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## THE THEME OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN MAHESH DATTANI'S "TARA"

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**Abstract:** Mahesh Dattani is a well-known contemporary Indian English dramatist who also works as a writer, stage and film director, actor, and theatrical personality. His plays deal with difficulties that arise in Indian settings. He writes on those on society's periphery, such as minorities, women, gays, and transsexuals. The goal of my paper is to look into the trauma of the female kid in Mahesh Dattani's Tara. Tara's situation is similar to that of many other sad Indian females. There are various barriers to raising a girl child in this traditional environment. On the one hand, they find empowerment via education, financial success, and individualism in society, but our culture is unable to eradicate long-held prejudices against them. In this drama, Tara is the daughter of an educated upper-middle-class family from Bangalore. The plot of the play is around twins who are born with three legs, with blood circulation to the third leg coming from the newborn girl's body. Only one of the twins could have two legs, while the other could only have one. The unequivocal decision to attach the third leg to the boy child's body in order to complete the child. This decision was made because to gender discrimination and injustice towards girl children in our Indian society, not on medical grounds. Dattani is worried about gender imbalance and prejudice against girl children. This is done not because the girl is incapable of surviving in society's brutal hands, but because societal conventions, economic standards, and cultural factors are to responsible for this heinous conduct. All of these events contribute to our society's notion of how the girl child must live and die. In this situation, a girl's potential is sacrificed on the altar of gender, resulting in this unpleasant criterion.

**Index Terms** - Gender Inequality, Discrimination Injustice to Girl Child, Prejudice, Social System

Mahesh Dattani holds a unique and illustrious place in the world of Indian drama in English. He has demonstrated his uniqueness in a variety of ways. His exposition of real-life problems is an important contribution to Indian English Drama. Among contemporary Indian playwrights, he stands out for his personal distinctiveness, stunning creative sense, and enormous dramatic guts. He is the most serious current dramatist writing in English on Indians. He addresses major issues that exist in urban India. He successfully gives voice to the issues and sorrows of our society's marginalized individuals. His plays feature vital characteristics such as human tragedy, passions, conflict, and appeal to human sentiment, which may instantly touch and stir a general audience. He elevates Indian drama in English to the level of international drama.

Women's hardship has been chronicled in Indian literature in all languages. As a result, they have lifted their voices in opposition to this barbaric treatment of women. This is true of Indian literature in English. It should be remembered that feminism has received mixed reactions from people all around the world. Feminism has given rise to two opposing attitudes: pro-feministic and anti-feministic. Writers who support feminism are referred to as pro-feminists, while those who oppose it are referred to as anti-feminists. Mahesh Dattani falls into the first category, which includes writers who advocate for women's rights. In terms of Mahesh Dattani's perception on women, he is rather unusual. In truth, he has no special feminist agenda to push on viewers. He seeks to understand many aspects of the feminine psyche. His works portray the ongoing conflict between the feminine mind and patriarchal authority. To the question, asked by Laxmi Subramanyam, Dattani replies: *They are humans. They want something. They face obstacles. They will do anything in their power to get it. All eyes focus on in the powerlessness of sensibility for political correctness either. My only defense is to say that I am not biased against woman. I*

Tara is Dattani's most moving three-act theatre play. It tells the story of Tara and Chandan, two Siamese twins. The drama alternates between past and present happenings. The setting for the majority of Dattani's plays is family and home. Tara is no exception. The play Tara, directed by Dattani himself, was originally produced as Twinkle Tara on October 23, 1990, at the Chowdiah Memorial Hall in Bangalore by Dattani's Playpen Performing Arts Group. It was staged under the direction of Alyque Padamsee. Tara was afterwards played at Sophia Bhabha Hall in Bombay by Theatre Group on November 9, 1991.

Mahesh Dattani's theatrical approaches include multilevel sets, split scenes, flashback devices, double characters, and so on. The stage in this drama is made up of tiered sets. The lowest level takes up the majority of the stage. It represents the Patels' home. The following level portrays the older Chandan's bed sitter in a London suburb. This is the only level that is realistic. Dr. Thakkar remained seated in his chair during the play at the higher level. He is not there during the action of the play, but his affiliation is demonstrated by his overwhelming God-like presence. Dan has a triangle mission to do. He is the narrator, the action organizer, and a character in the play. Dan's level is the only realistic level among the three. The event fades from his recollection. It is a remix version of a previous event that occurred at the Patel household. As is typical of his plays, the narrative is quite productive, breaking and restarting action.

Chandan's middle name is Dan. He changed his name from Chandan to Dan to absolve himself of the harm done to his sister Tara. He travels to London to try his hand at writing. He severed his ties with others. He strives to adjust to his new surroundings. The feeling that he is to blame for Tara's pitiful situation haunts his mind at all times. She's the other half of him. He's detached self is her. His conscience is gripped by a sense of guilt. Erin Mee aptly puts, "*Tara and Chandan are two sides of the same self.*" (CP: 320)

The spotlight shines on Dan (older Chandan) at his writing table at the start of the play. He's typing quickly. He comes to a halt, looks up, and addresses the audience directly.

*Dan: seedy suburb of London, thousands of miles from home hasn't put enough distance between us. (Holds up his glass.) My battery charger helps on some occasions. But now I want them to comeback. To masticate my memories in my mind and spit out the result to the (CP: 323-24)*

Dan is working on a two-act play called Twinkle Tara, but he can't write anything but the publication details. Random Raj, a short fiction about the British Raj, was written by him. The publishers declined because they did not believe it was worth publishing. The play begins without music, but as it progresses, music begins to fade in as Chandan and Tara stroll onto the stage level. They each limp, but on opposite legs. Bharati provides Tara additional milk because she has dropped half a pound in one week.

He's working on a play about Tara. Bharati and her husband have a heated argument about how they should love and care for their children. Patel blames Bharati for turning children against him. He lavishes equal amounts of love and affection on both children. His wife wishes to demonstrate that she loves Tara more than he does. The second act concludes with Tara's health failing and Patel requesting sugar. At the end, Dan reads his script:

*(reads aloud) Bharati sobs. Patel brings in the revived Tara. Patel picks up the phone and dials the hospital. The act ends with the explosive opening of Brahms' 'First concerto'. (CP: 354)*

Tara and Chandan are identical Siamese twins. They are twins, but they do not look alike. They are separated three months after their birth. They were actually linked at the chest and had three legs. Tara had a better chance of surviving the third leg. However, it was provided to Chandan while skipping a medical report, indicating gender prejudice. Mrs. Bharati Patel and her politically prominent father made the decision to give Chandan a third leg. Mr. Patel had nothing to do with this travesty. The operation took place in Bombay. Tara is thus the victim of gender discrimination in patriarchal culture. It is an unfortunate fact that patriarchy has always structured and ruled a woman's life since time immemorial. Dattani appears to imply that the power of wealth frequently collaborates with the force of patriarchy to subjugate and oppress women in our culture. Tara's grandfather uses his political and financial clout to persuade the doctor to give Chandan the third leg instead of Tara.

Crucially, the trinity of patriarchy, capitalism, and political power band together to oppose the presence of a girl. It has been attributed:

*Tara centers 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.*<sup>2</sup>

Tara is a biting criticism on gender discrimination and social apathy towards injustice done to even a girl babe under the guise of gender dualism. So it's not merely a story about gender identity or a medical problem. It depicts how women are marginalized to the point of misrepresenting their own identities. In a broader sense, the play is a horrible narrative of patriarchal society's injustice to a woman. Regardless of human civilization and advancement, we are all the same in our core.

The play depicts how the devil of gender discrimination destroys all other familial bonds and how socio-cultural myths and norms regulate and shape the course of human life. Bharati's love for Tara is pure and unending, but as a woman, her maternal love is marginalized, and her subalternity forces her to sacrifice her maternal love to meet society expectations. The patriarchal code places the mother-daughter relationship on the outskirts. Adrienne Rich aptly observes:

*Though motherhood is the experience of women, the institution of motherhood is under male control and the physical situation of becoming a mother is disciplined by males. This glorious motherhood is imposed on women, conditions her entire life.*<sup>3</sup>

Dattani illustrates the complicated scenario in which conjoined twins are confined by Nature in this drama. The patriarchal society's manipulation makes the situation more difficult and intricate. Tara finds herself in a very unhappy and bizarre predicament. It is attributed:

*Dattani establishes that mother and daughter relationship is ultimately subordinated to the directives of patriarchy. It makes obvious that women's lives are organized and manipulated by the patriarchy in all ages, all culture and all countries by establishing values, roles, gender perception and prescribe unequal means to achieve the 'wholeness' for women.*<sup>4</sup>

With great originality of thought, the drama revolves on the theme of favouring the boy and frowning upon the girl. In one of his conversations with Laxmi Subramanyam, Mahesh Dattani says:

*I see Tara as a play about the male self and female self. The male self is being preferred in all cultures. The play is about the separation of self and the resultant angst.*<sup>5</sup>

At this point in time, Dan is the interviewer. Dr. Takhar boasts about his divine influence in Tara and Chandan's lives. He does it directly in front of the audience. Dan gets a phone call from his father, who is now in India. Through this call, he learns of his mother, Bharati's, untimely death. This allows us to understand his mental and emotional anguish. He makes every attempt to maintain as much space as possible between himself

and India and the past. Nonetheless, the past, like the present, exists within. Tara is an investigation of the dark mysteries of human awareness that cause present-day stress and emotional turmoil. The past's pressure is a recurring theme in Dattani's work. His plays have a variety of disclosures. Dattani discovers what is behind the surface, what transpired in the previous days, and how it impacts the current action. As a result, the viewer is presented with unanticipated complexities.

Tara's nature is revelatory. Dan is under the influence of the past. He is burdened by the pressurable stress caused by past actions. They are portraits of his mother and granddad. At the time of the heinous decision to give Chandan a third leg, doctors believed Tara had a better chance of surviving than Chandan. Science is hampered by gender hierarchies. Without consulting Mr. Patel, Bharati and her politically strong father agreed to give Chandan the third leg. Bharati's MLA father persuaded the doctor by providing him some acres of land in Bangalore. As Patel explains *"A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl."* (CP: 378)

The leg could only survive for two days with Chandan, but it could have lived forever with Tara. This is not to say that Mr. Patel is without fault. He is also complicit in gender prejudice. He looks to be more concerned about Chandan's future than Tara's.

Bharati's obsession with Tara stems from her previous remorse. She is haunted by her previous guilt. Tara suffered greatly as a result of her alliance with her father. She now wants to shower Tara with love and compassion. Because of this, she wants to donate her own kidney to Tara when another donor is available. She desires to give a portion of herself and derives happiness from this. She expresses her care to the point where she and only she adores Tara. No one else! Patel, on the other hand, is opposed to her plan to donate her kidney to Tara. So she lies that it will be costly. Mr. Patel disagrees, claiming that her father's riches have always been her bulwark against him.

*Bharati: (pleadingly) Why won't you let me do it?*

*Patel: (controlling) Need I tell you? Because I do not want you to have the satisfaction of doing it.*

*Bharati: I will do it!*

*Patel: You will have to obey me. It's my turn now.*

*Bharati: I want to give her a part of me! (CP: 344)*

Bharati attempts to establish her moral superiority over her spouse. She works hard to carve out a place for herself in the family. Bharati's final decision to donate her kidney to Tara could be interpreted as an act of penance. Bharati said that her deceased father is to blame for Tara's inhumane treatment. Bharati's condition worsens after her father's death. She tries to make amends by lavishing care and attention on Tara and expressing her deep concern for her future. This is also the effect of her previous catastrophic error. She is fully aware of her previous wrongdoing and feels the full weight of her guilt. Her attempts to compensate for Tara's loss produce disagreement with her husband, which eventually leads to her mental breakdown. As a result, Bharati continues to strive to construct her maternal love until she suffers a mental breakdown.

It is important to note that there is a shift in Bharati's perspective, particularly on patriarchy. She is disappointed. Patel, how about you? He still promotes patriarchal ideology. He is concerned about Chandan's future profession. He doesn't appear to be concerned about Tara's future profession. Aside from gender discrimination, the play incorporates a psycho-philosophical depth into the text.

Dan suffers from severe discomfort and suffers from psychological stress. The play can also be viewed as a tragedy about the human condition. Dan realizes the wretchedness and unhappiness of his life as a result of the crime committed against Tara. His heart is aching. It has come closer to the observation of

Beena Agarwal:

*The pathetic confession of Dan by the end of the play "forgives me Tara, forgive me, for making it my tragedy" is the manifestation of Dattani's own anguish at the exploitation of an innocent girl. 6*

Science and technology are advancing at an unparalleled rate. It has bestowed upon humanity speed, pleasure, and perfection. Looking at the flip side of the coin, we can see that it is also utilised to bring sorrow and pain in the lives of many individuals. After all, the machine is operated by man for his own purposes and ambitions. Tara, the play, depicts how technologically advanced equipment is used to enslave women. Dattani proves that it is human motives, not mechanical motives that are important. Dattani raises a red candle against the dangers of scientific and technological progress.

Dattani examines both domestic and international theatrical traditions. In order to meet his needs, he combines western and native theatrical tactics. In his plays, he liberally employs words and sentences from Indian languages such as Gujarati, Hindi, and Kannada. Because Gujarati is his mother tongue, he frequently uses Gujarati phrases and sentences. In Tara, he employs a code mixing device. Roopa regularly uses Gujarati terms. As she says:

*"Prema! Prema-a (No response.)Prema-a! Oh, hello, aunty. (In broken Gujarati) Kem Chcho? Majjhama...?" (CP: 327)*

Mahesh Dattani depicts how women are suffering as a result of patriarchy and gender bias. To establish the foundation of a strong and unshakeable nation, sound family construction is essential, as it is the brick in the foundation of the nation. Furthermore, the family is our first society. If this first village or society is founded on prejudice and customs, the nation, the wider civilization, will not be able to survive, grow, or progress. It is observed:

*Mahesh Dattani frequently takes as his subject the complicated dynamics of the modern urban family. His characters struggle for some kind of 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.7*

The play also implies that the patriarchal social structure prevents women from achieving economic stability. Along with the tragic story of gender discrimination, a painful document of material discrimination against women is weaved into the fabric of the play's text. Because Bharati was her father's only child, he left Tara and

Chandan a house in Bangalore. Tara, on the other hand, is not included in the grandfather's bequest of money. Chandan inherits a large sum of money.

The concept of separation appears in many forms as well. There are two types of separation. Tara and Chandan were separated through surgery after Chandan was unfairly given a third leg. The second factor is Mr. Patel's family boycott. Mr. Patel, who is Gujarati, married Bharati, who is Kannadiga. As a result, his family has severed ties with him. Both of these divisions are the result of social preconceptions and practises. Dattani's plays encourage the deconstruction of false prejudices and norms that plague people's life with anguish and misery. It is observed:

*Woven into the play are the issues of class and community, and the clash between traditional and modern life styles and values. 8*

Dattani dramatises the metropolitan family's anguish. In the play, there is a sense of dissatisfaction among the Patel family members. Tara and Chandan are physically deformed, while Mrs. Bharati Patel is afflicted with hysteria. Husband and wife do not have any familial ties. Some unsolved secrets cast heavy shadows on their life. It has been assumed:

*This is thus a play about the injustices done in the name of construction of gender identities – this hierarchisation and demarcation of roles does as much harm to men as to women. Dan carries as much harm of the unfair burden this imposes as Tara. 9*

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