



RESEARCH PAPER

Psycho-dramatic Analysis of Mahesh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> February 26, 2022</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> April 10, 2022</p> <p><b>Online:</b> April 15, 2022</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Dilemmas, Psycho-dramatic, Therapy Trauma</p> <p><b>*Corresponding Author</b>  taimurkayani2011@gmail.com</p>	<p>The aim of the present analysis of <i>Thirty Days in September</i> is to justify the ways of getting over the sexual trauma in terms of the role of others the treatment of the victim and the various dilemmas into which the characters find themselves. The mental state of the victim and his or her emotions in the moment of crisis are very important to understand the traumatic effect on the victim's personality. This study has signified the role of others in the understanding of victims' mental trouble. By analyzing the play from the angle that has been mentioned earlier, the ways of treatment by using psycho-dramatic therapy have been investigated. The paper first discusses sexual abuse, its causes, and its side effects. Moreover, it explores the treatments of getting over sexual trauma with the role of others. Thirdly, it deals with three stages of psycho-dramatic therapy. This research has explored the complete journey of the victim that shows how she has suffered and comes out of the sexual trauma.</p>

Introduction

Deictic This Psycho-dramatic therapy is the counseling of the victim who is sexually abused in his or her childhood. It is a complete process that decreases the intensity of the victim's agony. The self-realization of the victim and coming back to life are the main principles of this paper. Moreover, this study has focused on the role of others. Previous studies have focused more on psychological problems and mental conditions of the victims, their absent-mindedness, lack of emotions, selflessness, inner guilt, dissatisfaction of soul, and the problems that victims have to face in their life while this study has concentrated on the role of others in the treatment of the victim and its impact on the victim's mind. This study has focused on the psycho-dramatic techniques that can help the victim to get over this trauma.

Dattani has raised his voice against this unfair silence of society and introduced another perspective of the issue. He provides a track of salvation that how a victim can successfully cope with the critical situation. He prefers the ways of treatment, which can move a patient towards a contented life. This study has also highlighted the important roles of others who live around, and their effect on the victim. The implementation of three stages of counseling helps the victim to live a pleasant life

Review of the Literature

Child sexual abuse is a heinous issue. Children are facilitated but their inner thoughts and problems are always snubbed. It is said that most of the exploiters are found in families.

They are close relatives. People feel guilty to discuss this issue. It is considered a social taboo. There are several types of child sexual abuse, children who are molested by their close relatives and those who are molested by strangers (Fisher, 2011). Moreover, Maltz (2002) says that "sexual abuse is a shameful act when a dominant person does sexual act forcefully. It can also be defined as the sexual act between an adult and immature child, explicitly or in a hidden way" (p. 9). Victim's psychological abnormal behaviour is always ignored while it is the best source to understand a child's mental condition (Bashir, 2017) The problem related to incest, in the state of childhood molestation is discussed in the play, *Thirty Days in September*, sexual harassment of a minor girl by her uncle can be seen, brother of her mother. The problem takes its worst form, as the victim finds no salvation even when she is under the custody of her parents. She is forced to suffer silently right in her own house. This painful episode of molestation leaves scars on the mind of a victim. The victim faces psychological as well as physical problems throughout his or her life. Sexual trauma can be cured by using psycho-dramatic therapy in psychoanalysis. A psychologist tries to understand the basic problem of the victim and provides him or her secure environment, which helps the victim to come back in his or her life (Maltz, 2002). In addition, Childhood molestation affects him or her physically and mentally. These influences of child sexual abuse are depression, post-horrendous pressure disorder, anxiety, complex post-traumatic stress disorder, inclination to assist mistreatment in adulthood, and physical injury to the child (Hall, 2011). The children who are distorted sexually by their relatives are special cases. They lose the balance of trust in their life when they see no protection even in their own homes. Hall describes that this sensation becomes the reason for physical and mental damage. Sometimes, his/ her inner guilt forces the victim to live a life of shame (2011).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Psychodrama-General considerations**

Psychodrama belongs to Moreno's theory of spontaneity and creativity. It uses the practices of spontaneous role-playing and of discovering the phases of our lives through concrete action. The main purpose of psychodrama is to probe deep insight relationship of the victim with other family members and people who are around him or her. It tries to understand the reaction of the victim when he or she is provided with a mutual cooperative and supportive environment. It focuses on the life of an individual, his or her turns towards life and public relationship. There must be a protagonist who helps the victim to get over the sexual trauma. Therefore, the role of the mother is also important (M. Hartman, 1987). According to the psycho-dramatic theory, the victim recovers after passing three stages i.e. warm-up, Action, and Sharing. The victim is not aware of his or her mental condition. The victim feels guilty for the act of molestation and blames him or herself (Hall, 2011). In the very first stage, the victim is realized about his or her mental condition by the protagonist of the play. Therefore, there must be a person who holds the victim's hand to face the reality and forces him/her to make a contact with a psychiatrist. Psychiatrist has to create a peaceful environment for the victim to give a surety of safety. The restorative organization together is basic to help direct survivors feel safe. Affiliation with the protagonist rebuilds the concept of trust in his/her mind. Understanding of victim's mind helps him/her of gaining mental peace. It is perilous for the protagonist to permit the victim to accumulate feelings of trust, security, and accessibility. Since sexual manhandling is harsh in control by nature libertarianism is pushed as a vital factor.

## **Textual Analysis**

Dattani investigates deeply the taboo issue of child sexual abuse in *Thirty Days in September*, which is a saga of incest, betrayal, and demonic suppression in the name of blood relationships. It is a depiction of the whole procedure of getting over the sexual trauma through the role of others. Dattani has shown the complete journey of a victim, Mala. Her uncle, brother of her mother, Vinay has a secret forbidden relationship with Mala. This hurtful experience has fixed into her subconscious, which leads Mala to live a pathetic life. The description of getting over sexual trauma and mental condition has been analyzed under the psycho-dramatic theory. As it has mentioned earlier in a theoretical framework, the text has been divided into several sections for the convenience of understanding as well as for creating a theoretical relationship between the text of *Thirty Days in September* and theory. These are basic aspects that the researcher is going to explore, her mental conditional and suppression of voice. Further, this study suggests a way of getting over sexual trauma by using psycho-dramatic therapy, particularly, three stages of recovery i.e. Warm-up, Action, and Sharing.

The impact of childhood molestation on the mind of the victim is very terrible. Depression and anxiety cover the mental growth of the victim and push back into the deep well of gloominess. The victim does not survive normally. The negative impact on the victim's mind makes him or her restless, particularly, when the victim finds no way of salvation. It can be clear through the conversation of Shanta with Deepak, Mala's boyfriend. Shanta tells him that a month before, Mala decides to go for a holy picnic with her colleagues but in the meanwhile, she refuses to go. Shanta tells her daughter's confusion that sheds a curtain between her and other people of her surroundings. This shows that Mala does not want to spend her time with others. She does not feel pleasure in the company of others. She also makes lies with her mother whenever her mother, Shanta asks to go with her. Shanta explains the mental distraction of her daughter, Mala. Dattani (2010) expresses trauma in the following lines:

*Shanta: About a month ago, she told me she was going for a picnic at Palam Vihar with her office friends. However, the next day, I overheard her talking on the phone to her office friend, saying that she had to spend holi with me. (p.4)*

These lines show her mental stress and her trial to avoid people. She does not want to expose herself before people. Whenever she realizes that someone has started to know about her personal life, she avoids him. She is unable to expose differences among people. She is unable to distinguish her relationship with Deepak as well as her mother.

Moreover, her mental condition can be seen in play when she tries to forget her past but she is unable to do that. Her memories chase her in maintaining her relationship with Deepak. Whenever she tries to adjust with Deepak, her subconscious disturbs her a lot and leads her towards depression. It chases her like her shadow. Dattani (2010) represents a character, the role of man, is representing her memories. These are the long-lasting side effects of childhood molestation. She finds this character everywhere. Whenever she indulges in any relationship, this shadow chases her throughout the play. Deepak expresses his feelings but unconsciously she relates them with her uncle's dirty feelings about her, during molestation. It can be seen in these lines:

*DEEPAK: It is okay. It is okay. Cry if you want to. MAN: Shhh! don't cry you want to come here in your holidays, no? Then do not cry. Today, you are seven years old beautiful girl. It is your birthday so, a gift should be special. Lie down. Come on, quickly. DEEPAK: Look into my eyes. (P. 43)*

There is another aspect in which victims often suffer from guilt, disgrace, and self-blame and frequently blame themselves as in the case of the protagonist experiencing molestation at an early age that influences the entire personality and it becomes hard for her to view the trustworthy family member in a negative light. The victim becomes unable to understand herself and internalizes negative messages. It can be seen in these lines: "*Mala: I do not know why. I just do not understand. Please do not ask me why I do it. It is just a game ... not a game. No, it is ...it is I know it is wrong. What I am doing is wrong! However, it means a lot to me. I like it. That is why I am a bad person. I have no character*" (Dattani, 2010, p. 98). Sometimes, the victim stores his or her memories in sub-consciousness, which disturbs him or her terribly. Trauma is not merely merchandise of the mind's ability to come over this sexual trauma. It is truly a body-mind portent. Trauma affects the client's cognitive recollection which often lacks clarity. As the mind connects with the body, psychodrama reshaped the thoughts of the victim. Psychiatric inspires the body to actively contribute oftentimes; the body needs to lead the mind to the truth.

This study explains that psychodrama helps the victim to reframe his or her thoughts. Success comes in the form of the client's adolescence, most likely because psychodramatic techniques are used for an individual's treatment. Psychodrama allows the trauma survivors to work through their pursuits at a deeper level. It understands the circle of the sexually traumatic victim and the protagonist of the group who encompasses the life of the victim and inspires him or her to get over the trauma. Dattani shows the role of others and how they can help a victim to get over the trauma of childhood molestation.

The three stages of the victim's recovery can be seen in this play. Deepak, as the protagonist of the play, raises his voice to help Victim, Mala. He warms up her thoughts of awareness and shows the right track of her life. Before this counseling session, how Deepak warms up Mala to consult with the doctor that can be seen in the next scene, Deepak introduces himself as Mala's boyfriend comes visiting. He wants to discuss the matters with aunty, but she does not want to pay any attention, instead of telling him to be off before Mala returns.

Deepak breaks the mystery of Mala's life and tries his best to explore the unusual action of Mala towards life. He discusses all the issues that he has faced during his attachment with Mala. By assisting the client who helps the victim to express her inner feelings and incidents that he or she has faced. It is a supportive relationship. This supportive relationship enhances the trust of the victim and the victim feels safe and tries to come back in her life. Dattani suggests positive intimate relationships that may increase the survivors' feelings of protection. It also helps them in gaining interpersonal experience, experience reconnection. "*Deepak: I met your counselor yesterday. Mala: what, what did he say? Deepak: She did not talk to me about you. She said that is confidential*" (2010, p. 15). A peaceful environment and assurance of secrets are considered part of this treatment, as it is considered a social taboo. People do not even discuss this issue. Further, Deepak plays the role of supporter and motivates her to share her inner pain. These lines show Deepak's strive to reveal Mala's condition. He asks a question from Mala:

*Deepak: So, what is with the thirty days affair?*

*Mala: I am not sure you will understand.*

*Deepak: I want to understand. Make me understand.*

*Mala: You know I have been... around.*

*Deepak: I gathered from your calendar.*

*That was some collection of ticks, crosses, and names. (2010, p. 89)*

It is identified the importance of the supportive and long-term relationship of the victim with her supporter. It is suggested that the intimate relationship enhances the sense of trust between supporter and victim. It is suggested that the therapeutic goals for a couple include resolution of issues related to physical and emotional safety, resolution of distressing memories, increased trust between survivor and partner, understanding of survivor's symptoms, and participation in appropriate social reconnection as cited from:

*Mala: Can I stay here? Deepak: Trust me Mala and tell me what is bothering you. Deepak: you are not giving yourself a chance. You are not giving me a chance. Mala: I am scared to be home. I do not want to be home. Anywhere but home! Deepak: You cannot go home anyway if it rains again. Why don't you stay here? I will fetch you a blanket. (Dattani, 2010, p. 119)*

In the next step of recovery, Mala starts keeping trust Deepak and shares her feelings. She finds her savior who can help her to come over sexual trauma. Deepak tends to understand her and to consult a psychiatrist when she tells her feeling for other men. She accepts the fact of sexual attraction that she feels for other men. It is the first step of healing the victim's troubles with the support of his counselor. The erotic symptoms of Victim often include sexualizing relationships, inappropriate seduction, difficulties with affection and intimacy, compulsive sexual behaviour, promiscuity, problems concerning desire, arousal, and orgasm, flashbacks, difficulties with touch, and sadistic or masochistic tendencies: "As Deepak gets up, Mala pulls him back. Mala: I cannot stop them! I attract them. Deepak: This is all in your mind. Mala: you do not understand! I am doing something that attracts them to me" (Dattani, 2010, p. 92).

This is another aspect of the play that shows the two boundaries of two characters while living in the same house. Both characters are suffering from the same pain but both characters fight against it in two different ways. Sexual abuse has made her bold and aggressive. The same mental trouble forces Shanta to keep silent. The play opens with the rebooting act of Shanta that she does unknowingly. "Shanta stops singing, put the bell down, and bows to the idol before getting up and moving to the living room area. The light comes up on that area as she picks up a notebook from a shelf or table and goes to the door. She appears to be doing all this on" (Dattani, 2010, p. 89). Shanta does not show her interest in life and conserves herself within the four walls of a house. She always remains busy praying. Her lack of interest in living life shows her mental disturbance. It is declared through Mala's conversation with her mother, Shanta. Mala's step of blaming not only leads her towards healthy life but it solves the riddle of Shanta's life:

*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.) . . . No, pain no pleasure, only silence. Silence means Shanti. However, my tongue is cut off. No. No. It just fell off somewhere. I did not use it, no. I cannot shout for help, I cannot say words of comfort; I cannot even speak about it. No, I cannot. I am dumb. (Dattani, 2010, p. 135)*

For most survivors, individual treatment usually precedes concurrent with group treatment as this allows women to process their trauma on an individual level so, they also share it with others. Dattani articulates the courage of Mala to speak before her mother. "Mala: You know I could not say anything to you. You never gave me a chance to. If only you had looked into my eyes and seen the hurt, or asked me, Beta, what's wrong" (2010, p. 133). Mala breaks the ice between her and her mother, Shanta. She raises questions against her mother. She asks the reasons for her mother's ignorance. This is the mental trouble of the victim that she cannot feel safe even at her own home. She is unable to create distinction among relations. She considers her mother as a culprit who does not save her life. Positively, she speaks her inner feelings. It is basic fact of recovery of victim:

*Where were you when he locked the door to your bedroom while I was sleeping in there? Where were you during those fifteen minutes when he was destroying my soul? Fifteen minutes multiplied by thirty or thirty-one or whatever. Fifteen minutes of every day of summer holiday, add them up. That is how long how little it took you to send me to hell for the rest of my life! Surely, you must have known, Ma. (Dattani, 2010, p. 134)*

Further, there is the next step of Mala's counseling. Once the crowd becomes familiar and moves the past, the warm-up expression of the gathering, activity strategies may begin to be utilized. This stage is watched as the working phase of the group members when individuals inspect their worries and advance toward helpful change. Different systems and models can be employed with injury victims in the gathering groups. The Therapeutic Spiral Model is a great psycho-dramatic approach that executes the use with a specific end goal to fuse amass individuals into the restorative procedure. One intercession is utilized as a part of this model has a gathering part that carries on one of her horrendous encounters at present causes her trouble. It enables the members to work through their most noticeably awful horrendous encounters by influencing them to appear to be too enormous to deal with. Their memories are recalled that helps them to forget all painful episodes. It brings out a rag from their hearts. It is acceptance of reality.

Subsequently, the hero recovers the quality and keeps on handling the injury notwithstanding one's feelings of trepidation. The containing twofold reinforces the hero and passes on compassion, as well as helps in advancing the hero's adjustment, pumping up one's inner self, averting relapse and disassociation, and empowering sound purgation. Notwithstanding profiting the hero, the individuals who assume the containing twofold part and persevered encounters like those of the hero feel more grounded and more bolstered to process their injuries. Over the remedial characteristics, the containing dual procedure is curt and simple to learn. In the action phase, the protagonist, with the help of a therapist, creates a scene that is based on significant events in the victim's life. It can be seen in the play when the scene opens as Mala is in conversation with her counselor, which reveals her oppressed life encapsulates in her opening statement that is a synopsis of the events that unfold:

*Mala: I do not know how to begin. Today is the 30th of September 2001, and my name is? I do not know I want to say my name. I am sorry. I hope that is okay with you. I am unsure about this and many other things. But this ... this is the first time you see that I ... I know it is my entire fault. This is what I am meant for. It's not anybody's fault, except my own. Sometimes, I wish that my mother. (It gets to be difficult for her.) I am sorry but ... I can only tell you more if you turn this thing off. (Dattani, 2010, p. 89)*

She talks about her mother, Shanta's silent attitude, *"I thought that was the cure for my pain. That if I ate until I was stuffed, the pain would go away... You knew all along what was happening to me, I will not ever let you forget that"* (Dattani, 2010, p. 24). This is the real anxiety of Mala that she utters and considers herself the culprit of her victimization. Deepak creates a specific condition for her where she can speak her inner voice. Pretending is another psychodrama method fused into the Therapeutic Spiral Model. By having a victim assume the part of one and re-establishing the awful experience, the victim has been given an assortment of chances. Since the past is brought into the present, gives the victim a scene to investigate already un-communicated feelings, say or do things one wished to have said or done, ingrain expectation, and exchange fault from the customer to the culprit. Through this investigation, the customer may see one's past involvement with another point of view, which unavoidably changes the definitive importance of the experience. For instance, a gathering part may re-store, living through a horrendous ordeal just like a chance to advocate for others, who persevere through comparable encounters.

It reveals the mental condition of Mala of fighting with herself, a way through her traumatized life. Dattani has explored the subconscious of the protagonist by playing Mala's tape-recorded recollections. At once, she blames herself but after taking counseling classes, she has realized the fact of addiction. She does not blame herself for her sexual addicted behaviour and unethical relationship with her uncle. It is the third stage of her recovery. She has started to share her thoughts with a counselor and she is blaming her uncle for all. The feelings of guilt have disappeared. The psychiatrist motivates her to explain her pain and mental conflicts. Dattani has represented the completely protected environment that is given to the victim during his or her counseling.

The principal objective of this phase is to express conclusions for individuals without blocking further self-investigation of the individuals. The conclusion is crucial and straightforward. Researchers have tried to achieve this undertaking in an assortment of ways including different process questions, individuals' sharing emotions, considerations, and responses to the different exercises. When the emotional sections are prepared, it enables the crowd to move into a more psychological exchange from an experiential and enthusiastic substance to a more subjective substance.

Utilizing psycho-dramatic therapy with counteractive action explores a system. When Mala's voice on the tape as before. The light comes up on the doll once again. Mala's voice (she cries). The scene fades out to the man telling Mala to touch him erotically. She turns wild and starts hitting him. She grabs him by throat to strangle him. He utters, "*thirty days has September. April, June and November. February has twenty-eight. All the rest have thirty-one!*" (Dattani, 2010, p. 57). This is the concluding phase of recovery that ends on the last scene of a life-sized doll of a seven-year-old girl sustain up on a chair, during Mala's talk on tape. During the first chat, there, the back of the head is seen during the play.

Mala continues to hit the imaginary man until he dies. She speaks as loudly as she can speak. Inwardly, she kills her memories by killing this imaginary man. These are the turning movements of the doll and the role of man as it is described in the psycho-dramatic technique, *Aside*. The scene fades out to the man telling Mala to touch him erotically. She turns wild and starts hitting him. She grabs him by throat to strangle him. He utters, "*Thirty days have September, April, June, and November. February has twenty-eight. All the rest have thirty-one!*" (57). Moreover, the technique of "*Aside*" in psycho-dramatic therapy can be observed by the role of the man. Mala's act of hitting him is a try to forget her past and when she considers him dead, she feels satisfaction and enjoys her freedom. It can be seen in these lines: The sequence shifts to Mala in the Counsellor's chamber with the Man in the spotlight. She is filled with a sense of joy as the Man is dead. "*He is dead. Today, I have made February 29th my Freedom Day. I will celebrate it with my husband*" (Dattani, 2010, p.56). The man falls limply on the chair as if dead while Mala picks up her doll and smoothens and comforts it. The sequence thus climaxes into a full cycle as a woman strives to liberate herself from traumatic life. Dattani seems successful to give freedom to his victim from sexual trauma by using psycho-dramatic therapy. Victim, Mala systematically recovers herself with the role of others, Deepak and psychiatric.

## **Conclusion**

This is an appropriate title for this play because protestant of the play, Deepak gets a clue from circling over the calendar that Mala has circled to indicate her sexual relationship with her uncle. She thinks that after thirty days she will be saved. Moreover, these thirty days also represent her days of getting over sexual trauma, her counseling with a psychologist. Therefore, the title of the play is appropriate according to the treatment timing of the victim, Mala. Thus, the way of getting over sexual trauma, which Dattani has explored in his play, proved beneficial for the victim. He has indicated the symptoms of the sexually addicted person, its causes, and the dissatisfied acts of a victim in his life. Above all, the

significance of the role of others in the treatment of victims has explained in it. Victims can successfully come back to life. Child sexual abuse is the least addressed issue of every society. It is considered as the social taboo and social chains that restrict an individual to raise his voice against it. Sometimes, religious boundaries forbid people to discuss it boldly and it covers the whole society in its evil. As it is the dark side of society that should be uncovered by raising a voice. Child sexual abuse disturbs the victim terribly and it has many side effects on his or her mental growth. Psychologically, the victim feels dissatisfaction in his or her life. Depression, anxiety and mental pressure push back victims in the dark well. Therefore, the victim's return back to life has very important. It is a sexual trauma and it should be got over. Psycho-dramatic techniques are considered very helpful in the treatment of the victim.



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