SILENCE AND CHILDHOOD
DESTRUCTION IN “THIRTY DAYS IN SEPTEMBER”**

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Abstract

Women have been sexually harassed for the time. With emergence of their problems feminism came into existence.

Feminism deals with the problems of women generally written by women writers but Mahesh Dattani has presented this issue through his play “Thirty Days in September”. The play “Thirty Days in September” is about child sexual abuse, one of the dehumanizing act of violence. The play deals with the emotional, psychological and physical torture at the hands of patriarchal dominance. Mahesh Dattani has portrayed both the mother (Shanta) and the daughter (Mala) as the victims of patriarchal mindset. Patriarchal dominance in which women have no right to raise their voices against the injustice done to them by the male dominated society. The play, “Thirty Days in September” of Mahesh Dattani has been inspired by the contemporary issues of the society. The play reflects serious conflict internal and external, psychological and physical. This play explores degeneration of human values belonging to a middle class. Mahesh Dattani has presented the harsh reality of the society. He has expressed most sensitive issue that is child sexual abuse. The play deals with the effects of the forced sexual relationship on the individual's psyche which gets intensified with the time. Mala, the protagonist character of the play suffered a lot and gone through sexual abuse by her maternal uncle, Vinay reaching before puberty age just because of women's helplessness. In India, sexual abuse is most serious problem but women remain silent due to their dignity and let men abuse them. Most of the time women have been sexually abused by the men just because of their helplessness and silence. Women remain silent or do not raise voice against their injustice because of their pride in the society because society accuses a girl for her harassment. It happens many times and many places that they become victim because of their economical poor condition, helplessness, silence whether it is at working place or at home. Women do not open their mouth against injustice, sexual abuse, exploitation due to dominance of patriarchy. If a woman does it then it is not welcomed by the society and she suffers throughout her life. For such women, people do not respect her so woman remains silent against her sexual abuse.

This play is an example of harsh realities that a girl Mala and her mother Shanta is suffered a lot due to their helplessness and silence.



Keywords : Child Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, Helplessness, Silence, Unspoken Pressure, Childhood destruction, Rape of Innocence, Patriarchy, Traumatized Psyche.

Introduction

Mahesh Dattani is first playwright in English who received SahityaAkademi Award. He has presented harsh realities of the life in his play “Thirty Days in September”. It is a short play but it has great influence on the society and it has touched the most sensitive issue that is child sexual abuse. It also focuses on the child's psyche while being sexually abused and mothers helplessness and her silence. It explores severe brutality of the society and unbreakable love bond between adult and child. When mother discovers the truth about her daughter which sets them both on a journey of self discovery about their lives and their linked past. This play highlights social stigma that is associated with victim instead of perpetrator. The title of the play “Thirty Days in September” symbolizes Mala's painful life before entering into a puberty. Mala, the protagonist of the play is helpless due to long term relationship with her uncle Vinay, and when her boyfriend Deepak refuses to let Mala break up with him at the end of the play. This play focuses on patriarchy and how women are being abused due to male dominance. Being helplessness women remain silent and do not reveal their problems to others and it leads to their physical, mental and identical destruction. In this play we can see that Mala's mother is also sexually abused by her own brother, Vinay but still she remains silent so it caused her daughter's pain. Had she been raised her voice in her childhood for sexual abuse then her daughter would not have been suffered from sexual abuse by her brother but the mother remained silent and out of helplessness she gave her child into the hands of demon, her brother Vinay. Shanta not only destroyed her life but also spoiled her daughter's life because of her silence. Her emotions, innocence, ignorance, her playful childhood is exploited. The person who have sexually abused the girl, he not only abused her physically but also raped her innocent childhood and it has great psychological effect on the girl throughout the life. Hence, women should raise their voice against injustice, exploitation, unspoken pressure so that men can stop this type of crime and should get justice from the society.

Taken into consideration the aforesaid issue the present research paper offers an attempt to look deep into nature of women's problems, most heinous issue that is child sexual abuse, patriarchy, women's helplessness, silence, unspoken pressure, rape of innocence and their identical destruction.

Title: A Study of Patriarchy, Helplessness, Silence and Childhood Destruction in “Thirty Days in September”

Mahesh Dattani in his “Thirty Days in September” has dramatized most heinous issue that is child sexual abuse. This play focuses more light on the effects of forced relationship on a girl child’s psychology. The protagonist character, Mala is molested before entering into puberty age by her uncle Vinay but her mother Shanta did not raise voice against his evil act because her mother herself was molested by the same person in her childhood so she remains silent out of helplessness so just because of her silence her daughter gets abused by her brother. This paper highlights mother-daughter conflicting relationship. The paper presents and criticizes social stigma and social taboo which speaks women as pain bearers and childhood exploitation, destruction which not only shakes humanity but also damages individual’s mind, body, emotions and life. It uncovers conflict between conscious and unconscious mind. The present research paper is an attempt to explore the Dattani’s feminine sensibility, women’s exploitation, their helplessness unspoken pressure and their silence and unspoken pain. Analytical research methodology is adopted for the present research paper and qualitative techniques would be applied.

The play “Thirty Days in September” depicts the issues of childhood abuse, helplessness, silence, unspoken pain, rape of innocence and childhood destruction. Mala, the protagonist of the play, suffered a lot in her childhood and molested by her uncle, Vinay in her childhood and whenever she tried to tell it to her mother then she was resisted from the talking. It led conflict between the relationship of a mother and a daughter. So, out of helplessness Mala’s mother, Shanta revealed that she herself was molested by the same person in her childhood, when she was only six and no one was there to protect her. Thus she revealed harsh reality of the life.

Patriarchy: patriarchy is a social system that gives power and control to men rather than women. Patriarchal dominance is found in the play “Thirty Days in September”. In Shanta’s childhood, Shanta was sexually abused by her own brother Vinay, when she was about six only but neither her parents nor brothers protected her and she became prey for a man. Later, when Shanta’s husband left her then her brother Vinay took care for her and her child daughter that is Mala but he controlled the life of the both women and he used their body as toys for his sexual pleasure. But she was depended upon a man so she is exploited. Afterwards, when Shanta decided to marry her girl Mala with Deepak then she asked her brother Vinay to fix her daughter’s marriage with Deepak and asked him to behave properly with the boy so he cannot reject the relationship. What a tragedy is this! A man is asked to fix the marriage of a girl who has been sexually abused her daughter from her childhood. Shanta took help of her brother Vinay to fix her daughter Mala’s marriage despite knowing the fact that she herself and her daughter have been sexually abused by

that demon from their childhood but still she took help just because a woman needs man's support in the society. Childhood is the age of being happy, singing, enjoying childhood, flying like a bird, freedom to enjoy, testing ice-creams and candy but before her puberty age he imposed himself on that child for his sexual pleasure and does not care even for her innocence and ignorance. He not only raped her physically but corrupted hers the world of innocence and ignorance. No one could understand the feelings of a child Mala, neither her mother nor her uncle. Whenever Mala tried to tell it to her own mother then her mother use to feed her. Indirectly, Mala was being asked to stop from the talking. Her mother never gave her chance to express her pain just because of male dominated mentality. Just because Shanta was alone and needs man's support she ignored her daughter's pain. It signals that women do not speak against their exploitation because of male dominance. Male dominance and her helplessness forced her to be silent and to become a victim of patriarchal system. Next shameful fact is that when Shanta's brother Vinay asks her that whenever he comes to that city then he will live with them in their house then Shanta is left into silence, does not utter a single word and only looks towards the picture of Lord Krishna. What a tragic incident is that! She knows the reality but she can't get rescued herself and her daughter from the clutches from his hands. Shanta's brother destroyed their purity, exploited their childhood, innocence, raped them, harassed them but despite knowing the fact Shanta took help of her brother for her living and fix her daughters marriage. Hence, it is a patriarchal system where women are controlled by the men and women become victim of patriarchal dominance.

Helplessness : Shanta and her daughter Mala are victim of patriarchal dominance. Shanta is sexually abused by her own brother, Vinay, when she was only about six years old and not sought help from others to get out of the clutches of male dominance. Afterwards, her daughter Mala is also sexually abused in her childhood by the same person but still Shanta remained silent because she was helpless. Her husband was not living with her and she needs man's support for their survival and her brother, Vinay helped them so Shanta remained silent. Whenever, her daughter Mala tried to seek help from her mother then her mother fed her and restrained her from speaking despite knowing that her daughter was being sexually abused by her brother but she did it because she was helpless and needs man's support. Next tragic fact is that Shanta asked her brother Vinay to fix her daughter's marriage because she was alone and her husband was not with her so she took help of a demon, her brother, who harassed both of them. Shanta was alone and helpless so every time she looked at Lord Krishna's portrait and prayed for their rescue and ignored her daughter's questions and led her daughter suffer. She could not tell her suffering to her daughter because there was no one to help them so she remained silent. A mother can do anything for the child but here Shanta's silence has destroyed a life of her innocent child. Despite knowing the fact Shanta ignored her daughter, did not punish her brother and led her daughter suffer just because she was alone and helpless. Shanta's

helplessness made Mala suffer, not only her uncle raped her but Mala's cousin and other men also raped her. Shanta, instead of punishing them accused Mala saying that she was interested in sex. She knew the fact that her daughter was innocent and being accused, but to avoid her questions she accused Mala. It was her helplessness that she was unable to protect her own daughter from her own brother. It is her helplessness that it led her daughters childhood destruction and was unable to answer her daughters question in her eyes and on her face. Mala did not understand the difference between sex and real love because he was being abused from her childhood so she tried to attract the people or whenever she met people then she thought of sex first. For example When she danced with Ravi, her colleague at that time he was asked to hold her tightly and closely and also he was demanded a kiss. It shows that her psyche has been changed because of childhood sexual abuse. Other fact is that Mala and her boy friend, Deepak were in coffee shop and unknown person was there then Mala thought that the person was gazing at her breasts. It means that all the time she was thinking about sex because her feelings were dead in her childhood and there was no one to hear her cry. Its impact we see when Deepak was asked her for marriage then she ignored him because she herself was unable to separate herself from her uncle and her childhood memories. It is her helplessness that she was unable to recognize true love and to go with Deepak. Hence, out of their helplessness they quarreled with each other because Mala thought that her mother did not help her and Shanta was helpless what made them suffer.

Silence : Throughout her life Shanta remained silent that's why her daughter, Mala suffered a lot. Shanta's brother Vinay molested her daughter but she remained silent which led to her daughter's tragedy. At the cost of Shanta's silence Mala had to pay her childhood, her innocence. If Shanta raised her voice and spoken about her molestation then things would have been different. If she would have resisted it in her childhood then her daughter would not have gone through the same experience and same pain. It was her silence which created chaos in their life. whenever Mala tried to tell her problems to her mother then she didn't help her. She fed her and resisted her from talking what caused her tragedy. Had Shanta allowed her daughter to speak freely and tell her about her molestation so her daughter's life would not have been affected. Her silence made Shanta victim of male dominated society and made her daughter suffer at the hands of demon. Because of their silence traumatized childhood changed Mala into a different personality so that Mala was unable to understand the difference between sex and love. Her mother didn't help her to understand sex and love in her childhood so later whenever she met with the people then she only thought about touch, kiss and sex and tried to attract the people towards her because she was doing the same at the age of innocence. Shanta's silence destroyed the life of both women and made them suffer a lot.

Childhood Destruction : Mala, protagonist of the play was molested when she was about seven years old. It was the age of playing, singing, dancing, testing ice creams etc. but instead of doing all those

things she went from sexual abuse. It separated her from other girls at the age of innocence. She had to pay her happiness at the cost of sexual abuseso she couldn't play freely like other children even couldn't cry for her pain while being sexually abused which destroyed her childhood. It created chaos In her childhood and whenever she went to her mother then her mother tried to avoid her and did not understand her pain what affected her psychology and it had changed her mind a lot in later life. Later, whenever she met with men then she started thinking about the sex and slept with her uncle, her cousin and many more people whoever available there. Her childhood experience changed her way of thinking of love, whenever she met with the men she only started thinking about touch, kiss and sex. For example in party while dancing with Ravi, her colleague, Mala demanded kiss from him. While drinking a coffee in a coffee shop with her boyfriend Deepak, Mala thought that unknown man was staring at her breast. It means that her painful childhood changed her a lot and being unaware of the feeling of real love she only thought about the sex and only tried to come close to the men. Even if she was unable to understand whether she wanted to go away from her childhood memories or from her uncle with her boyfriend Deepak or to live with her uncle. It is the traumatized psychological effect imposed forced relationship on a child. She has gone through the sexual pain before her puberty. It is not only physical rape but it is a rape of innocence. She was not only molested physically but also couldn't enjoy her childhood happily.

Conclusion

Mahesh Dattani's most of plays are constructed around social issues not only any particular message. He deals with the themes of individual versus society. He expresses social taboo, isolated and helpless childhood. This play focuses on issues such as dependency, molestation, helplessness, silence, destruction of feelings, emotions, psychological effects, impacts of forced relationship, patriarchal dominance, women's identical destruction, childhood destruction, extreme vulnerability and conflict between logic and desire. The present research paper focuses on patriarchal system, effect of patriarchal dominance, women's conditions, their helplessness, their silence and childhood instruction. It is a rape of innocence and ignorance. Shantawas helpless, depended upon her brother, Vinay and her dependence made her daughter Mala suffer a lot. Her childhood became victim at the cost of her mothers silence.

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