



**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE OR STATUTORY RAPE AND ITS
EFFECTS:
A PSYCHOANALYSIS OF “THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA” AND
“THIRTY DAYS IN SEPTEMBER”**

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ABSTRACT

The research paper, an exploration of Child sexual abuse or statutory rape as found in the works of Tennessee Williams and Mahesh Dattani has its focus on specific work of the two playwrights. The Night of the Iguana by Williams (1962) and Dattani's Thirty Days in September (2001) are texts with which a probe into the maladies and social ills can be undertaken for the study of child abuse or statutory rape. The critical inquiry sees into such common denominators as poverty, corruption, crime, discrimination of caste/racism, divorce, child abuse, violence against women. Although the Playwrights are of different socio-economical, political and cultural background, the issues for each playwright are of serious concerns which assume universal contemporary relevance bearing a comparative interdisciplinary study. Both the works present sensitively rendered cases of contemporary abuses; The Night of the Iguana with great reception of critical acclaim and awards, also had artistically effective version of movie; Lawrence T Shannon, a former priest who has lost his faith and his way. Alcoholism and sexual liaisons, allegedly with minors, have brought his downfall and continue to undermine his position. Thirty Days in September this drama on incest has Mala, the daughter of Shantha, who is molested by her maternal uncle, Vinay. Mala's intention is to unburden her self by confiding it to her mother. Mala's confiding reveals Shantha too had been molested by the same person, i.e., Vinay her brother. Thethematic issues probed with reference to the plays manifest the ideas of socio-historical reality reflected as part of literary creativity that demands discursive attention.

Keywords: Child sexual abuse, incest, Maladies and Social ills, Socio-historical reality.

Introduction

Child sexual abuse (CSA)

Child sexual abuse is a worldwide concern and an umbrella term describing criminal and civil offenses in which an adult engages in sexual activity with a minor or exploits a minor for the purpose of sexual gratification. It takes the form of a terrible epidemic. Child Sexual Abuse can vary along a number of dimensions including frequency, duration, age at onset, and relationship of victim to perpetrator. The upper age limit used to define childhood is 18 years. It typically includes unwanted and inappropriate sexual solicitation of, or exposure to, a child by an older person; genital touching or fondling; or penetration in terms of oral, anal or vaginal intercourse or attempted

It is evident that the global prevalence of child sexual abuse has been estimated at 19.7% for females and 7.9% for males. Most sexual abuse offenders are acquainted with their victims; approximately 30% are relatives of the child, most often brothers, fathers, uncles, or cousins; around 60% are other acquaintances, such as "friends" of the family, babysitters, or neighbors; strangers are the offenders in approximately 10% of child sexual abuse cases. Most child sexual abuse is committed by men; studies on female child molesters show that women commit 14% to 40% of offenses reported against boys and 6% of offenses reported against girls. (wikipedia/Child_sexual_abuse)

Feminists argue that the sexual exploitation of children, and girls per se, is endemic to all patriarchal societies that prioritize the needs of men in public as well as private settings; the effects of patriarchy on women, prompted feminists the need to speak with one voice, they marshaled an attack on male privilege maintained and enforced, amongst other things, through female silence. The ways of upbringing of children, the orthodoxy, the pressures of urban society in terms of infantile sexuality as related to Oedipus complex, individual's failures, frustrations and stresses like unemployment have been the causes for the problem of child abuse as a result libidinal suppression intercourse.

The ideas of Freud that the primacy of the unconscious mind in mental life, the unconscious being regarded as a dynamic force drawing on the energy of instinctual drives, and as the location of desires which are repressed because they are socially unacceptable or a threat to the ego. The development view of human life, which stresses the importance of infantile experience accounting for personality in terms of the progressive channeling of an initially undifferentiated energy or libido, the infantile sexuality and its development centered on the Oedipus complex, the techniques of free association and dream interpretations as means of analyzing repressed material, and the beliefs that much behavior is unconsciously motivated, that sexuality plays major role in the personality, and that civilization has been created by the direction of libidinous impulses to symbolic ends—all these Freudian thoughts are applicable

to the child sexual abusers like Shannon and Vinay for their psychoanalytical understanding.
(Wynne_Davies Freud)

The plays under consideration reveal suppression denominator as found in the eccentricities of the characters of the plays referred to. Tennessee Williams and Mahesh Dattani are significant playwrights of the twentieth century whodeal with intricate relationships among individuals, as well as neurosis and psychological disintegration. Williams' characters seem frequently to be fractured and insecure, relating dysfunctional without intimate connection to others or confident self-identity.

As to the plays of Tennessee Williams, Heilman comments;

“Failures of personality are a special theme of ... Williams” and also “(Williams' early) plays deal with hypersensitive characters who, from weakness or disability, either cannot face the real world at all or have to opt out of it”.

Of all Williams' plays, *The Night of the Iguana* is one of the most profoundly psychological; it also brought him the New York Drama Critics circle award. It presents a portrait of the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, the subject, who is inwardly tormented. He is deemed morally unfit as Reverend, and, now a defrocked minister for his indefensible sin and penchant for young girls, as he himself succinctly puts it, “fornication and heresy... in the same week.”(williams 75) A warrant has already been issued in Texas for his alleged affair with a young Sunday school teacher, who is known to have received blasphemous sermon. He was put in an asylum as a decree of church before he takes up a job of tour guide.

Furthermore, Shannon is, conceived as a man of a recidivist, reoffending and continuing the previous pattern of behavior; Judith Fellowes, the leader of the Baptist group, is incensed to have him fired at Shannon for allegedly abusing a young girl and charged him for statutory rape for his sexual interference with Charlotte Goodall who was on Shannon's tour; the under-aged girl of a seventeen, not of legal age of 18 set for girls in Texas to have sexual contact on one's own consent; is lost in a belief thatshe is in love with Shannon. She went multiple times to his room. When she expressed her love to him in public, his sexually appropriating her, then rejecting her proposal and turning her out of the roomled her to suffer psychologically. The context of Charlotte's love and rejection:

SHANNON. Don't complicate my life now

CHARLOTTE. Why have you changed like this?

SHANON.You're going to get me kicked out of Blake Tours, Charlotte

SHANNON. Why did you sing “I Love You Truly” at me?

CHARLOTTE. Because I do love you truly!

SHANNON. Honey girl, don't you know that nothing worse could happen to a girl in your, your...unstable condition.....than to get emotionally mixed up with a man in my unstable condition, huh!

CHARLOTTE. All I know is you've got to marry me, Larry, after what happened between us in Mexico City!

SHANNON. A man in my condition can't marry, *it isn't decent or legal.* (Williams, The Night of the Iguana 73)

Charlotte Goodall has been defiant and rebellious to her father's will as is presented in the play. The attitude that she remains unregulated from any force, rather be more liberal to embrace anything that she wanted to do on her free will, would put her to unwanted sexual activity with Shannon as she was naive, immature and innocent; Shannon takes advantage of it and molests her. She is unable to have any sense of danger in her innocence Goodall the name comes to suggest the child like naivety in her. The innocence shattered often is evident from disquieting reports;

"Every year more than 3 million reports of child abuse are made in the united states." The American Psychiatric Association states this condemnable fact "never can benormal or socially acceptable behavior" (wikipedia/Child_sexual_abuse)

Shannon, an irresponsible male member of patriarchal society, dictates over prepubescent and uses Charlotte as an entity for his sexual appetite, despite knowing that she is a minor girl. And finally throw her once he is sexually gratified.

Perhaps, Shannon's emotional instability since childhood; for instance once his mother had caught him red-handed while he was masturbating. She advised him that was as an act of discourtesy to God; Shannon's indulgence that he had confided to Fred which his wife Maxine Faulk knew was made out once:

"You told him that Mama, your Mama, used to send you to bed before you were ready to sleep – so you practiced the little boy's vice, you amused yourself with yourself. And once she caught you at it and whaled your backside with the backside of a hairbrush because she said she had to punish you for it because it made God mad as much as it did Mama, and she had to punish you for it so God wouldn't punish you harder than she would... You said you loved God and Mama and so you quit to please them, but it was your secret pleasure and you harbored a secret resentment against Mama and God for making you give it up. And so you got back at God by preaching atheistically sermons and you got back at Mama by starting to lay young girls". (williams, The Night of the Iguana 83)

His sexual impulse obstructed on religious exhortations of his mother, the strongly repressed urge when he still found that he had a need for it. Consequent frustration and deprivation was the cause of an antagonistic attitude towards God and Women. This made him. Sexually deviant with frequent pressures of it with bouts of alcoholism, depression - "crack-ups,-" which he feared he would go insane. His impulses pseudo-defensive mental mechanisms are very much evidenced right through the play. His puerile act of urinating on the tour group's luggage suggests he has complex against women (Williams, *The Night of the Iguana* 90).

Shannon's condition apparently acknowledged by Maxine Faulk's sexual advances and she offers Shannon with a judicious advice to stop his predilection for younger girls:

"You know I'll help you, baby, but why don't you lay off the young ones and cultivate an interest in normal grown-up women?" (Williams, *The Night of the Iguana* 61)

Shannon being a recidivist in molesting under-aged is evident from Charlotte Goodall:

SHANNON: she's trying to get me fired and she is also trying to pin on me a rape charge, a charge of statutory rape.

MAXINE: what's "statutory rape"? I've never known what that was.

That's where a man is seduced by a girl under twenty (she chuckles). It's not funny, Maxine Honey.

SHANNON. I don't want any, any-regardless of age.

MAXINE. Then why do you take them, Shannon. (He swallows but does not answer.)--, Shannon.

SHANNON. People need human contact, Maxine honey. (Williams, *The Night of the Iguana* 62)

At the end of the play, Shannon opens up about his life to Hannah Jelkes, and, in doing so, establishes "human contact" of a non-physical and spiritual. Hannah shows him tremendous understanding and empathy, so much so that she could tell him that she had been sexually molested by a stranger when she was a teenager:

*When I was sixteen, your favorite age, Mr. Shannon, (...) I'd sit at the almost empty back of the movie theatre so that the popcorn munching would not disturb the other movie patrons. Well...one afternoon young man sat beside me and pushed his...knee against mine and...I moved over two seats but he Moved over beside me and continued this ...pressure! I jumped up and screamed, Mr. Shannon, he was arrested for molesting a minor. (Williams, *The Night of the Iguana* 99)*

Hannah as catalyst, Shannon overcomes his infantile complex, integrates his split and moves to empathetic maturity as to his determination of a partner; although Shannon had felt distaste for Maxine's open sexuality, he resigns himself to life with Widow Maxine. John Lahr's stressing on human relationships comments ... "The Night of the Iguana." is more about the universal human feelings of loneliness, despair, (Lahr's)

Mahesh Dattani is appreciated as multifaceted, playwright, director, actor, screenplay writer, film maker, good academician and a leading dramatist in Indian Drama in English. He is concerned with serious case of child's sexual abuse in India. Most of his plays primarily deal with such burning social and political issues as, Child abuse, the invisible issues, AIDS victims, communalism, patriarchy, gender discrimination, lesbianism and, the other human relationships. He has tried to expose to his best visions and thoughts in the medium of English to the world

Thirty Days In September is an interesting play by Dattani on 'incest' cum child sexual abuse; the first of its kind in English in India. The play bears common denominators to the issue of child sexual abuse with Tennessee Williams's 'The Night of the Iguana.' The issue of incest as revealed in **Thirty Days in September**, as related to daughter and mother- Mala and her mother Shantha-both of them being victims of abuse; show the hidden sordid realities of world of child abuse. Both the Mother and the Daughter have been sexually assaulted in their childhood by her maternal uncle Vinay, who is Shanta's own brother. Mala's mother knows all facts of daughter; being sexually abused but she thought she had to be silent for the sake of honour. It is this kind of fix that makes the child more vulnerable to trouble.

Child abuse prevails in immediate relations of surroundings not far from family. Dattani portrays society, feels drawn to write about the real child experience of such victims. 'Thirty days in September' was produced in the interest of an NGO, RAHI (Recovery and Healing of incest) as a felt responsibility.

Shanta Indian woman of traditional ideals bears the pain by suppressing her own voices inwardly. Being constantly sexually assaulted by her uncle Vinay, Mala has been affected drastically with symptoms of disturbed trauma; of being in fear, guilty anxiety, depression, angst and hostility, and maniac signs of temptation for men,

Mala challenges the social customs which define woman as a silent receiver of pain by asking her mother to speak on her impasse. The modern outspokenness is evident as Mala is opposed to mother remaining silent, of daughter's (Mala) incestuous relationship with Vinay despite knowing it. She is challengingly articulate as to question the issues now; She recollects how she was molested by her uncle several times during her every summer vacation when she was a kid. In fact Mala expects her mother to break her silence on this unethical affiliation:

"Where were you when she locked the door to your bedroom while I was napping in there? Where were you during those fifteen minutes when he was destroying my soul! Fifteen minutes every day of my summer holidays(Dattani 34)

In another context,

"Once we were talking about a rape case that was in the papers. You said something about children also not being safe...Then I told you about what happened to me. But you changed the subject...That time I wondered if it was I or did I imagine it all? Surely not. No, it did happen." (Dattani 80)

Whenever, she tried to tell her mother about this but never did she respond, instead she is pretended to be busier to prepare AluParathas in the kitchen or rushed to seek the help from the idol of Lord Krishna. She is seemingly ignores deliberately. At last the horrid truth is revealed by the mother in front of Mala's molester. Mother conveys of how she had been under wrong impression that:

... "I remember, seeing you with my brother during the summer holidays. You were pushing yourself in the bedroom, you were asking him to kiss you, to touch you, to pinch you... I also remember when your cousin came for his holidays...you wanted my brother and your cousin dancing around you. How can I forget"? (Dattani 27)

Of being abused by assaults of Vinay- Mala's effects show up in her imbalance of thoughts and indecisiveness whenshe rejects the offer by Deepak's love and proposal.Her psychologicalindecisiveness and inhibitions end as she is guided by her mother. Doubly shocking is what Shantha reveals her own case of being subjected to abuse when she had been a child by the same Vinay:

"I was six Mala.I was Six. And he was thirteen...and it wasn't only summer holidays. For ten years! For ten years" (Dattani 55)

The issue of Child abuse or statutory rape, domination of the male, sexually inappropriate behavior, feelings of isolation and stigma, poor self esteem, a tendency toward re-victimization and sexual maladjustment are excesses that go in for the themes of plays dealt hereunder; The cases of child abuse or statutory rape as brought out by Dattani and Williams are stark realities of a world that needs to be addressed across socio-Economic, Literary and Psychoanalytical fields of studies. Whether in America or India, the problems of men and women may possibly be different as abuser and the abused. The reasons lie in their being subjected to a complexity of conditions Vinay or Shannon could be understood as being deviant men who possibly might have suffered the early infantile dissatisfaction of desire that could have affected their personality as Freud makes it:

“... Sexuality and the unconscious implicate not only individual psychology but also the constitution of social life. Formed in ambivalent relation to others, sexuality and sexual identity permeate the bonds of civilization and ramify throughout all social relations.”

Conclusion

Child sexual abuse that appears rampant; a mammoth problem in the society. It has been the subject of discourse under academics, Williams and Dattani has made a vivid account of child sexual abuse/statutory rape presentation. Shannon (Possibly Vinay too) is a product of a free society of materialistic values of Capitalism that flaunt sensuality and luxury at the destruction of the values; spiritual and human; Individuals sometimes are sandwiched between two worlds of excessive orthodoxy and materialistic realm of unlimited desire where being severely affected by alienation such as suffered by Shannon in case of lack of family love and crushed under excessive restrictions that destroy the unconscious desire principle while growing up. The personalities tend to be affected by the characteristic split leading to morallapses. The problem of child sexual abuse could be addressed to find solution with right approach of psychoanalysis finding the reasons from socio-cultural, economic background with which the consultation can be provided.

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