

Internal Struggles and Identity as the Major Themes in Dr. Sanjay Johari's 'The Invisible Conflicts'

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Abstract

Dr. Sanjay Johari's play *The Invisible Conflicts* is a significant contemporary dramatic exploration of identity, human emotions, social restrictions, and the complex relationship between individual freedom and societal expectations. The play presents the hidden psychological and emotional struggles of individuals who find themselves trapped between their personal desires and the moral frameworks established by society. Through the characters of Urvesh, Lolitha, Mickey, and Nandini, the playwright portrays the conflicts related to sexual identity, marital expectations, family pressures, and the search for self-acceptance. The drama challenges conventional assumptions about relationships and highlights the importance of empathy, understanding, and human dignity. The dramatic narrative exposes not only the pain of living behind socially constructed identities, but also reveals how heterosexual marriage often results in emotional isolation rather than companionship. By portraying homosexuality not as a moral deviation but as a natural human identity, the play contributes to contemporary discussions on gender, sexuality, and all human rights. This play reveals the psychological emotions of the characters.

Methodology and Approach: The present research paper examines how Dr. Sanjay Johari uses dramatic techniques, dialogues, and characterization to represent the 'Invisible conflicts' existing within the human minds and social structures. The play does not merely focus on personal relationships but also raises broader questions regarding freedom of choice, social recognition, and individual identity. Through realistic conversations and emotional struggles, the playwright reveals the gap between legal rights and social acceptance. The study attempts to analyse the play as a modern social drama that reflects contemporary debates on identity and human relationships.

Outcome: Dr. Sanjay Johari's *'The Invisible Conflicts'* represents a new dimension of contemporary Indian drama by dealing with sensitive issues that often remain hidden within society. Drama has always been a powerful medium to present social realities because it brings human experiences directly before the audience. Like Shakespeare, the modern social dramatists have used the characters to expose the contradictions of human life. In the same tradition, Dr. Sanjay Johari explores the internal struggles of individuals whose emotions and identities do not easily fit into traditional social expectations.

The Purpose of the Paper: The aim of this research paper is to expose the contemporary issues related to the utter marginalization of the third sex-the gay, the homosexual, and the lesbians. The LGBTQ+ individuals have been excluded from the mainstream of Indian social intercourse and never found a sympathetic representation neither in Indian English writings nor in the creative expression in various

Indian languages. Like Mahesh Dattani, Dr. Sanjay Johari describes invisible issues and tabooed subjects out from under the rug and places them on the stage for discussion, but he has to face a lot of opposition from mainstream society. With his deep study of the false ego of the society, he sieves the dirt out of our society and he tries to make it a better place for one and all. His drama *The Invisible Conflicts* is different from other dramas. He deals with different hurdles in the way of progressive society. He raises the problems from society and pleads forcefully. This drama is free from complexity.

Conclusion and Suggestions: Dr. Sanjay Johari's drama '*Invisible Conflicts* deals Indian society and the people's views on marriage. They think that marriage is a holy relation between husband and wife. The parents of husband dream of becoming of grandparents. In the drama Urvesh gets married Lolitha and Urvesh's mother, Mrs. Nagar dreams of becoming of grandmother but her dream is shattered when she comes to know that her son Urvesh is gay and her daughter in law is lesbian. Urvesh loves Mickey with depth of his heart while Lolitha loves Nandini from her childhood. Mrs. Nagar thinks their relation is unnatural. Urvesh and Lolitha get marry but they are not happy with this marriage. They want to get free from the bond of this marriage. Urvesh gets divorce from Lolitha and gets marry Mickey. Urvesh and Mickey come into the house as a couple. Urvesh is the bridegroom, and Mickey is the bride. On the other hand, Lalitha is bridegroom and Nandini is as a bride. Through Mickey's voice, the playwright raises an important question: why should individual emotions be judged only through the perspective of society? The conflict between inner truth and external judgment becomes the central dramatic force of the play.

Keywords: Identity, Exploration, Restrictions, Trapped, Established Conventional, Assumption, Existing, Recognition, Gay, Lesbian, society

Introduction-

Dr. Sanjay Johari has been teaching fictions, dramas, prose and poetry at post graduate college nearly for thirty years. So, he knows how to narrate a story like Henry Feilding. He is a realist like Mulk Raj Anand and he knows the customs and ceremonies of rural and urban life. He draws his characters from all the sections of society. He has sympathy with LGBTQ+ individuals. He has studied a lot of authors. He has written two dramas-Kinner Maa and The Invisible Conflicts. He has written the plays on those topics about which he has his own experience. This is the reason he chooses to dramatize Indian Urban Milieu instead of rural mass. He weaves the incidents from his surroundings into his play and raised the question of man's struggle to find out his identity in society. His Drama is full of a number of issues of modern urban society. The playwright possesses the special corner for unprivileged sections of the society. He dramatizes their miseries and problems in his plays to draw everybody's attention to them. After reading the play *the Invisible Conflicts*, no one can restrict his sympathy and love for Urvesh, Lolitha, Nandini, Mickey.

So, the dramatist has touched different convolutions of human life and expands the scope of Indian English dramatic world. He makes a volcanic change in the world of theatre and gives it a unique identity. He knows how to write or speak his thoughts in a concrete and arranged way. He presents the psychological domain of human consciousness. He has the sympathy with the gay and lesbian. The central concern of the play is the conflict between personal identity and social acceptance. The title itself suggests that many struggles remain invisible because individuals hesitate to express their true feelings due to fear of rejection. His characters are not his mouthpiece but they are the voice of the common

people. He has touched the unprivileged segments of Indian society in his play. He presents the realistic world of homosexuals. They fight for identify, child sexual abuse, gender discrimination, interpersonal relationship and other touching areas of Indian life. The play presents the lives of Urvesh and Lolitha, whose arranged marriage becomes a symbol of the conflict between personal identity and social expectations. Through realistic dialogue and emotionally charged situations, the playwright challenges traditional assumptions about marriage, sexuality, and family honour while advocating acceptance, dignity, and equality for LGBTQ+ individuals.

The characters of Urvesh and Lolitha enter into marriage, but their relationship lacks emotional and physical compatibility because both carry their own suppressed identities. Their marriage becomes a symbol of social pressure rather than genuine companionship. Urvesh's character reflects the dilemma of an individual who is unable to openly express his emotions because of family and social expectations. His conversation with Lolitha reveals their mutual suffering: "We're opposite, so we've got to take divorce. You will live freely and I also."

This dialogue reflects the painful reality that sometimes relationships created according to social traditions fail to provide emotional satisfaction. The playwright presents marriage not merely as a social institution but as a relationship that requires understanding and acceptance. Lolitha's character represents the struggle of a woman who tries to balance personal feelings with family responsibilities. She is unable to communicate her true emotions openly because society expects her to perform the role of an ideal wife. Her conflict becomes more intense when her mother-in-law expects her to fulfill traditional responsibilities. Mrs. Nagar's desire for a grandson represents the conventional expectations of family structures. She states, "I'll never fulfill my dream to be a grandmother.(Dr. Johari-70)

The plot of the drama is well organic and all the events are connected to one another and the various stories take place together, the drama serves the readers with a variety of themes as Struggles and Identity. We see enthusiasm and passion; we also see a glimpse of depression and exhaustion. In the drama there is a mixture of realism and romanticism. The story of the characters proceeds through a wide range of the characters who differ to each other, such characters are Urvesh, Lolitha, Nandini, Micky, Namit, Mr. Nagar, Mrs. Nagar, Anurag, Shiella, Tarun, Mr. Nagpal, Mrs Nagpal. The character of Mickey further develops the theme of identity and emotional freedom in the play. Mickey represents a person who desires recognition and acceptance rather than concealment. His relationship with Urvesh exposes the difference between personal emotions and social approval. When Urvesh tells Mickey that his relation is with his heart, Mickey says, "I can't live without you. Why do people not understand our feelings?"(Johari-16) The people don't like the homosexuality. They think it unnatural. But Mickey does not approve with them and he says to Urvesh, "Homosexuality is not a crime. It is the natural attraction of two people of the same gender. There are so many laws adopted in the favour of homosexuality. I want to live with you, I want your company and I want spend time with you."(Johari-27) Although Mickey considers his feelings natural, he understands that society does not easily accept relationships beyond traditional norms. His conversation with Urvesh reflects this painful reality:

"I love you by heart's core; it is unnatural in people's eyes. Dear, why do people make objections?"(Johari-55)

Nandini's character also plays an important role in presenting the theme of self-acceptance. She refuses to consider her feelings as wrong and challenges the social restrictions imposed upon individuals. Her confidence represents the desire of a person to live according to personal identity rather than social expectations. Through Nandini, Dr. Johari presents the idea that acceptance of oneself is the first step

towards emotional freedom. Nandini and Lolitha are lesbians. Nandini tells Lolitha that she loves her with depth of her heart and she can't without her. Lolitha asks her to think about the society, she says, "This is our life; nobody helps us. So why to think of society? This is the major problem: when we think to take a step, society interferes there.....Disgusting dear, we have no right to live our life our own way; everybody has the privilege to live anyhow. These customs and creeds bound us to take another step. Condemn. I hate these tendencies; I want to live freely with you." (Johari-10)

The playwright effectively portrays this conflict through Mrs. Nagar's words:

"I want to be a grandmother. Why don't you take it seriously? I want to take you to a lady doctor?" (Johari-57)

This statement reveals how social expectations often ignore individual emotions and personal choices. Mrs. Nagar is not presented simply as an antagonist; rather, she represents a traditional mindset that struggles to understand changing realities.

The story of drama revolves around Urvesh and Lolitha. Urvesh is gay while Lolitha is lesbian, and they are compelled by family expectations to enter in to an arranged marriage despite their different sexual orientations. Both of them do get marriage. But their marriage proves unsuccessful and it becomes an ironic representation of social success. Urvesh says to Lolitha honestly, "I have a charm, but not for girls, only for boys." While Lolitha too says, "I am not interested in sexual relationships.....You duffer. I am lesbian." (Johari-2&3) These two views dismantle the conventional image of marriage and establish the central conflict of the drama. The dramatic irony is that Urvesh and Lolitha understand each other's suffering more deeply than society understands either of them. The playwright skillfully uses dialogues as a major dramatic device. The conversations among characters reveal their psychological conditions and hidden fears. Unlike traditional dramas where conflicts are often external, *The Invisible Conflicts* focuses mainly on internal conflicts. The characters fight with their own emotions, family pressures, and social attitudes. The "invisible" nature of these conflicts makes the play psychologically significant.

One of the important aspects of the play is its representation of the difference between legal rights and social acceptance. The characters discuss that society often refuses to accept the changes even when legal systems recognise individual freedom. Urvesh and Lolitha understand that their personal choices may have legal support, but social acceptance remains a challenge. As Urvesh states:

"Society doesn't want to allow it. Nobody cares what we feel."

He again tells his father that he has left Lolitha for the sake of Mickey. He will run away with him. Mr. Nagar tells him that it is heinous act. Urvesh asserts, "What is heinous, Dad? This is problem for us. Nobody knows what we want. They consider us invaluable people. Why? We have no right to live freely. Despite having sympathy and support, they make abusive remarks.....I don't care. This is my matter; where to go, how to live, the office is the only the office." (Johari-91) This dialogue reflects the continuing struggle between progressive ideas and conservative social thinking. The playwright does not limit the issue to one particular community; rather, he explores the universal human desire to be understood and respected.

The play also questions the stereotypical understanding of relationships. Through different characters, Dr. Johari suggests that human emotions cannot always be controlled according to social rules. The characters are not presented as simple representatives of right or wrong; instead, they are complex human beings struggling for happiness and dignity.

From a feminist perspective, Lolitha's character deserves special attention. She challenges the idea that a woman's identity exists only through marriage and motherhood. Her refusal to accept an unhappy relationship reflects the modern woman's search for independence and self-respect. Her statement: "Marriage doesn't mean to bear a child."

The play also explores the psychological impact of suppression. When individuals are forced to hide their emotions, they experience frustration, loneliness, and anxiety. Dr. Johari presents these psychological struggles through intense dialogues and dramatic situations. The characters' inability to express themselves freely creates the central tension of the drama.

Stylistically, *The Invisible Conflicts* combines social realism with psychological drama. The language of the play is simple and direct, making the emotional struggles of characters easily understandable. The dramatic situations are created through conversations rather than external actions, which gives importance to the inner world of characters. The characters achieve emotional clarity by acknowledging their identities rather than denying them, yet the broader social transformation remains an ongoing process. This realistic conclusion strengthens the artistic credibility of the play because it reflects the complexity of contemporary social life. Rather than presenting an idealized ending, the playwright encourages audiences to continue questioning inherited prejudices and discriminatory assumptions.

Dr. Sanjay Johari's *The Invisible Conflicts* is a meaningful contemporary social drama that explores the hidden struggles of human identity, relationships, and acceptance. The play successfully presents the conflict between individual freedom and social expectations. Through Urvesh, Lolitha, Mickey, and Nandini, the playwright gives voice to those individuals whose emotions remain unheard because of social barriers. The drama encourages society to develop greater understanding, compassion, and respect for human dignity. The significance of the play lies in its attempt to bring invisible issues into visible discussion. It reminds readers and audiences that every individual has emotions, dreams, and the right to seek happiness. By portraying personal struggles within a social framework, Dr. Sanjay Johari contributes to the development of contemporary Indian drama and opens new possibilities for discussions on identity and human relationships.

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