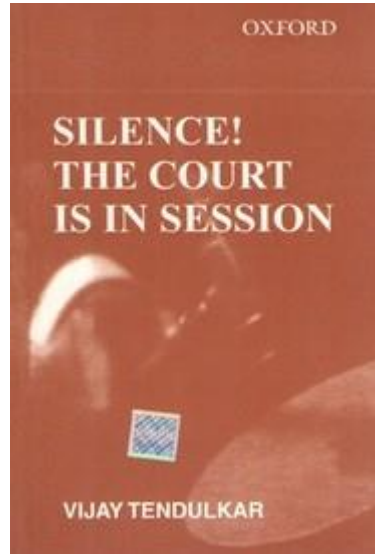


**Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session*
and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study**

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar



Abstract

Nobody could deny that the safest place for children is their home and the most trusted people in life of children are their parents and siblings but the media and government reports indicate that it is no longer true now. The mask of Indian tradition and culture hides increasing number and variety of heinous crimes of incestuous relations. There was self-denial about these crimes in our communities. This pathetic condition is noticed by literary giants like Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani who could not ignore it and so they presented the situation to alarm and warn the people through their plays. The present article is an attempt to investigate how Tendulkar and Dattani have handled the incest in their plays *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days Has September*.

Keywords: Paedophilia, CSA, Leviticus, molestation, psyche, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, Incest, Incestuous, exploitation, trauma.

Frequent Occurrence of Incest

Each **and** every day, the news of incestuous relations and sexual abuse of children is pouring down in Indian media, which exposes the alarming vicious situation prevailing in the country. However, people and government behave like an ostrich and pretend to be ignorant of the reality. The reports presented by MDCD in 2007, RAHI in 2013 and other government agencies as well as NGOs indicate that in Indian society the relations which were considered very pious and trust worthy are no longer secure now. The playwrights Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani who represent two different era have also raised this issue in their plays. The effort of Tendulkar and Dattani along with the NGOs is eye-opening and leads us to create a better and more secured place for the children and women so that they can really have the freedom and pleasure of life and they can break the silence.

The world runs with binary opposite elements. The human society is also formed with a pair of binary opposite - Adam and Eve. They were created by Almighty in time immemorial as it is said in the many scriptures found in the world. There are different norms in different society to live in harmony and peace. These norms keep us different from being ignorant animals. Sexuality is prevalent in every society and it is permitted or restricted with different norms. If a person living in a society follows the norms of that society, his or her action is considered legal and legitimate but if he or she defies the norms followed in that society, his or her action will be considered illegal, offensive and illegitimate.

It seems that no major religion permits individuals to have sex with their parents or siblings. Every society has its own rules and regulation for illicit relations. The sexual relations beyond the norms in a family are known as incestuous relationship which is illegal and offensive in the society and in religious world, it is a heinous sin that leads to worst outcome. For example, in the Bible, unlawful sexual relations are explained in Leviticus 18 by God to Moses:

⁹You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether brought up in the family or in another home. ¹⁰ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter or of your daughter's daughter, for their nakedness is your own nakedness. ¹¹ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

daughter, brought up in your father's family, since she is your sister. ¹²You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's relative. ¹³You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is your mother's relative. ¹⁴You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, that is, you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt. . ¹⁷You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, and you shall not take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness; they are relatives; it is depravity. (Bible, 18:6-18)

Mohammad Abdul Kalam, professor of Anthropology at the University of Madras argues that what may be right for one particular society may not work for another. He says cases of incest should be seen as individual perversions.

"While amongst most South Indians, an uncle-niece marriage may not amount to incest, in north India it is frowned upon. But that doesn't mean that incest is not taking place in the north. Abusive words mentioning mother-sister are an indicator that there is an awareness of this so-called taboo but nobody wants to talk about it." (Shoma, incest)

Paedophilia

Paedophilia or Child Sexual abuse (CSA) is the physical or mental violation of a child with sexual intent, usually by an older person who is in some position of trust and/or power vis-à-vis the child. The term *pedophile* refers to any adult who habitually seeks the company of a child or children for the gratification of his/her sexual needs. Child sexual abuse occurs in three ways typically: incestuous abuse (i.e. by family members of victims), sexual abuse by strangers, and child prostitution. In conservative societies, as ours is, incest is less likely to be reported to the police, because of fear of social disgrace. Families often choose to 'resolve' the issue privately because they view it as not a criminal matter.

Shocking Frequency and Statistics

In 1985, the study by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences revealed that one out of three girls and one out of 10 boys had been sexually abused as a child. Fifty per cent of child

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

sexual abuse happens at home. In 1996, Samara, a Bangalore-based NGO, conducted a study among 348 girls. 15 per cent were used for masturbation mostly by male relatives when they were less than 10 years old. Seventy- five per cent of the abusers were adult family members. India has the world's largest number of sexually abused children; with a child below 16 years raped every 155th minute, a child below 10 every 13th hour and one in every 10 children sexually abused at any point time. Ahuja Gupta, founder and executive director of an NGO called Recovering and Healing from Incest or RAHI,

"By not legislating a strict punishment, the law is simply reiterating that it's not a serious issue. If stringent punishment were made legal, then it has to be accepted that incest exists. But we don't even want to admit that. It's treated more like an aberration and so there is no harsh punishment. And this is true across the world." (BTS, 2013)

Agnes adds that somewhere we "don't want to interfere with our family values and as such keep quiet about it." Most often, the interest of the child is sacrificed for the greater interest of the family.

It is very strange and shocking that there were no statistics on incest in India worked out in the past. But a 2007 study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development on the sexual abuse of children found that 54% had been violated at some point in their lives; 50% knew the offenders. The sexual abuse of children, of which incest is a major part, is a growing menace but little is done to address the issue. Interestingly, the sexual assault of a minor boy is covered by the very law — article 377 — that criminalizes homosexuality. (MWCD, 2007)

According to National Crime Record Bureau of India:

Incest rape (Incidence.....536) Incest rape cases have increased by 36.7% from 392 cases in 2012 to 536 cases in 2013 as compared to 35.2% increase in overall rape cases. 20.1% of such cases were registered in Maharashtra (108 out of 536 cases), wherein 117 victims of incest rape (rape

by blood relatives) were reported. It is to be noted that 52.2% of incest rape victims (286 out of 548 victims) were in age group of 10-18 years. (CI, 84)

Nishit Kumar, who is head of Communication and Strategic Initiatives at Mumbai's Childline India Foundation, says it is appalling that India, which has 450 million children below 18, allocated just 0.7% to protect children in its last Budget. He says "it's a question of priority" and Indian lawmakers are yet to realize the enormity — and spread — of the crime.

Post-independence Creative Writers on Incest Relations

After the independence, a rapid change was observed in social, economic and political phenomenon of states like Maharashtra, Delhi, and West Bengal. Women were coming up to their own. The western influence and education caused these changes to happen in India. The literary luminous stars were scattering their light on the then society and exposing the pros and cons of the changes.

In the 1960's and 1970's in Indian drama, there was a phase when the new identity of women was emerging and writers like Tendulkar and Mohan Rakesh were forcefully taking up their cause. Ghashiram's wife, though invisible on the stage, but referred in the play, keeps silent on the offering of her daughter by her husband for illegal sexual contact with Nana without marriage. This shows the place of woman in society. Even the wives of Nana never question him when he is engaged sexually with small young girls. The women in Ghashiram Kotwal do not resist the imposition but they accept it. Kamala, a woman bought by Jaisingh just for Rs. Two Hundred and Fifty in Luhardaga, is the victim of social system of India. Leela Benare has to face bitter experience of carnal love just at the innocent age of fourteen. In all cases above mentioned in the works of Vijay Tendulkar, it is the silence of the women which causes pain and problem for other women.

Dattani's Forceful and Effective Play – After-effect of Incest Imposition

On the other hand, Mahesh Dattani a modern fearless playwright, in his play, *Thirty Days in September* has dramatized the most heinous issue, child sexual abuse which seems to me an extension of the Leela Benare's Childhood sexual plight by her maternal uncle. Dattani has presented the after-effect of incestuous relationship on the psyche of the victimized child with the passage of time. The protagonist of the play, Mala who could be seen as grown up version of Leela Benare, is molested by her maternal uncle before reaching her puberty.

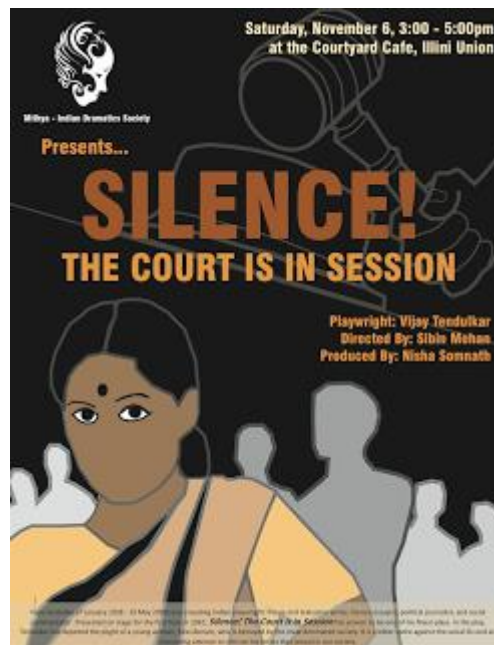
Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

Tendulkar's Theatre – The Shadow of Unwedded Pregnancy

Tendulkar was an unconventional writer. He broke the rules and regulations of Marathi Theater successfully. He exposed the rapidly changing society and dubious hypocritical character of traditional degraded values. The Indian culture has a spiritual base. The Indians are God-fearing people who believe in virtue or sin. They live in cultural restraint. Through traditional, moral and spiritual values, they have been taught to cultivate tolerance, respect, sexual self-control and self-sacrifice when necessary. People are insecure due to economic conditions, communal stratification, and caste system. It does not allow much freedom to the individual. Due to the grip of tradition we all are the victims of society.



Courtesy: literarism.blogspot.com

In modern Indian literature incestuous relation is mentioned but it remains invisible. In his works, the Marathi Playwright Vijay Tendulkar dealt with it directly. In India, both the people and the Government were/are not ready to accept the fact that incestuous relations were/are present and that women are being exploited by their own near and dear ones. Tendulkar brought the matter out in the open in his play *Silence! The Court is in Session*. In the sixties, it was a tough task to talk about incest not only in public but also in literature but Tendulkar dared to expose it in the shadow of unwedded pregnancy.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

Personal Relatives – Maternal Uncle

The plays of Vijay Tendulkar revolve around inter-personal relationship in an effective way. He focuses on man-woman relationship in different dimensions. When we come to know about the incestuous relationship between Benare and her maternal uncle, we are shocked. In Indian culture, the place of maternal uncle is given great importance. Maternal uncle is revered as a double mother. Maternal uncle plays important role at the time of marriage ceremony. During the marriage ceremony, maternal uncle has to perform the responsibility of “Kanyadan”. He is supposed to be the best custodian in Indian culture, second only to the girl’s father, but the custodian turns out to be exploiter of Benare. If a teenage girl is seduced by her own maternal uncle, whom should the girl trust? At the time of mock trial, Benare confesses that she was seduced by her maternal uncle. Her uncle praises her bloom every day, shows his love to her and misleads her to a social crime of incest. “She fell in love at the age of fifteen, with her own maternal uncle. That’s what ended in disappointment.” (SCS, 66)

“It’s true, I did commit a sin. I was in love with my mother’s brother. But in our strict house, in the prime of my unfolding youth, he was the one who came close to me. He praised my bloom every day. He gave me love.How was I to know that if you felt like breaking yourself into bits and melting into one with someone – if you felt that just being with him gave a whole meaning to life – and if he was your uncle, it was a sin! Why, I was hardly fourteen! I didn’t even know what sin was – I swear by my mother ... And my brave man turned tail and ran.” (SCS, 74)

What Went Wrong?

Having gone through the statement of Leela Benare, one can guess what went wrong in her family. First of all, Leela Benare was not allowed to be friendly with the boys. Her curiosity at her teen age was not satisfied by either mother or her teacher with proper guidance. Her suppressed inquisitive desires erupted when she got a person in the form of her maternal uncle who praised “my bloom every day. He gave me love.”

Ray Wyre in his article “Paedophilia Characteristics and Patterns of Behaviour” writes, “By intuition and design, they (pedophiles) may select vulnerable children, who may

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015
Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar
Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

be physically and/or emotionally neglected.” Mother’s neglect of Benare mother is revealed in the play. As Benare may not have been educated about good touch or bad touch in her childhood:

... How was I to know that if you felt like breaking yourself into bits and melting into one with someone – if you felt that just being with him gave a whole meaning to life – and if he was your uncle, it was a sin! Why, I was hardly fourteen! I didn’t even know what sin was ... (SCS, 74)

Benare’s Songs

The songs Tendulkar assigns to Benare are of great dramatic and psychological significance. For instance, take the song she sings in the opening scene:

Oh, I've got a sweetheart
.....
I'll tell you a secret –
He wants to marry me.
But mummy says, I'm too little
To have such thoughts as these (SCS, 58-59).

In this song, we can feel the teenager’s dream about her beloved and her desire to get married but as soon as the secret is revealed to mother, she is silenced by saying that she is too little to think about these things. In parents’ eyes children never grow up. They realize the reality when an outsider draws their attention but by that time, time escapes from their hands.

The song which she sings later reveals her mental agony which she has experienced in her childhood after that heinous incident. It throws light on the condition on almost all Indian women, who have to face humiliation and pass an ordeal at each and every step of their life. In their life, they get a ray of hope but the same ray destroys their trust.

Our feet tread on upon unknown
And dangerous pathways evermore.
.....
Our earthen hands burn out, and then

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

Again in flames they are alight.

Everything is fully known,

And everything is clear to see.

.....

There is a battle sometimes, where

Defeat is destined as the end.

Some experiences are meant

To taste, then just to waste and spend. (SCS, 62-63)

Government Report

Indian Government became alert in 2007 and presented a condensed report “Study on Child Abuse: India 2007” under the supervision of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. Chapter 6.1 Background of this report says,

“The subject of child sexual abuse is still a taboo in India. There is a conspiracy of silence around the subject and a very large percentage of people feel that this is a largely western problem and that child sexual abuse does not happen in India. Part of the reason of course lies in a traditional conservative family and community structure that does not talk about sex and sexuality at all. Parents do not speak to children about sexuality as well as physical and emotional changes that take place during their growing years. As a result of this, all forms of sexual abuse that a child faces do not get reported to anyone. The girl, whose mother has not spoken to her even about a basic issue like menstruation, is unable to tell her mother about the uncle or neighbour who has made sexual advances towards her. This silence encourages the abuser so that he is emboldened to continue the abuse and to press his advantage to subject the child to more severe forms of sexual abuse. Very often children do not even realize that they are being abused.” (Child Abuse, 73)

According to a survey conducted by WHO, between 14% and 56% of the sexual abuse of girls, and up to 25% of the sexual abuse of boys, was perpetrated by relatives or step parents. In many places, adults were outspoken about the risk of sexual violence their

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

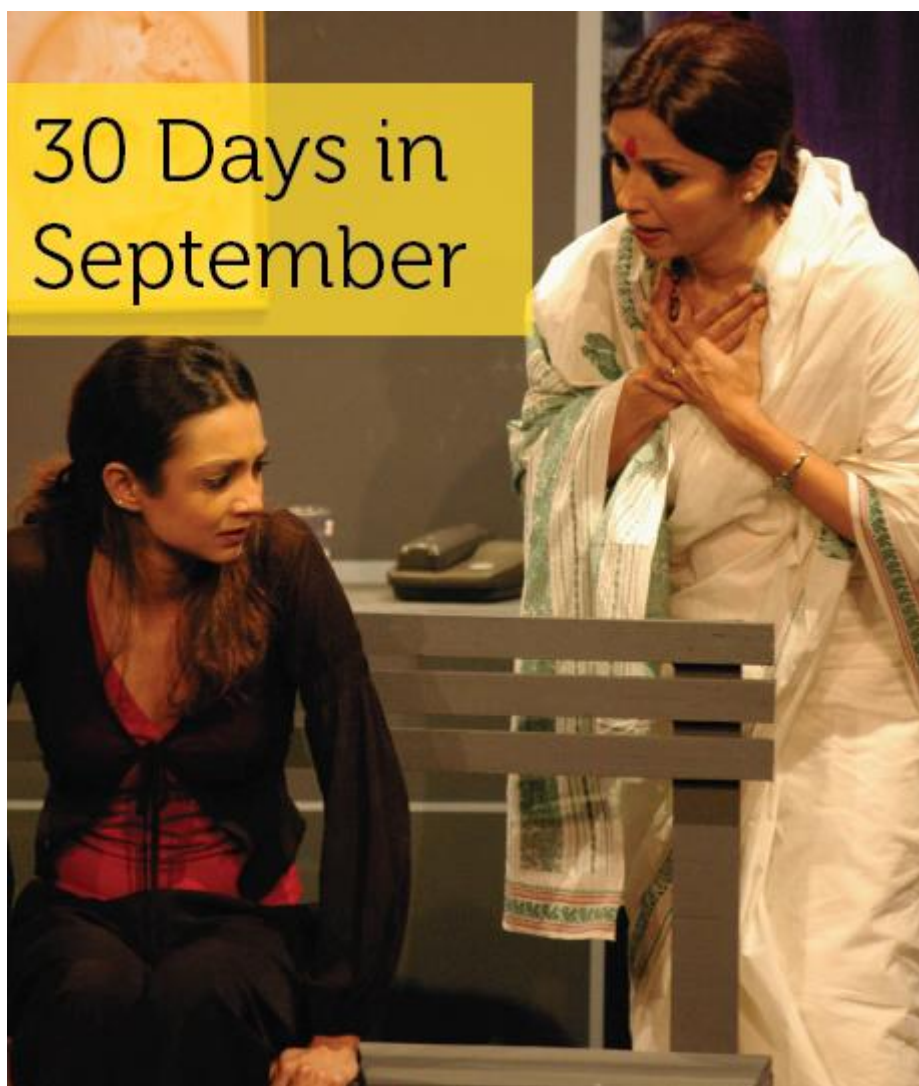
Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September: A Comparative Study*

children faced at school or at play in the community, but rarely did adults speak of children's risk of sexual abuse within the home and family context.

“The shame, secrecy and denial associated with familial sexual violence against children foster a pervasive culture of silence, where children cannot speak about sexual violence in the home, and where adults do not know what to do or say if they suspect someone they know is sexually abusing a child.” (Child Abuse, 74)

Mahesh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*



Courtesy: <http://www.jtpac.org/synopsis-30days-sept.php>

Vijay Tendulkar raised the alarm against the sexual abuse of women and children in sixties in twentieth century. It was a daring step in an odd environment. After 40 years, in

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September: A Comparative Study*

August 2002, Mahesh Dattani was commissioned by RAHI (Recovering and Healing from Incest) to write a play on child sexual abuse. The result came in the form of a stunning play “Thirty Days in September”, the first play on incest in India. Commissioned and researched by RAHI and written by the well-known playwright, Mahesh Dattani, the play was born out of RAHI’s work with survivors and based on the stories the women shared with the playwright. The play is now recognized as a critically acclaimed commercial production, and continues to have successful runs in different parts of the country and abroad. It has completed over 75 shows and has been translated into several Indian languages.

RAHI’s Role

RAHI is the first and only organization in India for women survivors of Incest and Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) since 1996. The organization is professional, informed, uniquely positioned to facilitate the recovery process for women survivors through an informed and distinctive model of healing. Professionally informed and with deep experience, RAHI is a feminist group that has created a supportive environment for survivors. It goes beyond ‘breaking the silence’ and has developed a powerful voice that strives to mainstream the discussion about Incest/ CSA in India and includes it in social dialogue. Addressing the long-term impact of incest /CSA on adult women, RAHI not only forms the backbone of work on this issue in India but has also paved the way for incest/CSA to become a ‘field’ in the country, and has inspired other groups working in this area.

RAHI has been active in this field for a long time and had many heart stirring cases of incest and child sexual abuse. These cases were thoroughly studied and then the sensitive topic was moulded into “Thirty Days in September”. Going through the report “Breaking the Silence: Child Sexual Abuse in India” presented by RAHI in February 2013, we see the amalgamation of two or more case studies in Thirty Days of September like the case of Jyoti (BTS,20-21), Case of Deepti (BTS,23), Case of Aditi and Riya(BTS,24).

Climax of the Play

The climax of the play is the revelation of another incestuous relation by the same person who was exploiting Mala. Whenever Maya was sexually abused, her mother pretended to be innocent as if nothing had happened. Her mother does not raise voice against her daughter's molestation. As she grows, she becomes physically vulnerable and sexually

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

addicted. The play also highlights the mother's silence against her daughter's molestation resulting in a conflict between them which ends with the mother's revelation that she herself was molested by the same person in her childhood. Thus we come to know that not only daughter but also mother had been sexually abused by Vinay who is a real brother of Shanta and maternal uncle of the protagonist Mala.

In this way, Mahesh Dattani has played trick with time. He killed two birds with a single stone. First he presented the incestuous relationship between brother and sister; and between Niece and Maternal Uncle. Both these relations in any religion or society of the world are still considered pious and pure. In India, Sister ties holy strand (Rakhi) on the wrist of her brother and brother gives promise to protect her till his last breath against any odd moment. After father, brother is supposed to be the custodian of a sister. But this relation was polluted by the brother of Shanta.

Vinay has shredded the thread of pious relationship established by society and religion in India and other countries.

The play "Thirty Days Has September" opens with the recorded voice on tape as methods of self-revelation, Dattani unveils the conflict of Mala's conscious and unconscious mind. Mala frankly reveals her real name, Mala Khatri and confidently asserts that it is the person, who molested her, should hide himself from being recognized because she has not been a participant but a victim of his beastly passion. Mala's voice on tape which is played in the black-out takes her back to September 30th, 2001 and presents her as a more confused and to a great extent, a nervous person. She assumes herself responsible for the havoc which changed her attitude to life; sometimes she suspects that it is her mother who is behind her destruction.

She, being a victim of sexual exploitation before reaching her puberty and in early youth, and of betrayal at the hands of her mother becomes indecisive about her action:

"I—I don't know how to begin . . . Today is the 30th of September . . . 2001, and my name is . . . I don't think I want to say my name . . . I am sorry . . . I know it is all my fault really . . . It must be. I must have asked for it . . . it's not

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

anybody's fault, except my own. Sometimes I wish that my mother . . ." (CP II 9). Later she says: "The only person who can, who could have prevented all this is my mother. Sometimes I wish she would just tell me to stop. She could have prevented a lot from happening . . ." (CP II,9).

Why are Children Sexually Exploited in Home?

Question arises after all why children are exploited in home. In the case of Leela Benare, we have seen that a strict environment was created around her. She must not have been allowed to mix up with opposite sex and must not have been let to question about teenage emotional, hormonal and biological changes. Benare was fourteen and old enough to sense physical pleasure. But in the case of Mala, she was only seven, an age to play with dolls and to sing nursery rhymes "Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November." She was unable to understand Uncle Vinay's activities with her. She didn't like it but she being weak was unable to protest him. She even tried to inform her parents but of no use. Her father sent her to her mother and her mother turned deaf ear to her and tried to divert the topic for unknown reason. Her father did not pay attention to his own daughter and always brushed aside the responsibility to her mother.

"I am not talking about a bad dream! I am talking about the time when uncle would molest me. When I was seven. Then eight. Nine. Ten. Every vacation when we went to visit him or when he came to stay with us. You were busy in either the puja room or the kitchen. I would go to papa and cry. Before I could even tell him why I was crying he would tell me to go to you. (CP, II 25-26)

The silence of her mother against her molestation which subsides in her unconscious mind hurts her emotionally. Gradually she grew up and her traumatic experience of physical exploitation and her mother's indifferent attitude towards it starts coming at the surface level that resulted in a lifelong clash between mother and daughter.

Mala questions her mother for being ignorant and passive to her plight:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

Where were you when he locked the door to your bed room 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, add them up. 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!
(CP II 53)

Shakespeare's Hamlet also feels the same when he comes to know about her father's death and his mother's marriage to his uncle. He feels this world is hostile and human relationship is betrayal. Portraying the relationship between mother and daughter, Dattani has tried to shed light on the fact that betrayal in any close relationship, as Mala realizes, is as painful as sexual abuse. In his conversation with Lakshmi Subramanyam, Dattani says:

"Though sexual abuse is at the core of my play, the mother-daughter relationship is equally important. The main protagonist, who has suffered at the hands of her uncle, feels a deep sense of betrayal that her mother did not stop the abuse and failed in her role as protector" (MV,133).

Facing the lack of communication with her mother, Mala consequently becomes contemptuous and accuses her mother of ignoring her. Criticizing her mother for stuffing her with food instead of consoling her, Mala expresses her mother's insensitivity to her pain:

Oh yes, you would remember that I always like *alu parathas* because that's what I got whenever I came to you, hurt and crying. Instead of listening to what I had to say, you stuffed me with food. I couldn't speak because I was being fed all the time, and you know what? I began to like them. I thought that was the cure for my pain. That if I ate till I was stuffed, the pain would go away. Every time I came to you mummy, you were ready with something to feed me. You knew. Otherwise you wouldn't have been so prepared. You knew all along what was happening to me . . . (CP II 24)

When Mala continuously instigates her mother with bitter remarks, ultimately Shanta is forced to accept that it was the financial assistance which kept her silent. Thus, Mala's

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

anguish and pain is intensified from her realization of her mother's betrayal. In this regard Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri observes: "Child sexual abuse spans a range of problems, but it is this complicity of the family through silence and a lack of protest that is the ultimate betrayal for the abused" (73).

Guilt Consciousness

In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Tendulkar does not focus on guilt consciousness. Maternal uncle and Professor Damale escape the trial. No one condemns them for their misdeeds. Leela Benare wants to give birth to child without getting married. But in *Thirty Days in September*, sexual molestation in childhood breeds a sense of guilt consciousness which has been discussed by Dattani in his earlier plays. The sexual assault on Mala in her childhood and betrayal at the hands of her mother not only affects Mala's psyche but also develops a sense of guilt consciousness in her mother, Shanta. Both of them suffer pain of their sexual exploitation but with Mala it becomes more effective. To compensate for her guilt of being silent to the injustice meted out to her girl, Shanta requests Deepak to marry Mala but to no avail. She turns down Deepak's proposal for marrying her arguing that they would not be compatible.

Shantha's Guilt Silence and Consciousness

Now let's examine the case of Shanta. Toward the end of the play, we are acquainted with the causes of Shanta's silence. Shanta also suffers a guilt consciousness. Shanta expresses her love for Mala to compensate for her guilt. At last she feels herself guilty of Mala's pitiable plight and accepts: "It is always my fault . . . I-I forget things. I am the one to blame. But she is a very nice girl at heart" (*CP II 15*). Moved by Mala's pain, Shanta reveals the reality of her life and the reason for her keeping her lips shut:

"I was six, Mala. I was six. And he was thirteen . . . and it wasn't only summer holidays. For ten years! For ten years!! (*Pointing to the picture of God*) I looked to Him. I didn't feel anything. I didn't feel pain, I didn't feel pleasure. I lost myself in Him. He helped me. He helped me. By taking away all feelings. No pain no pleasure, only silence. Silence means Shanti. Shanti. But my tongue is cut off. No. No. It just fell off somewhere. I didn't use it, no. I

cannot shout for help, I cannot say words of comfort, I cannot even speak about it. No, I can't. I am dumb. (CP II 55)

Effect of Revelation

The revelation of the fact flabbergasts not only Mala but also the spectators. The holiest relation in the world was shattered. Now we have sympathy for Shanta. Shanta having broken her long silence, Mala regrets: "While I accused you of not recognizing my pain, you never felt any anger at me for not recognizing yours. We were both struggling to survive but—I never acknowledged your struggle" (CP II 58).

As the silence is broken, they find each other on the same stage. Mala is filled with remorse for torturing her mother mentally: "It's not your fault, mother. Just as it wasn't my fault. Please, tell me that you've forgiven me for blaming you. Please tell me that . . . I know you will, mother. I know you have" (CP II 58).

In an interview with Anitha Santhanam, Mahesh Dattani remarks:

"It's the silence and the betrayal of the family that affects me the most. Like in this case, the mother knew that her daughter was being sexually abused by her uncle, but still chose to keep quiet. It's the silence that makes the abused feel betrayed."

Indian Morality and Objects of Male Gaze

In this way, both mother and daughter share the same fate. Both suffer molestation in their childhood which affects their lives—Shanta becomes senseless to pain and pleasure but Mala always feels longing for sexual gratification. Shanta's silence, which she takes as Shanti, ruins two lives—hers and her daughter's. Her silence against her daughter's sexual abuse and even against herself symbolizes two things— the first, degrading Indian morality, and the second, the stereotypes for women which present them as objects of male gaze.

Leela Benare and Mala – Girls with Modern Sensibility

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

Both Leela Benare and Mala are girls with modern sensibility. Leela Benare having the bitter experience in her teen age, decides to live her life in her own style. She as an ideal teacher and actor enjoys her life and decides to live as a spinster. But the intellectual power of Prof. Damale entangles her and she throws her body on his altar. She becomes unmarried mother and her “god” turns tail and ducks the responsibility.

Mala being molested by her uncle again and again becomes nymphomaniac. She not only revolts against her mother's silence but also challenges male supremacy by rejecting Deepak's proposal for living together. She feels uncomfortable when she is not able to draw the attention of any male. She becomes hyper. Later on with proper counseling with psychiatrist and with the help of Deepak, she gets rid of emotional and psychic trauma and lives happy life with him.

Being concerned about the effect of incest on the victim, Delhi-based senior consulting psychiatrist Dr. Sanjay Chugh says,

“The psychological harm on the victim is massive as it evokes doubts, raises questions for which answers are not easy to get. The victim may suppress emotions or be filled with feelings of rage, guilt and shame. It is difficult for such victims to trust others later on in life. The victim needs to stand up for himself/herself and not to allow the trauma to make them psychologically and socially weak. Active social support from family, friends, guidance centres and counsellors can bring the victim's faith in the goodness of human beings back,”

Dr. Sanjay Chugh says, "Child sexual abuse often comes to light when childhood histories are explored and in most cases the perpetrator is a known person who is close to the family or inside the family." In an interview with Utpale K. Banerjee, Mahesh Dannai tells, “In some cases, there was a sense of betrayal if it involved the father and there was a transferred resentment against the mother who perhaps could have intervened, but didn't. Often it was a hapless mother who had just no power in society, to speak against the father as the perpetrator.”

What Should Be Done?

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study

People need to realize and accept incest as a part of our society that happens in every socio-economic group. The denial mode will not make the problem go away. We need to spread the word at a mass level where people are made aware not only about its existence but also about the help available. Incest will persist as long as the collective conspiracy of silence within the family, the state and the society allow it to go on. If we wish to check these incidents, we must break this silence and pay heed to children. The fear of society has to be neglected. The state's institutions which have the responsibility of law and order must have separate way to treat victim as well as culprit. Parents should not be so strict to their children that they could not share their feelings, secretes and curiosity. Their curiosity must be handled in an expert way by parents so that children could not wander at second hand and unreliable sources to get an answer. At present, latest technologies have brought children in a vast ocean of unfiltered and ambiguous information, so they must keep an eye on them and their unusual activities or behaviour.

Works Cited

- "Crime against Women." Crime in India 2013. Rep.61st Ed. New Delhi: National Crime Record Bureau India, 2013. 84. Print.
- "Sexual Abuse." Study on Child Abuse INDIA 2007. New Delhi: Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007. 41-70. Print.
- Agrawal, Beena. Mahesh Dattani's Plays: A New Horizon in Indian Theatre. Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2008. Print.
- Banerjee, Utkle K. "Conversation with Mahesh Dattani" Indian Literature, Vol. 48, No. 5 (223) (Sep-Oct 2004), pp. 161-167. New Delhi: Sahitya Academy.2004
- Chatterji, Shoma. "Incest and the Conspiracy of Silence." <http://indiatogether.org/incest-children>. Amitabha Basu, 30 Apr. 2009. Web. 9 June 2015. .
- Chaudhuri, Asha Kuthari. Contemporary Indian Writers in English: Mahesh Dattani: An Introduction. New Delhi: Foundation, 2005. Print.
- Dattani, Mahesh. Interview by Anitha Santhanam. "It's the silence that affects me most." 2001.
- Dattani: Mahesh, "Thirty Days Has September". col. Collected Plays II. New Delhi: Penguin, 2005. Print.
- Dummett, Mark. Breaking the Silence: Child Sexual Abuse in India. New York, N.Y.: Human Rights Watch, 2013. Print.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September: A Comparative Study*

Multani, Angelie, ed. "Introduction." Mahesh Dattani's Plays: Critical Perspectives. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2007. Print.

Subramanyam, Lakshmi, ed. "A Dialogue with Mahesh Dattani." Muffled Voices: Women in Modern Indian Theatre. New Delhi: Shakti Books, 2002. Print

Tendulkar, Vijay Dhondopant. "Silence! The Court Is in Session." Collected Plays in Translation: Kamala, Silence! The Court Is in Session, Sakharam Binder, the Vultures, Encounter in Umbugland, Ghashiram Kotwal, A Friend's Story, Kanyadaan. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.

Wikisource contributors. "Bible (King James)/Leviticus." Wikisource . Wikisource, 19 Apr. 2013. Web. 8 Jun. 2015.

Wyre, Ray. "Paedophilia Characteristics and Patterns of Behaviour." Home Truths About Child Sexual Abuse: a policy and Practice. Ed. Catherine Itzin. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.



Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar
Department of English
Banaras Hindu University
Varanasi-221005
Uttar Pradesh
India
suryaprakashgupt@gmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

Surya Prakash, Ph.D. Research Scholar
Incestuous Relations in *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Thirty Days has September*:
A Comparative Study