



05

**POILE SENGUPTA'S MANGALAM: A STUDY FROM GENDER  
SENSITIVITY TO TRAUMA**

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**Abstract:**

*The present research paper aims to discover the psychological paradigms in the award winning play Mangalam (1993) of Poile Sengupta. The gender sensitivity and bias of socio-cultural taboo is the core of the play. All women characters of the play are jeopardized beneath socio-cultural stereotypes and taboos. The trauma women imposed under the circumstances of phallic practices have considered in this article. The man made obligations and unvarying violence estranged the women characters of the play leading to mental trauma and a feeling of outsider. The persistent efforts, activities and experiences of male domain departed women from main stream and women's psychology perpetuated as unidentifiable.*

**Keywords:** Discourse, Gender Sensitivity, Phallus, Psychology, Trauma, etc.

Poile Sengupta is a leading voice of contemporary Indian English drama chiefly known for women centre plays. The issues of women and women impression are at the central in her plays such as *Mangalam* (1993), *Inner Laws* (1994), *Keats Was a Tuber* (1996), *Alipha* (2001), *Thus Spake Shoorpanakha*, *So Said Shakuni* (2001) and *Samara's Song* (2007). The award winning play *Mangalam* (1993) brought sensations in theatrical world due to its open discussion of women's trauma brought by rape, molestation and molestation as well as suicide of central character Mangalam. The female characters in the play such as Mangalam, Thangam, Revathy, Usha, Chitra, Kamla and Sumati are codified under the scaffold of patriarchy. The socio-cultural construction of society always places man at the centre and woman at the margin of every sensation of life. Poile Sengupta in the present play *Mangalam* (1993) efficiently explores the nuances of psychological dimensions leading towards chaos, pathos, misery and unsolved remedies. In the introduction of the plays Poile Sengupta says:

Unlike *Keats Was a Tuber*, is not only about the nuances of language. It is about family politics, seen through the perspective of woman. The play deals with serrated relationships behind ostensibly normal household, whether in a small town in southern India of the 1960s, or in a modern cosmopolitan family, perhaps in Chennai (Sengupta, 31).

The present research article explores psycho dynamic aspects applicable in universal way. The researcher attempted analytical method to study the selected problem and done with MLA manual eight edition. The present research problem stands on the following hypotheses.

- Poile Sengupta efficiently brings to surface the mental dilemma of women caused by consistent violence and humiliation.
- Lack of comprehension and denunciation of reality compel women into nightmare.



- The solidarity of imaginary world leads to disorder.
- The fear of facing reality and shattering of desires often brings weakness and frustration.
- The trauma of childhood continues throughout life ends with end of a soul.

Though there is a considerable research on Poile Sengupta and her plays in accordance to multiple perspectives, yet the present study attempts a significant effort to explore the psychological dimensions of Indian women imbibed under phallic signifier and signified. The research problem has scope for further study. The present study deals with only play *Mangalam* of Poile Sengupta and hardly touches to her other plays. The study highlights the psychological notions in effectual way. The persistent gender practices such as violence, negotiations, rejections, suppression, subjugation and association of external of women resulted in imbalance of women psyche.

In stipulations of scientific psychology study, many women are ignorant of the psychological hurdles formed around them by cultural and social patterns. Moreover, women are obliged to find fault in external aspects such as society, family and relationships. The real development of a human being leads by inner hindrance. The internal impediments are fear, doubt, guilt, risk, approval of cultural stereotypes and cynicism. As compare to phallic suppression of women, their self suppression is more dexterous. Many women are clutched in the trauma of fear and displacement. The comprehension of identity and recognition of identity by no means comes to surface due to internal fear of suspect to acrophobia of others disliking, making wrong choices, negative gaze and notorious. They never expose a positive look as they are monumental of an unconstructive idol. The panic disorder transformed them as a bad wives, daughters, mothers and sisters eventually; they establish a relationship of strained with every persona surrounded their life. The renowned post colonial scholar-critic Homi Bhabha has appropriately defined the trauma as:

A painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of trauma of the present. It is such a memory of the history of race and racism, colonialism and the question of cultural identity that Fanon reveals with greater profundity (Sengupta, 5).

The molestation and sexual abuse of Mangalam by her brother-in-law, the husband of her sister Thangam shatters her marital relationship with husband Dorai. The violent and vicious snatching of her body keeps her in trauma for lifetime and moreover, this incident considerably changed her inner and outer self. Her husband Dorai tortures her for thirty one years and had enough reasons to torture her. The life of Mangalam is a toss between devil and deep sea as she is a married woman. She commits suicide at the end of the play to consider society her husband as the culprit of her life but her suicide attempt is criticized by various critics on the notion that if she could show courage and leave her husband to establish her own identity, she may stand as a guiding spirit to women like Chitra, Usha, Revathy, Kamla, Sumati and Thangam. The sexual molestation of Mangalam hides by her father in exchange of money and dowry and gets married to Dorai. The pre-marriage chastity and paternity of his first sibling Sriram blooms extensively in the vision of Dorai. The pre-occupation of wife's guilt in his mind forces him to ill treat the unlucky woman off and on. The trouble, abuse, insults and guilt of thirty one year's provides discomfort zone neither in family nor in anyone. The character of Mangalam explores numerous sheds of gender ideology and practices of society. Dorai her husband tortures his wife Mangalam for the lack chastity and at the same time he meets a woman in temple regularly by lust. The difference created by socio-cultural patterns of society deeply humiliates women on the basis of gender practices. The trauma of Mangalam can be well defined in the words of Cary Caruth as:



In catastrophic age, that is, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures; not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves (Sengupta, 11).

The post traumatic pressure caused by the sex abuse and also the unpredicted marriage another accident like the previous marriage. Her sexual abuse distorted her married life because her reliable partner husband Dorai never considers her honest wife. He never speaks a single word in humanistic way instead constantly blames her for corrupting his life. Mangalam even loses support from her children; her children neither have affection nor empathy. The collective alienation and desolation from everyone makes Mangalam a fish without water. The socio-cultural constraints and patriarchal norms make her choice less because she feels uncomfortable and unpleasant to accompany any one. The conversation between her daughter-in-law Revathy and sister Thangam efficiently explores the misery and agony of Mangalam as:

REVATHY. And your sister. What do you think her life was? With a husband who hated her. I have seen her crying, everyday, she cried. She smiled when he went out of the house. Once he has gone for three days, and she laughed like a young girl, she sang song. But when he was here, he made her suffer. He gave her children year after year so that he could see her suffer. Every night, he made her suffer. Even when the doctors said no...Do you know how she died? (Sengupta, 31)

Dorai is the ideal personification of patriarchy makes suffer his wife Thangam for thirty one years and forced his personal choices on his children. Mangalam before marriage and after marriage receive agony and despair. Her feeling of aloof as a weakness of her feminine psyche further intensifies her internal fear. She constantly faces the torture, negative attitude of Dorai. The indifference of Dorai and abhorrence shapes her identity. She always faces the fear of insensible psychological mechanism of self defense the assumptions of changes leveled against by her own super ego. The sexual abuse before marriage continually lurks in her inner mind. The sexual abuse before marriage and severe treatment of her husband Dorai compels her to develop alienation and passivity. She assumes her life as absurd and meaningless for today and tomorrow. Her loneliness accompanied by emptiness, anguish and pain. She failed to cope with life and trauma overpowers her as well as freed herself from all the psychological disabilities. The conversation between Revathy and Dorai explores the death of Mangalam as:

DORAI. (To himself) Revenge! That's what she always wanted. Revenge!

REVATHY. So she decided not to take any chances, isn't it? How many of your sleeping did she swallow? (Sengupta, 32)

Thangam the sister of Mangalam is stamped as 'barren women' in the socio-cultural context of society as she is childless. Thangam blames Dorai for his rough and cruel treatment with his wife. She firmly believes that Dorai is solely responsible for the death of Mangalam because he tortures her brutally and his torture compels her to commits suicide. The dehumanize treatment of Dorai never brings a harmony in their relationship moreover; he utilizes her as an equipment. Her arguments against



Dorai's conception of chastity and purity are actually a challenge through to tradition, essentialism and patriarchy. The approach of Thangam towards life is progressive and scientific hence she even supports inter-caste marriage and women empowerment. At various occasions she directly articulates like the alter ego of the deceased sister. The silence of Mangalam is converted into fire words by Thangam. She openly interrogates Dorai on numerous aspects. Even though she is a barren women in the socio perspective but never feels depressed psychologically like her sister Mangalam. The sexual abuse before marriage made Mangalam completely indifferent to Thangam because Mangalam keeps it as secret for thirty one years and she finishes her life in that trauma. In her interview with Anita Singh Poile Sengupta published in *Asian Theatre Journal* remarks as:

I find it unacceptable to be categorized as a feminist. I am a writer with the consciousness of a woman. I cannot escape my gender, but it not my sole identity. My women characters live in a threshold, patriarchal world, but they are strong and capable of speaking and acting for themselves (Sengupta, 83).

The daughter-in-law of Dorai, Revathy intensely observes the character of Mangalm and presents her desolation vividly. Her observations present some psychological insights concerning the relationship of Dorai and Mangalam. Revathy exposes the modus operand of suicide that Manglam swallowed the overdose of sleeping pills. The fever she has created to impress of normal death but Revathy is confirmed about the preplan attempt of suicide. Revathy affirms that the suicide of Mangalam is an indirect revenge against Dorai and her scathe criticism of Dorai sounds genuine and true. The relations of Revathy and her husband Mani are mutual as well as totally contrastive with her mother-in-law Mangalam and father-in-law Dorai. The bonding of Mani and Revathy is not externally perfect but psychologically concrete and strong. Even though Ravathy faces a lot of hurdles in family where she always feels that her share is given to sisters of house and other members of family hated her she never loses her psychological temperament and stands firm in life.

Poile Sengupta is a profound voice of contemporary Indian English Drama who has successfully evokes the sentiments of women on stage through her plays. The man made phenomenon and stereotypes leading women towards chaos have been efficiently analyzed in her plays. The suffocation of Mangalam and other female characters in the play Mangalam is not natural but they have created by phallic practices blaming women as the ultimate source of jeopardy. The pre-marriage sexual abuse and mental torture of husband Dorai for thirty one year's compels Mangalam to commit suicide and free herself from all the psychological burden of life. Mangalam never finds a true companion in her husband neither anybody who could help her to share her misery. The feeling of loneliness and alienation grows rapidly in Mangalam because she lacks to express her inner pain. The collection of memory, trauma, torture and harassment leads her to feeling of outsider. Alike her sister she never takes steps to express her inner pain and create her own identity. Sumati in second act establish herself as an independent woman character that possesses courage to reject the choices of other. The study of women's mind and comprehension of psychology as well as trauma has efficiently explored in the present play by Poile Sengupta.

To conclude, the present paper analyses the psychological dimensions and trauma of Indian women projected under several man made practices such as gender sensitivity, feticide, molestation, rape, discourse, violence and so on. The women as a gender are always reported as inferior and subjective and experiences leads women towards chaos and alienation. A woman in society and family never gets respect for her body and psychology hence they have been treated as object identity. The association of women is always treated as inferior in family and society. The identity of woman, her



body, her psychology and her inner desires never recognized in patriarchal society at the same time man is introspected to fulfill every desire. A woman in society and family puts to suffer without her fault and man after committing lecherous activities celebrated with pride. A patriarchal always creates comfort zone for men describing women as inferior and negative on the basis of gender. The entire practices of society are male centric where women are assign the roles of either sufferer or spectator. The constant victimization of women under brutal gender practices leads to trauma and mental illness. The feeling of outsider and negation intensely touches to women and as a result women develop a world of alienation where they can dialogue with their self as nobody respond them in existing world.

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