



Gender Deformity in Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story*: A Transactional Analysis

Parvathy Elatthuvalappil, Dr. Shiva Chaudhary

Research Scholar, Jain(Deemed-to-be) University, Assistant Professor, Jain (Deemed -to-be) University

Abstract

The society individuals live in dictates their behavior, molding them through its conventions and creating cultural deformities. These deformities, derived from Claude Steiner's six maladies—joylessness, lovelessness, mindlessness, sex-role scripting, inequality, and powerlessness—can be analyzed through the manifestations of the ego: The Parent ego, The Adult ego, and The Child ego. Gender deformity, in particular, stems from societal sex-role scripting. Vijay Tendulkar's drama vividly represents society without offering solutions, urging readers to introspect. His characters are intense and deep, reflecting individuals within society. "A Friend's Story" by Vijay Tendulkar can be analyzed using Transactional Analysis to explore gender deformity. This paper aims to examine the text and investigate gender deformity through Transactional Analysis theory.

Keywords: Transactional analysis, Vijay Tendulkar, Drama, Cultural Deformities, Gender Deformity

Introduction

Transactional Analysis (TA) theory, developed by Dr. Eric Berne, emphasizes understanding the problems of mentally ill patients without making them feel insecure or insulted. TA examines individual behavior and the interplay of different ego states to treat patients effectively. Dr. Berne refers to these interactions as "games." While the id, ego, and superego are commonly discussed, TA focuses on three specific ego states: the Parent ego, the Adult ego, and the Child ego. These manifestations help analyze and address behavioral patterns.

Dr. Eric Berne developed Transactional analysis, a post-Freudian school of psychology, that can be used to describe the various deformities created in a society (Steiner 35). The fragmentation, differentiation and alienation are all by products of the conventions set by the society and ardently imbibed by culture. Cultural deformities are caused by the inequality that exists in a society. These

inequalities are created by human beings and are not innate. When a child is born, she/he is differentiated based on several factors. Gender, caste and class in an Indian society. Indian society was divided based on the caste system in ancient times and still continues to follow the system of caste-based divisions. The society was divided into four major categories, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. The vedic hymns were only open to the upper castes, the Shudras were not allowed to study or hear the vedic hymns. Women surprisingly had equal rights as men during that period. The system soon degenerated and led to determination of caste based on birth. A fifth category was soon introduced, they were called the Untouchables. The rigidity of the system led to social inequality which can be found in today's Indian society. (Thakar 25) When a child is born, she/he imbibes these conventions and roles and passes it onto the next generation. Claude Steiner speaks about stroke/recognition in his work *Scripts People Live*. The children learn that they will receive appreciation when they play according to the rules. In the childhood phase the strokes are often physical and children learn to adapt to that. They learn that they will receive strokes when they play according to the rules and they will receive a negative response when they do not follow the rules. When they grow up to be adults, the strokes give way to recognition. And they begin to live in the society aiming for these recognitions. The lack of or inability to attain these recognitions will lead to a sense of disappointment. This leads to deformities.

Claude M. Steiner, a disciple of Dr. Eric Berne has talked about the six maladies of culture. 'They are sex role scripting, inequality, lovelessness, joylessness, mindlessness and powerlessness'. (Babu 13)

In the book *Scripts People Live* Steiner talks about three basic ways in which people's lives can become disturbed and distorted. They are depression, madness and drug addiction. It is based on these factors that the above mentioned six maladies have been derived. Dr. Eric Berne talks about strokes and recognitions. The lack of these strokes leads to depression of various kinds. Strokes are a form of human communication which influences the way human beings behave in a society. Lovelessness arises from depression. Madness or no mind script is when people feel like they don't belong in this world, they are not able to live in this society because nobody accepts them. These people often tend to think that they are mad. When we look at drug addiction, Berne is not just talking about classified drugs such as heroin. He is referring to anything that we human beings use to make ourselves feel better. It can be alcohol and even an everyday beverage like coffee. People are taught to not experience their body completely. People lose their agency over their bodies. The norms to which they are exposed begin to dictate their behaviour. In this case experiencing their body to its complete potential. Whether it is pain or pleasure. In short, every individual is affected by one or more of these three basic scripts. Mostly they project one of them more than the others. Dr. Eric Berne believed that these can be controlled with the help of transactional analysis. (Steiner 62) . The Adult ego state is a state in which the individual can be looked at as a computer, it stores data obtained through various senses. This ego state can be considered as emotionless. The Parent ego state consists of the behaviours adopted from the parents. Traditional values and culture can be found recorded in this ego state. The Child ego state can be considered as the child stage of any individual between the age group of two to seven. This includes everything that the individual does in the most free form without thinking too much.

Every ego state can be considered as an organ in itself that functions according to the demands of the situation. The Parent ego is best suited when there is a need for control. The Adult ego is required when facts need to be verified and objectivity is expected. The Child is suited when free thought and creativity are required. *Exclusions* and *contamination* are two aspects that Transactional Analysts talk about. *Exclusion* happens when one ego is excluded when it is necessary. For example, when a child falls down and hurts herself the parent's Adult ego can be excluded because the Adult ego will tell the child facts about how it is important to take care of yourself and the dangerous aspects of an accident. The child in that situation needs the parent's Parent ego to speak and tell her that it is okay to fall, it is very normal and the child needs to inform the parent. *Adaptiveness* is the ability to respond to reality with the most suited ego state. If *Adaptiveness* is practised for the wellbeing of an individual it is good but if it is practised to control someone then it becomes bad.

Analysis

In *A Friend's Story* by Vijay Tendulkar we see him representing the homosexual community. Mitra or Sumitra is a lesbian and the play speaks about her struggles to fit into the society. Since she is more masculine it can be seen that her Adult ego has imbibed certain facts and rules of how men should behave in the society. She behaves aggressively and tries to dominate the woman she loves. "The other girls were the helpless, touch-me-not kind. But there was a masculine vigour in Sumitra Dev's stride and speech." Bapu, who is the male character in the play, believes that he isn't masculine enough. He feels insecure about himself, this is again because of the roles and behaviours associated with the rules which are assigned by the society. His Adult ego has imbibed all the facts and whenever he responds to situations his Parent ego keeps telling that he is not masculine enough. Bapu when he came across Mitra's photograph, he was appalled by her appearance. He couldn't accept the fact that she was surrounded by hairy bare chested men with cigarettes in their mouths. This is his Parent ego speaking. The Parent ego is influenced by the behaviours of the people around, such as parents. When the family projects these roles and values the Parent ego of the child imbibes the response. The Adult ego teaches them the rules objectively while the Parent ego instils the response. Bapu was shocked because the image didn't suit the picture of an ideal girl, the picture drawn by society. Mitra told Bapu about her childhood, how she used to play with the boys all the time. Her Parent ego comes out when she is narrating the incident to Bapu. The aggressive nature that she associates with masculinity is projected.

Sumitra : We lived in Sangli when I was a child. There was a family called Marathe in the opposite house. They had a son. Inused to play dodgeball with him. I would hit him every time, he could never dodge the ball. When he got hit too often, he'd go home running crying for his mother. (Breaks into a loud laugh). My mother used to say, I had hoodwinked God to be born a girl. I was always with the boys. Used to play all their games from marbles to gillidanda. Even Kabbadi. It was great fun. Can you swim Bapu? No? (422)

Mitra is disturbed by her sexual orientation. It can be understood from the conversation that she has with Bapu . She tells him that she is alone and is battling something within her. This might be her Adult and Parent ego battling with her Child ego. The Child ego wants to express herself freely without any inhibitions while the Parent ego keeps telling her that she cannot do that because she is a woman and women are expected to fall in love with a man and to be feminine.

Mitra goes on to explain how she tried to fit in by trying to have physical intimacy with a male servant at home, it is then that she realised that she is not attracted to men. The fact that she tried establishes the fact that her life is definitely controlled by her Parent and Adult ego which has fully imbibed the gender roles set by the society. The Child ego is completely buried. Since the society only accepts two genders during the time this play was written Mitra could only associate herself with the masculine gender and she started behaving very aggressively. She wanted to have Nama, the girl she is attracted to, at any rate. " I want Nama, all of her, understand? (In an aggressive tone.)" (454)

Nama is a girl who is stuck between Dalvi, the boy who is in a relationship with her and Mitra with whom she likes spending time. The readers will almost feel like Nama is not able to take Mitra's behaviour anymore but she is scared to tell her that because of her aggressiveness. Nama is the "Poor Little Me" type of woman who Wycoff defined as being someone who constantly looks for a Rescuer to rescue her. She gets into trouble because she likes to be cared for and adored by both Dalvi and Mitra. After a point it becomes difficult for her to accommodate the obsession that Mitra has for her.

Nama : She...loves me...very much. I too like the way she treats me...But sometimes i get fed up even with her love...Too much of it ...More over, I have my own problems. How can I explain ... and she is hardly in any condition to hear me out, or to understand...That becomes a big problem. (Trying not to speak further, but breaks out.) She insists I must like everything she does...How is it possible? She doesn't allow me to edge in a word, as if she's always right, what she likes is the best...Everything has to be decided by her. And I must agree without any reservations. How can this be?

Hence, the character of Mitra in Vijay Tendulkar's "A Friend's Story" vividly exemplifies traits of toxic masculinity, as defined by the APA guidelines for Psychological Practices with Boys and Men (2018). These traits, including power over women, intimate partner violence, aggressive behavior, emotional detachment, and heterosexual self-presentation, manifest in Mitra's actions throughout the play. As a masculine-presenting lesbian, Mitra's behavior reflects these harmful characteristics, deeply impacting her relationship with Nama.

Nama, initially drawn to the dynamic between her Child ego and Mitra's Parent ego, eventually realizes that Mitra's interactions stem from the Pig Parent ego—a more destructive and controlling aspect. This revelation leads to Nama feeling trapped and distressed, highlighting the detrimental effects of Mitra's toxic masculinity.

The tragic conclusion of the play, marked by Mitra's suicide, underscores the devastating impact of societal rejection and alienation due to her sexuality. Mitra's death serves as a poignant commentary on the harsh realities faced by individuals who do not conform to societal norms.

Conclusion

Through the lens of Transactional Analysis, "A Friend's Story" allows for a profound exploration of gender deformity and the intricate interplay of ego states. The Parent, Adult, and Child ego states provide a framework to understand the characters' behaviors and their psychological motivations. Mitra's struggle and ultimate demise illustrate the severe consequences of societal pressure and the internal conflict caused by rigid gender roles.

This analysis sheds light on the complexities of gender identity and the pervasive influence of societal expectations. Tendulkar's play invites readers to introspect and challenge the cultural norms that perpetuate gender deformity and toxic masculinity. By delving into the characters' psychological depths, we gain a deeper understanding of the need for compassion, acceptance, and a more nuanced approach to gender and identity in our society.

References

- Adarkar,Priya. "A Friend's Story". *Collected Plays in Translation*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003, 267-358.Print
- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. New Delhi, VivaBooks,2018. Print
- Gartman, David. *Culture, Class and Critical Theory*.NewYork, Routledge,2013. Print
- Ramnarayan, Gowri. "A Friend's Story". *Collected Plays in Translation*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003,417-496. Print
- Robert Wuthnow et.al., *Cultural Analysis*. Boston, Routledge, 1984). Print Sarat Babu, M. *Indian Drama Today*. Delhi, Prestige Books,1997. Print
- Steiner,Claude. *Scripts People Live*, Kindle oasis (10th Gen), Grove Press, 2007.Print
- Subuhi, Jiwani. "Vijay Tendulkar is a scathing interpreter of maladies." *DNA India*, 7th October 2005.Web. 20Feb.2021 https://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/report-vijay_tendulkar-is-a-scathing-interpreter-of-maladies-4810.
- Thakur,Nisha. "Vijay Tendulkar's Kanyadaan:A Study of Power Politics And Consciousness." *Research Scholar*,Vol2,No,3, August,2014,pp769.Web. https://www.academia.edu/26051591/Vijay_Tendulkars_a_Friends_Story_A_Social_Psychological_Perspective_of_a_Lesbian_in_Homophobic_World?email_work_card=view-paper.
- Thakar,Rishi A. *Vijay Tendulkar: A Playwright*. Delhi,JTS Publications, 2018.Print
- Wadikar, Shailaja B. *Vijay Tendulkar A Pioneer Playwright*.Delhi, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2013.Print