

**VOICE FOR EMANCIPATION FROM CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE WITH
REFERENCE TO MAHESH DATTANI'S PLAY
*THIRTY DAYS IN SEPTEMBER***

S. Jagadishwari

Ph.D Research Scholar
Department of English and Foreign Language
Gandhigram Rural Institute,
Deemed University,
Gandhigram- 624302

Dr. G. Baskaran

Professor,
Faculty of English and Foreign Language
Gandhigram Rural Institute,
Deemed University,
Gandhigram- 624302

Abstract

Abuse changes your life.....Fight back and change the life of your abusers by breaking your silence on abuse- Patty Rase Hopson.

In India Girl child is always neglected and even if anyone notices, they look them in a sexual manner. Girl child always need a protection from the cradle to grave. They feel themselves alone and as a refuge in their own house and consider it to be the 'unsafe nest'. These children are somehow encouraged, tricked, bribed, pressurized or else forced to take part in this crime. In that small age they are unable to express their pain and the harm done to them. In fact they themselves don't know that it is something dangerous for them and even the doers convince them by giving them their favorite things which they can't get from their parents. Dattani has beautifully depicted the unbearable child sexual abuse tolerated and digested by the mother and her daughter in his play *Thirty Days in September*.

Keywords: Sexual abuse, Mahesh Dattani, Girl Child.

Around 60% of child abusers are the family members itself like fathers, mothers, brothers, cousins etc. C. S Lakshmi rightly points out that 'one assimilates violence as a part of being a woman. Draupati is humiliated in the Kaurva court, Sita enters the fire to prove her chastity and Ahalaya hardens into stone, awaiting her deliverance at the touch of the foot of Rama, the child listens, thinking that this is what it is to be a woman, the attacks on her body

seem as an inevitable aspect of being female”. Thus women are brought up as a passive listeners, bearers and accepters from the small age itself in order to survive in this male dominated society. Girl child sexual abuse is fabulously depicted by Dattani in his play *Thirty Days in September*. Dattani has emerged as the voice of modern India and his “manly queen” questions the female and male roles in the contemporary society through symbols, images and language which gives India a new place in world theatre. Dattani is a socially conscious person as he stages the invisible issues and also discusses the pros and cons of one’s life. During those days talking about Child abuse is consider as sin or immoral but it is only and only Dattani who takes it a challenge of revealing the trauma of an Indian child and her mother fabulously in his play. It is not only welcomed but also affected the viewers mind and earned lots of name and fame.

As Vinay Kirpal says “Child sexual abuse happens because the system of silence encourages some more men to want it to happen, and so the political, social, cultural and religious attitudes which serves to underestimate the child, especially the female child, create a climate in which abuse can thrive”. One such suffer in this play is Mala, a girl child who suffers sexual abuse in the hands of her maternal uncle from the age of seven to thirteen. Although the mother knows her problem and sufferings she never comes forward to help her daughter. That’s why Mala hates her mother and this sort of abuse totally changes the direction of her life.

Deepak, a young chap sincerely loves Mala and wants to marry her. But she refuses to have a permanent relationship with him who admires and respect her and even knows her sufferings that she has from the small age. But Mala indulge herself in promiscuous thirty days affair with many older men and puts a cross in the calendar every month when she ends her relationship with them. She craves for male attention as she suffers from self-esteem. As when she goes to a coffee house with Deepak she tells that a man is staring at her and later she confesses that: “No: He wasn’t staring at me....I wanted to.... You want to know that I feel most? If he had looked at me, I would have felt- I would have felt truly alive” (TDS ACT II 36).

Even when she goes to party, she forces a man (Ravi) to dance with her who comes with his fiancé. She openly forces him to exploit her to gratify her sexual thirst. She says “Do whatever you want with me, but take me with you”(TDS ACT II 22). This shows how the Child sexual abuse affects a girl’s life which totally changes her direction of lifestyle. Such abuse is like a poison which one’s enters into the body it spreads all over the parts and destroys the person completely. In same way the abuse done to Mala in small age affects her in so much that she begs to everyone to come and exploit her.

Vinay Sexual abuse on her at the small age has spoiled her whole life and at last she turns to be a prostitute. Deepak understands her problem and takes her to the counselor where she hesitantly reveals some truth that how she is forced by her uncle to fulfill his sexual lust. The memory of her uncle’s misdeeds haunts her as he used to say to mala “If they hear you they will say you are a bad girl. This is our secret.... Hold your frock up. Up over your face! Help me and I will love you more than your mummy and Daddy”(TDS ACT I 67). She is continuously abused by the uncle and four years later he says “You have become a whore at thirteen. You like it! You enjoy it!(TDS ACT I 60).

The agony of Mala life grows because of Shanta’s silence but the fact is that she too suffers as a victim like Mala. Although she can’t help her when she is a child, so at least at young age she wanted to help her that’s why she forced Mala to marry Deepak in order to lead a decent life in the society. It is Deepak who comes as a ray of hope in the life of Mala who falls head over heels in love with her. Shanta urges him to save her daughter’s life as she doesn’t want

Mala to suffer like herself. But Deepak openly tells to her that Mala is not at all interested in the marriage and turned down his proposal in a rude manner. As he says:

Last week, I told her that she was the most intelligent, sensitive and dynamic woman. I had met, she just stared at me and said, “I have something to tell you. Its over. I don’t want to continue with our relationship. She does not want to see me even again”(TDS ACT II 14).

Whereas Shanta urges him not to leave her daughter and promises him that she will convince her daughter. In the above conversation Dattani clearly shows the pathetic condition of Indian mother who tolerates her sufferings but when the same happens to her own blood she burst out and ready to do anything to save her daughter’s life. Shanta quickly runs to Mala and urges her to stop leading this sort of shameful life and marry him. But Mala accuses Shanta that she is only responsible for making her to lead such a horrible life:

It’s your fault mom where were you during those fifteen minutes when he was destroying my soul? Fifteen minutes multiplied by thirty or thirty one or whatever. That’s how long or how little it took for you to send me to hell for the rest of my life.(TDS ACT III 22). This is the last straw in the camel’s back. Shanta reveals her secret by saying that how she too is exploited and abused in the hands of her own brother Vinay from six years onwards which continues for ten years. She explained her physical and mental torture that she is undergoing till now. She says “You say I didn’t help you. I could not help you. Same as you could not help me, Did you ever see the pain in my eyes? Nobody saw anything. Nobody said anything. Not my brother, Not my parents. Only(pointing to the man) he spoke. Only he spoke, Only he said, only he saw”(TDS ACT III 55).

That’s why Shanta request Mala not to become like her till the end of the life and wants her to lead a dignified life by marrying Deepak. Both Shanta and Deepak tries their best to convince Mala to forget her past and begin a fresh life. Only at that time she realizes the truth that it is not her mother’s fault and feels very bad that even her mother suffered more than her in childhood and even still having the pain in her heart. Mala fully breaks down and apologizes to her mother for adding salt to all her pains by torturing her psychologically and begs for her forgiveness:

It’s not your fault mother. Just as it wasn’t my fault. Please tell me that you’ve forgotten me for blaming you. Please tell me that.... I know you will, mother. I know you have.(TDS ACT III 58).

Finally Mala speaks openly and strongly that she can’t lead a peaceful or normal life after sleeping with many men. “By staying silent doesn’t mean I can forget! This is my hell. This hell is where I belong! It is your creation, Ma! You created it for me. With your silence!” (TDS ACT III54). Both mother and daughter are portrayed as a pathetic characters and victims in the hands of patriarchal society.

At last Mala consoles herself and changes her mind by taking everything in an easy manner as her body language reflects that she is at full piece with herself. At the councillor’s desk during her last session she says:-

Mala Kahtri. February, 2004... I do not hesitate to use my real name now... After all, it is he who must hide... He should look the other way... I have the power to do that now because I know it wasn’t my fault... I Know not.(TDS ACT II 15)

This is how Mala with great effort gets rid of the guilt of being a ‘prostitute’ and wins a psychological battle with full consciousness by throwing away all the painful memories of her childhood. As she stops considering herself responsible for the disaster that takes place in life.

Dattani in a interview with Anitha Santharam comments that it is the “Silence that affects me most. . . . I did not want them (upper middle class) to dismiss sexual abuse as something that does not happen to people like them”. He shows it clearly that how the child abuse spoils the life of a girl from birth to death and till the end she has to face the internal and external struggle throughout her life.

Dattani wants the women to raise their voice from the teenage itself and fight for their rights. Unless and until one comes forward to tell the injustice happened to them due to shame and fear, then the crime will be on the top. Moreover their silence will definitely give strength to the abusers to they will freely move and do this abuse openly without any sort of hesitation. The writer brings such plays in front of the society with the hope that they will come out to raise their voice for the suffers along with the writer.

Moreover sexual education must be impart to all the school students and even practical classes should be taken for the girls to tell the different sort of abuses and even the remedies to overcome the problem. Child abuse is like a viral fever seems to be spreading all over the India. The Indian government has to take necessary steps to remove it from the root otherwise it will destroy the peace and prestige of our country.

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