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## Mahesh Dattani's Tara- A Glimpse of Patriarchal Society

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### Abstract

Mahesh Dattani is one of the most leading contemporary playwrights in Indian writing in English. Mahesh Dattani creates a real world Indian society, infamous for bringing atrocities against its female members and also introduce a dream world at the end of the play when Tara and Dan are seen hugging each other in some other place. A perfect combination of the real world and the dream world in Tara helps the dramatist pave a new way for projecting his views on gender discrimination. A patriarchal society is perfectly presented in Tara where the important family decisions are taken by its male members. In a patriarchal society, a woman's identity is defined by others in term of her relationship with man. Patel, the representative of patriarchal authority in the play, clearly differentiates the role of his son from that of his daughter. Certain gendered roles are accepted in the society as natural and hardly does anyone bother to go beyond those accepted norms. This paper aims at how women are dominated and looked down upon by the patriarchal society.

Keywords: patriarchal society, tragedy, authority, discrimination.

Indian Drama' is the broad concept comprising entire Indian myths, and culture. Drama in India has a great tradition right from Vedic period with the book of 'Natyashashtra' by Bharat Muni. Indian English drama was established in India by British and western patrons of drama. Pre- Independence and post-independence Indian English drama was remarkable in its quality as well as quantity. Though Indian English drama was a mere imitation of British dramatists, but it had a genuine feelings and cultural notions. So that at present few dramatists like Mahesh Dattani, Manjula Padmanabhan and Girish Karnad are achieving milestones of success in Indian theatre with great prospect in Indian theatre as well as world theatre.

Indian drama in English was introduced and came in practice after the arrival of British in India who set up English missionary schools for dual purpose that is preaching Christian religion and creating employees for British government. This induced Indian people to learn a new language – English and get the perception of Western world and their Literature. It poured new strength in the paralyzed Indian English Drama. As Krishna Kriplani points out- The modern English Drama “Owned its first flowering to foreign grafting”. With the impact of western civilization on Indian life, a new renaissance dawned on Indian arts including drama. Furthermore English education gave an impetus and a momentum to the critical study of not only western drama but also classical Indian drama. English and Italian troupe toured India and performed many English plays, mainly Shakespeare’s plays, in cities like Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta.

It took a century and a quarter for Indian drama to reach a respectable stage and it now challenges comparison with other forms of literature- poetry and fiction- in terms of quality if not quantity. The first play in English entitled “Is This Civilization?” was written in 1871 by Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Since then, many plays have been genuinely written in English by ‘enterprising’ Indian writers, in spite of the fact that drama in English fascinated only the super- sophisticated who live in the cities and the larger towns, in the universities or in certain government offices or business houses.

Most of the Indian English dramatists of pre-Independence period followed the tradition of Elizabethan drama in general and Shakespeare in particular. By the end of the 19th century, there were pioneering efforts boldly employed by contemporary playwrights such as Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, T.P.Kailasam, Lobo Prabhu, Bharati Sarabhai and so on who contributed substantially to the growth and development of Indian English Drama. These dramatists tried their hand in different forms of drama- romance, opera, comedy, farce, tragedy, melodrama and historical and mythological plays. The Post-Independence Indian English Drama developed with ‘poetic drama’ fashion by imitating western poetic drama tradition and following the path of- “The Tagore-Aurobindo-Kailasam tradition of poetic drama continues, but with a difference in the hands of Manjeri Isvaran , G.V. Desani, Lakhan Deb and Pritish Nandy. Despite the growth of poetic drama in early post-independence Indian English drama, Indian drama made genuine progress in all forms of drama.

Dramatists like Nissim Ezekiel, Lakhan Deb, Gurucharan Das, Pratap Sharma, Asif Currimbhoy, Gieve Patel made significant contribution in uplifting the drama tradition in Indian English drama. After a promising beginning of Indian English drama in post-Independence period, suddenly there is a downfall and a total dearth of English plays. In 1970s, a new trend came forward in English plays in India which changed its face that is Translation method, which means translate the plays of contemporary notable regional playwrights into English and staged in theatre. It got huge success for its bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of both thematic concerns and technical virtuosity within no time. Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Mahashweta Devi are the most representative of the Contemporary Indian drama not only in Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, and Kannada but also on the pan Indian level.

Recently Indian English drama has produced two brilliant playwrights like Manjula Padmanabhan and Mahesh Dattani who elevate Indian English drama at its summit of success. Both of them raise English drama not only in Indian theatre but also in the world theatre in rich quality and thematic presentation. Manjula Padmanabhan is the first Indian to earn international fame with her play, 'Harvest' that deals with an impoverished family living in a single room in a chawl of Bombay, fading up by extreme hunger and unemployment, protagonist decided to sell his organs of body.

The plays of Padmanabhan are intellectual but not suited for stage whereas Mahesh Dattani has been quite successful on the stage. Mahesh Dattani, the creator of "Tara" the play that I am discussing in this paper, is a prolific theatre artist, dramatist, director, and a popular dancer. The plays of Mahesh Dattani emerged as 'fresh arrival' in the domain of Indian English drama in the last decade of twentieth century. He is the only English language playwright who won the Sahitya Akademi award for his play 'Final Solution' in 1998. His plays have been staged to critical acclaim all over the country and abroad. Alyque Padamsee says regarding him, "At last we have playwright who gives sixty million English speaking Indians an identity." Mahesh Dattani used the contemporary sensational issues as a theme for his plays such as – Gender discrimination in 'Tara', Gay community in 'On muggy night in Mumbai', Status of eunuch in 'Seven steps around the fire', and Communalism in 'Final Solution'.

"The most significant contribution of Dattani is perhaps his use of language. Dattani uses in his plays the kind of English spoken by people in India". Tara was Dattani's third play staged in Bangalore the year it was written, and directed by Dattani himself. It was staged as Twinkle Tara. When it was staged next year in Mumbai, it was called Tara, and was directed by Alyque Padamasee. The play is a comment on the predicament of women in the past, reflects the status of women in the present and dramatizes the complexities of the social setup. His play Tara is an exhortation to the society to shed the age old prejudices against women and have a progressive outlook.

Mahesh Dattani is a name that guided a faltering Indian English Drama on the path of reliability, steadfastness and distinct identity. Besides prolific and prominent Indian playwright writing in English, Mahesh Dattani is also well known as a stage director, screen writer and film maker with numerous scripts and productions to his credit. His plays have been anthologized in single volume called Collected Plays by Penguin. Most of his plays have been translated and performed in other regional languages of India and have been incorporated in the syllabus of several Indian and foreign universities and schools.

His film "Morning Raga" remained cynosure of the Cairo Film Festival in December 2004 and it registered the award for best artistic contribution. More importantly its script has been archived by The Academy of Motion Pictures, USA and it was accepted by Oscar Academy for nomination of the award. He has worked in partnership with various international theatre companies and his recent achievements are stage adaptation of Paulo Coelho's bestseller classic, The Alchemist and composing of the script of Brief Candle, directed by Lillete Dubey. In an attempt to bridge the gap between the East and the West he was recently also

engaged in a multicultural project, called Reorientations, a workshop that lasted for a three week period at the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre in China. This occupied an English director Michael Walling along with English actors, one Indian dancer, two actors from Sweden and four Chinese actors.

Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* comes across as a play that deals with twin aspects that are two sides of the same coin. It also presents the conflict between illusion and reality as echoed by the multi-level set. The house of the Patels are kept as if in memory. The only realistic level is the part of the wall covered with faded wall paper that has the writer writing the play in which he appears to the audience.

In this sense, the playwright presents metatheatrical aspects as he talks of distancing oneself from the experience and writing about it. The Doctor as portrayed in the set, stands in contrast as the omnipotent Author. It thereby underlines the clash between the subjective and objective author. Chandan discovers that even distancing himself physically "in a seedy suburb of London thousands of miles away from home" hasn't done the trick. He attempts as much as possible to alienate himself from the script, but suffers from a writer's block and everything remains stagnant on his paper just as his life is. Just as in his life, nothing changes but the dates. And the greatest irony is that Indo-Anglian literature isn't worth toilet paper in his own country. He neglects his own personal history to get over his guilt with what happened to *Tara*. Just as the lowest portion occupies a major portion of the stage, the memory of guilt haunts and dominates Chandan's personality. It is to deny this that he creates his alter-ego Dan. His being a Diaspora, this causes another divide in his self: the identity of the Diaspora caught between his native culture and foreign culture as signified by Chandan and Dan.

Our culture is so rich with tradition, and that's a great advantage and disadvantage a swell..(321)The mysterious brown with the phoney accent. The last being the hardest to drop having spent two whole years in acquiring it. And what remains is what I intend making capital of. (324)

Mahesh Dattani has honoured to become the first English language playwright who won the Sahitya Akademi award for *Final Solutions* and *Other Plays* in 1998. Bold themes and unusual style of his plays have attracted the attention of audiences /readers. Through his plays, he has tried to bring invisible issues of society such as child sex abuse, incest, plight of transgender and woman etc into light. As a sensitive playwright, he throws light upon the lives of marginalized sections of society and tries to sensitize and make mainstream society aware about their problems.

The preoccupation with 'fringe' issues forms an element in Mahesh Dattani's work-issues that remain latent and suppressed, or are pushed to the periphery, come to occupy centre stage-quite literally. With Dattani, this becomes the only way to actually push these 'invisible' issues forward, to create at least an acknowledgement of their existence. (Chaudhuri 47)

Mahesh Dattani has represented the issue of marginalization of women in the play *Tara*. The play shows the discrimination against girl child in society. The play was first performed as *Twinkle Tara* at the Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bengaluru, on October 23, 1990 by Playpen Performing Arts Group. The play starts with a scene set in London. Chandan recalls the memories of his childhood with his sister Tara and also exposes the existing patriarchal mindset of society which prefers a boy child to a girl child. On the theme of *Tara*, theatre director Erin Mee points out:

Tara centres on the emotional separation that grows between two conjoined twins following the discovery that their physical separation was manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favour the boy (Chandan) over the girl (Tara). Tara, a feisty girl who isn't given the opportunities given to her brother (although she may be smarter) eventually wastes away and dies. Chandan escapes to London, changes his name to Dan, and attempts to repress the guilt he feels over his sister's death by living without a personal history. (319)

Mahesh Dattani deconstructs the binaries of gender-man and woman. In this binary, man is superior to woman. He challenges this notion and seems to claim that naturally masculinity and femininity are parts of identity of an individual. The concept of 'Ardhanarishwar' in Indian mythology also support this view. This makes gender based inequality and discrimination unnatural and unethical. Tara and Chandan, the conjoined twins, represent two sides of a self-feminine and masculine. It means, for humanity, man and woman are equal. In the play the unethical surgery symbolizes separation of feminine and masculine. The favor of Chandan represents higher status of man than woman. Tara aptly remarks:

And me. Maybe we still are. Like we've always been. Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb. Till we were forced out... And separated. (Collected Plays 325)

Mahesh Dattani sees *Tara* as a play about the gendered self and seems to convey that gender based discrimination ultimately brings disaster to humanity. Both genders face troubles due to gender biased decision of Patel family. The play shows how Patriarchy is pervasive, multi-layered and deeply rooted in social structure. It has become part of our collective consciousness. Preference of boy child is not only due to economic factors as many believe. Other factors such as religious, social etc also contribute in this preference.

In the play *Tara*, Patel family is economically and politically sound. The family as a social institution is supposed to provide love, care and support to its members. Still the family shows preference for Chandan during surgery which shows the complex nature of patriarchy in social system.

Tara is enthralling in that it makes use of a rather unlikely 'freak' case to lay bare the injustices in the conventional Indian family meted out to the girl child, a play that comments on a society that treats the children who share the womb differently. And as always, the stereotype comes in a friendly garb, covering the ugly truths. The Patels, on the face of it look like the ideal parents that special children like Tara and Chandan need to survive-indeed they have survived because of their dedicated parents. But there are more things that need to be revealed. (Chaudhuri 38)

During the social construction of gender, stereotyped gender roles play an important role. Male and female are assigned different roles and they are supposed to perform these roles during their day to day life. The roles supposed to be performed by male are considered important. On the basis of superiority of his roles, male is accorded higher status than female.

In Tara, Mahesh Dattani touches this issue when Patel asks Chandan to support him in business and expects Tara to remain in domestic sphere. This sex based division of labour is one of the important root causes of gender discrimination. Tara says, "Not at all. The men in the house were deciding on whether they are going to go hunting while the women looked after the cave." (Collected Plays 328) In the patriarchal values, male and female are expected to stick to their assigned roles only. Performing other's gender role may become cause of embarrassment. In the play Dattani tries to deconstruct this separation of roles through characters of Tara and Chandan. Chandan is interested in so called feminine roles. He says, "I haven't decided yet. (Looks at Patel.) I might stay back in the cave and do my jigsaw puzzle." (Collected Plays 328) Chandan would prefer to be a writer, while it is Tara who seems more inclined to go into a career like her father's. Patel is angry with his wife and accuses her of "turning him (Chandan) into a sissy-teaching him to knit!" (Collected Plays 350) This division of labour affects not only female but male also. It also puts burden on male and limits his interest and talent.

In patriarchal society, paradoxically, women play an important role in perpetuating discrimination against women. In the play Bharati, a woman, favors the male child during surgery. It proves, in patriarchal structure, the values biased towards male are deeply internalized even by female psyche through social conditioning. So in patriarchy, a woman becomes a tool against other woman in vicious cycle. Patel reveals secret about decision regarding surgery:

A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl. Your mother asked for a reconfirmation. The result was the same. The chances were better that the leg would survive ...on the girl. Your grandfather and mother had a private meeting with Dr. Thakkar. I wasn't asked to come. That same evening your mother told me of her decision. Everything will be done as planned. Except-I couldn't believe what she told me-that they would risk giving both legs to the boy. May be I had protested more strongly! (Collected Plays 378)

After failure of surgery, Bharati is full of guilt as she has spoiled life of her daughter. She tries to overcome this guilt feeling by giving excessive love and care to Tara. Her concerns are explicit when she says, “Yes. I plan for her happiness. I mean to give her all the love and affection which I can give. It’s what she...deserves. Love can make up for a lot.” (Collected Plays 349) Her guilt feeling makes her mentally disturbed. The quarrels between husband and wife also increase leading to tension in family. She tries to lessen her guilt by transferring blame to her husband and proving that she loves Tara more than he does. Patel remarks, “You know she loves you. You’re sure of that. Don’t make her choose between us, for God’s sake! You are ruining her life because you are sick. I want to help you, Bharati, please allow me to help you.” (Collected Plays 353) Bharati even bribes Roopa to play with Tara. Roopa says:

And to think I pitied you! Oh! I think you are disgusting! I only come here because your mother asked me to. No, she didn’t ask me, she bribed me to be your best friend. Yes, your loony mother used to give me things....Now that she’s finally gone crazy; I guess she won’t be giving me much. So goodbye. (Collected Plays 369)

Her guilt drives her to insanity. The sufferings and guilt of Bharati shows how women suffer in patriarchal system and values. Later when Tara learns the truth that she was discriminated by her mother, she gets shocked and emotionally broken.

Mahesh Dattani deconstructs the myth that Nature and God have made male superior to female. This myth justifies the subordination of woman against man. Mahesh Dattani tries to assert that male and female are equal in the eyes of Nature and the God, but it is the patriarchal society which has artificially created gender inequality. Dr Thakkar represents the scientific knowledge which has also become a tool in the hands of patriarchs for oppression and subjugation of women. Mahesh Dattani shows how various social institutions contribute in perpetuation of gender inequality and discrimination making them pervasive and deep-rooted. But he considers gender inequality inhuman and unethical. Dan considers injustice against Tara an unnatural sin:

She deserves something better. She never got a fair deal. Not even from nature. Neither of us did. May be God never wanted us to to be separated. Destiny desires strange things.... But even God does not always get what he wants. Conflict is the crux of life. A duel to the death between God and nature on one side and on the other-the amazing Dr. Thakkar. (Collected Plays 330)

Both Tara and Chandan are physically challenged. Both feel marginalized on account of this, but being a girl, Tara is doubly marginalized. In patriarchal society, physical beauty is valued more than her intelligence or inner beauty. Dattani exposes double standards of society showing how society discriminates between two physically challenged persons on the basis of gender. This double standard is reflected when Bharati says:

It’s all right while she is young. It’s all very cute and comfortable when she makes witty remarks. But let her grow up. Yes, Chandan. The world will tolerate you.

The world will accept you-but not her! Oh, the pain she is going to feel when she sees herself at eighteen or twenty.

Chandan feels inferiority complex due to his physical deformity. He feels, “They are not the ugly ones. We are. Horrible one-legged creatures.”(Collected Plays 369)However, Tara, a strong and sensitive girl, faces the girl bravely and even pushes his hesitant brother to participate in mainstream society with confidence and show his worth, “You are afraid. Afraid of meeting new people. People who don’t know you. Who won’t know how clever you are. You are afraid they won’t see beyond your” (Collected Plays 361)

The discrimination against woman starts from mother’s womb. The incidents of female foeticide and female infanticide are common in our society. A girl is considered burden on parents financially, emotionally and socially which leads to murder of girl child. The play brings forth this point through Roopa’s remarks,

“since you insist, I will tell you. It may not be true. But this is what I have heard.

The Patels in the old days were unhappy with getting girl babies-you know dowry and things like that-so they used to drown them in milk.” (Collected Plays 349)

Mahesh Dattani has smartly used multi-level set in the play. The lowest level represents the house of the Patels. On the highest level, there is a chair in which Dr. Thakkar remains seated throughout the play. His presence represents the unethical act of surgery which haunts and affects the lives of Patel family members. He becomes party to the partisan decision in agreeing to give the leg to Chandan despite the leg medically suits more to Tara.

Mahesh Dattani’s art of characterization is remarkable in the play. His characters seem authentic due to his deep understanding of society and human psychology. This is one of the reasons that audience/readers feel connected to his plays. “Mahesh Dattani’s plays have variety, and his themes are of contemporary interest. He has dived deep into human heart and re-created characters with authenticity and a sense of liveliness.” (Das 123)

Mahesh Dattani’s protagonists are usually different or differently abled, they might belong to the margins of contemporary society but Dattani subverts the equation and places them in the centre. They are either handicapped or gay, eunuchs, women who take up new challenges and dare to think and act differently in a patriarchal society. His themes and characters embody the changing face of India which is marching ahead in the global world and making its presence felt. Unlike GirishKarnad; Dattani is not looking into India’s mythical past for inspiration rather his characters are contemporary, unconventional and iconoclastic. Speaking about the kind of subjects and characters that are taken up by Dattani in his plays Erin B. Mee writes:



Mahesh Dattani frequently takes as his subject the complicated dynamics of the modern urban family. His characters struggle for some kind freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender, and repressed desire. Their dramas are played out on multi-level sets where interior and exterior become one, and geographical locations are collapsed---in short, his settings are as fragmented as the families who inhabit them. (Erin B. Mee “A Note on the Play”, CP: 319)

A Gujarati, Bangalorean, and an English speaking urban Indian --- Mahesh Dattani is himself a man of multiple identities. This article analyses Tara as a work tracing Chandan’s search for unified self and how he relives his personal history and tragedy by writing a play in the memory of his twin sister. Dan (older Chandan) living in London, starts by dropping off different masks or identities that he has acquired in the course of his stay in London. “I am a freak”, he declares and frees himself to “Allow the memories to flood in” (CP: 324). The memories of his twin sister whom he had nearly forgotten are brought to the fore of his conscious mind when he decides to write a play in her memory. Reminiscing about Tara, Dan realizes that “maybe I didn’t forget her. She was lying deep inside, out of reach...” (CP: 324). Getting entrapped into the trance of memories Dan goes on to reflect that “we still are, like we’ve always been. Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb. Till we were forced out . . . And separated.” (CP: 325) Here we get an early clue that Mahesh Dattani wished his play to be read from altogether different perspective. Talking about Tara in an interview with Erin B. Mee, Dattani says, “it’s a play about the self, about the man and the woman in self, but a lot of people think of it as a play about the girl child.” Further elaborating, he says that it is a play “about the male denying the female, and how the cultural construct of gender favors the male....it has to do with coming to terms with one’s own self in terms of the feminine in the self.” (Erin B. Mee, MDPCP: 158-159).

Tara is a play which depicts the emotional and psychological trauma of the forced separation of Tara and Chandan, the two conjoined twins. The Twins were conjoined chest down and shared three legs between them besides other medical complications. The third leg naturally belonged to the girl’s side and chances of survival of the leg were better on the girl. But the operation performed by unethical and unscrupulous Dr. Thakkar, is manipulated to favor the boy over girl. The leg is risked to be given to the boy, but nature had its own design and ultimately the leg is rejected by Chandan’s body and had to be amputated:

Patel. A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl. Your mother asked for a reconfirmation. The result was the same. The chances were slightly better that the leg would survive . . . on the girl....I couldn’t Believe what she told me---that they would risk giving both legs to the boy....The Doctor had agreed, I was told....He had acquired three acres of prime land---in the

Heart of the city---from the state. Your grandfather's political influence had been used. A few days later the surgery was done. As planned by them, Chandan had two legs--- for two days. It didn't take them very long to realize what a grave mistake they had made. The leg was amputated. A piece of dead flesh which could have---might have--- been Tara.... (CP: 378)

The details of separation remain a secret for the twins for fifteen years. When the knowledge of this biased and unscrupulous separation dawns upon the twins it finally and permanently tears them apart. Particularly, Tara is unable to bear the truth of her mother's compliance in this act. "And she called me her star !" (CP: 379), is Tara's last heart rending utterance on stage. Tara, unable to cope with reality is in a state of daze but Chandan is totally crushed when his sister breaks all ties from him by not reciprocating his gesture of true concern. Here, Dattani skillfully depicts that how genderbiases and identities based on gender can harm not only the female but the male as well. The tensions inherent in Patel household are evident from the very beginning of the play. The echoes of some past action can easily be felt in the present of the family. Bharati is over cautious and over protective towards Tara, the reason at this point seems to be her failing health. Patel, on the other hand is insistent on the patriarchal role that Chandan should take up.

Tara's observation in this regard that "men in the house were deciding on whether they were going to go hunting while the women looked after the cave"(CP: 328) mirrors the sentiments of her father Patel who insists that Chandan Exploring Identity: A Reading of Mahesh Dattani's Tara 101 should join his office and not waste himself sitting at home. The very absence of concern for Tara's future from Patel's side speaks volumes about his vision and his perception of male identity. Later in the play when Patel finds Chandan helping out Bharati with knitting, he loses his temper, and accuses Bharati that she is turning Chandan "into a sissy ---teaching him to knit!" (CP: 351). Patel's anger and outburst is indicative of his commitment toward male hegemony. But in a brilliant stroke Chandan subverts this hegemony as he rebels against the established structure. Chandan is creative, sensitive, sensible and caring.

He possesses all those qualities which are usually associated with the feminine. He refuses to join college without Tara, he refuses to get separated from his other half. But society cannot tolerate such 'freaks' and ultimately Chandan is forced to live a meaningless life.

Mahesh Dattani also deals with the notions of normality and beauty in the play. The twins want to assert themselves to show their repulsion for society. Particularly Tara looks back in anger towards the society which considers them (the twins) as abnormal and ugly. The society, represented by Roopa, fails to look into its own ugliness and its own blighted attitudes towards the 'Other'. In a moment of sheer hatred and anger subverting the established notions of normality, Tara tells Roopa, " I'd sooner be one-eyed, one armed and one-legged than an imbecile like you." (CP: 369) Through Tara, Dattani reflects that our notions of normality and disability are hollow and ridiculous. Tara's outburst makes us empathize with what she has experienced as a marginalized person.

Tara and Chandan share a very special bond as young children. They are intelligent and witty and simply remarkable in their sense of humor. They derive the energies of life from each other and appear robust and full of life when they are together, but simply fade away and wither on separation. When Dan chooses to write the story of his twin sister, he in fact cannot help but ends up writing his own. In a moment of togetherness, Chandan and Tara realize that there is indeed no difference between them. Tara says, “You, Me. There’s no difference” and a little later when Tara laughingly calls Chandan “Bastard!”, his quick witted reply is “Vulgar girl! Calling yourself names!” (CP: 361).

Dan is unable to come to terms with the separation and death of his sister. He carries the burden of injustice that was done to Tara who was denied a part of her own body. Paying for the sin of his parents, Dan isolates himself from society and much against the wishes of his father, wastes himself in London.

It can be said that Mahesh Dattani has successfully negotiated with the questions of gender, disability, the family and self-identity in the play. The play has got success all over the world and is one of the most loved works of him. Taking an unusual subject of conjoined twins, he realistically touches various issues related to gender discrimination. He presents a bitter reality of society without being didactic and touches various themes with sensitive heart. This play successfully highlights the plight of marginalized women in patriarchal society in a subtle ways. Erin Mee comments, “Dattani sees Tara as a play about the gendered self, about coming to terms with the feminine side of oneself in a world that always favors what is ‘male’; but many people India see it as a play about the girl child.”(320)

In an interview with AngelieMultaniDattani says, “Ultimately all good writing is about character revelations and journeys.” (Multani, MDPCP: 166-167) Indeed Tara is a journey into the recesses of human identity and human self. The effeminate self of Chandan is his neglected half which has remained unexplored and unrealized. The play is about this continuous quest for self-integration and self-realization. Chandan and Tara are metaphors of fragmented identities. The double naming of Chandan as Dan further suggests the fragmentation of identify at a different level. The multi-level set and the movement of action back and forth in time helps in portraying the fragmented consciousness of Dan. Towards the end Dan reflects on his helplessness and his inability to act; and realizes that he is only “An object like other objects in a cosmos, whose orbits are determined by those around. Moving in a forced harmony.” Tara desired freedom and thus was “hurled into space, doomed to crash with some unknown force.” (CP: 379) Finally, Dan asks for forgiveness from his dead sister and yearns for togetherness. The play ends with Tara and Dan walking without the limp. The two become whole and complete as they embrace and hug each other, recreating and reliving that state when they were one; inside the womb of their mother. Such completeness and totality of

being can only be achieved beyond the boundaries of time, in the memory, in the creative mind of an artist like Mahesh Dattani.

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