

An Analysis On Gender Inequality In Tara Of Mahesh Dattani

Partha Sarathi Mandal, Dr. Ravi Kumar Yadav

Department of English, Kalinga University, Naya Raipur,
Chhattisgarh, India.

Abstract

Mahesh Dattani is a well-respected English-speaking modern Indian dramatist, actor, director, and literary figure. The problems that develop in Indian situations are the subjects of his plays. People who are marginalized in society, including women, transgender people, gays, and minorities, are the subjects of his writing. In this paper we will focus on Mahesh Dattani's Tara and the pain experienced by the female child protagonist. Like countless other unlucky Indian women, Tara finds herself in a difficult situation. Raising a girl child is fraught with difficulty in this traditional culture. Our culture has failed to eradicate long-standing prejudices against them, even as they find empowerment via education, financial success, and social individuality. "The girl child is still an undesirable arrival into an Indian home, even when the family is ostensibly educated and even has exposure to Western ideas," Dr. Jyoti Sharma asserts. Tara is from an affluent, educated household in Bangalore; she is the play's protagonist. The dynamics of a combined Indian family are the centre of "Tara," an early drama by Dattani. It delves into questions of self-definition, social acceptance, and the effect of cultural norms on people's daily experiences.

Keywords: Empowerment, Social System, Discrimination, Prejudice, Marginalized, Affluent.

INTRODUCTION

Mahesh Dattani is among the most prominent contemporary Indian playwrights. He possesses an impressive array of talents in the realm of theater, including writing, directing, acting, dancing, and teaching. "Playpen" belongs to his theater business. Mumbai is the birthplace of Mahesh Dattani, who was born to parents from Gujarat. He attended Bangalore's St. Joseph's College after graduating from Baldwin Boys High School. Degrees in politics, economics, and history are among Dattani's academic achievements. His goal in life was to work in advertising, so he earned a master's degree in the field. He made his stage debut in Utpal Dutt's Surya Shikhar at the Bangalore Little Theatre, where he also began his acting career.

Drama is considered to be the most effective and powerful

genre in the world literature. The birth of Indian drama emphasizes that it is a major part of our society and culture. Earlier the themes of drama were concentrated on the religious conviction, philosophical approaches and the political changes of the country. Later on, there came the issues related to contemporary politics, social and economic problems, art, human life etc. The modern Indian drama concentrates on the several current issues and the real life problems. These current issues are clearly visible in the plays of Mahesh Dattani.

Dattani pens plays that delve into fascinating topics that are pertinent to modern culture. His plays continue the themes of his predecessors, including sexism, patriarchy, child sexual abuse, and other taboo topics like homosexuality and the mistreatment of eunuchs. He also writes about communalism, a source of tension among different social classes and races.

Mahesh Dattani is a well-respected English-speaking modern Indian dramatist, actor, director, and literary figure. The problems that develop in Indian situations are the subjects of his plays. People who are marginalized in society, including women, transgender people, gays, and minorities, are the subjects of his writing. In this paper we will focus on Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* and the pain experienced by the female child protagonist.

Mahesh Dattani said, "I see *Tara* as a play about the male and the female self" in an interview with Lakshmi Subramaniam. Across all civilizations, the masculine self is being privileged. A sense of alienation and the accompanying misery are important themes of the drama. Women have endured societal bias for a long time. They have been subjected to the most appalling living conditions, irrespective of their cultural, racial, class, or socioeconomic status.

The main characters of play *Tara* :-

- Tara, twin of Chandan
- Chandan (Dan), twin of Tara
- Roopa, new friend to Tara and Chandan
- Dr. Thakkar - Doctor who performed the operation
- Mrs Bharati - Tara's mother
- Mr Patel - Tara's father

At his London bedsitter, Chandan—now known as Dan—is shown quickly composing "*Twinkle Tara: a Play in Two Acts*," a play about his sister Tara, who has long since died away. He opens up about his twin sister, his lifelong obsession with

documenting his memories in writing, and his inability to generate ideas for writing.

A memory of Tara and Chandan as children comes as he speaks, showing them entering the Patel home. They discuss the fact that they were destined to be together from the moment they were born, but were forced to separate. Following their relocation from Bangalore to Mumbai for medical treatment, their mother Bharati shows up and requests that Tara and Chandan unpack. Concerned for Tara's well-being, she makes her preference known. After she implies that Patel despises their Bangalore home and their maternal grandpa, loves Chandan more than Tara, and is unable to reason with her, he stops trying.

With Bharati using manipulation to get Tara to do what she says, Patel tries to recruit Chandan, but Chandan won't leave unless Tara agrees to go with him. Teenage next-door neighbor Roopa visits them with ulterior motives—she wants to brag to her friends about Tara, who she thinks is weird. She steps in to stop the twins from squabbling and playing cards. It appears like Patel is worried about her wife's health as she speaks to an unseen neighbor while the children play in the alley. Her mother has given Tara the strength to face life head-on, she says.

Mr. Patel, the father of the family, is an absolutist and traditional man who has a hard time accepting the ideals held by the younger generation. As a result of both family pressure and his devotion to Tara, Dev finds himself in a difficult position. Topics covered in the play include the effects of traditional gender roles, the influence of social standards on personal decision-making, and the tension between modernity and tradition.

Along with the family's inner struggles, the play touches on larger topics including women's societal roles, familial power dynamics, and the difficulties of finding one's own identity in the face of societal norms and expectations.

The play "Tara" is all the more effective because it doesn't just place the blame on men; rather, it implies that women, influenced by patriarchy, frequently perpetuate injustice, as shown in the victim's mother's preference for a healthy male child over the female conjoined twin. Much of "Bravely Fought the Queen" takes place at home, where the women tend to their husbands and elderly mother-in-law Baa. Throughout the play, we occasionally witness the brutality that Baa's husband inflicted upon her. The complex expectations placed on the two ladies by their assumed social duties are also frequently hinted at. The bonsai motif serves to emphasize the women's stunted condition around the house.

A middle-class family that takes pride in its members' education raised Tara. Society holds Tara's parents in high esteem due to their education, but when faced with the choice between the conjoined twins, they opt for the boy, failing to consider that Tara's body would fare better with two legs. Nevertheless, the social environment was crucial to the success of the surgical separation. The respectable and wealthy politician Bharti's father interferes in the choosing of Chandan, a boy, because he needs an heir to his vast estate. The play's villainous villain is Bharti's absent father; he is responsible for the Patel family's uncomfortable situation of gender inequality. Dr Thakkar performs the surgery that benefits Chandan, and he is the one who compensates him. It was a societal issue that males are given the golden opportunity when he left money for only his grandson Chandan and nothing for Tara. This inclination for male chauvinism endures unabated.

The fact that money is considered more powerful than anything else is also shown by Tara in Dattani's work. Money influenced Dr. Thakkar's decision to do unethical work by refusing to treat Tara's leg, which affected her blood circulation. Because it couldn't draw blood, the third leg that had been attached to Chandan's body was soon cut. The lesson of Dattani's piece is that an outcast can never be truly remarkable. The purpose of his play is "reflect the malfunction of the society but to act like freak mirrors in a carnival and to project grotesque images of all that passes for normal in our world" (K.G. Manikrao).

Inequality based on gender has persisted in India for a long time and continues to impact the lives of men and women alike. Despite equal rights for men and women guaranteed by the Indian constitution, gender inequality persists, is still here. Human rights are violated when gender discrimination occurs. These are more common in close-knit families where members share with one another.

The assumption that gender inequality mostly affects women stems from a paucity of data pertaining to male victims of the phenomenon. In the workplace, women are seen as having less power and influence. Despite the fact that India has passed laws to protect women from rape, dowry, and adultery, shockingly high rates of these discriminatory practices persist. Mahesh Dattani's plays depict the everyday lives of ordinary Indians. The way families are structured in India is unique.

The outside world is for males, and women are to stay at home and tend to the house. It signifies that males are free to behave as they like. However, a woman cannot do anything without her husband's consent.

The drama Tara by Dattani centers on Mr. Patel's family. The plot revolves around the lives of identical twins, a girl and a

boy, who get along famously. A medical procedure is planned to separate Tara and Chandan, which could endanger one of those people. In order for Chandan to live a healthy life, their mother Bharati is adamant about giving him the third leg, which was common to them. When their daughter is the victim of injustice, Mr. Patel does nothing.

Along with the family's inner struggles, the play touches on larger topics including women's societal roles, familial power dynamics, and the difficulties of finding one's own identity in the face of societal norms and expectations.

Traditional Indian households' rigid gender norms are explored in the play. Tara's character questions these norms, and the family has to face its long-held views about how women should conduct because of her alleged infractions.

However, Tara is handicapped and Chandan has a small limp as a result of the operation. For both children, it ends up being pointless. As a result of her amazement, Bharati loses her composure and attempts to shower Tara with all the love and devotion she has. Soon, Patel starts acting aggressively and violently. Indifferent to the potential repercussions that could endanger Tara's life, he disregards her identification. It is a clear sign of the pervasive gender bias in our society.

Tara, a two-act stage play by Dattani, was initially staged as *Twinkle Tara* on October 23, 1990, in Bangalore's Chowdiah Memorial Hall, by Dattani's Playpen performing Arts Group. After that, on November 9, 1991, Theatre Group, Bombay staged it as *Tara* under the direction of Alyque Padamsee; that same year, it won the Sahitya Kerala Academy prize.

Siamese twins with a conjoined hip and three legs are the heroes of the mythical tale *Tara*. One of them might be missing a limb after being surgically separated. The two limbs would have been more suited to Tara's body, which provided most of the blood, but Chandan ended up with them instead. However, the attached limb was eventually severed because it couldn't be used as dead flesh. Two conjoined twins, Chandan and Tara, experience emotional separation as a result of their mother and grandfather's manipulation of their physical separation to benefit Chandan.

Tara, an innocent bystander to society's injustice, must live with the constant weight of her physical disability. "I want two legs," she whispers, her longing hidden from view.

Tara : I would wish for both. I would wish for two of them.

Chandan : Two Jaipur legs?

Tara : No, silly, the real ones. (As written in *Tara*, 266)

After coming to the realization that her mother loves her very much, Tara starts to believe that her father despises her as well. She seems, nonetheless, to be a fearless young woman who enthusiastically confronts her detractors and enemies. Chandan, her brother, has been there for her every step of the way.

The fact that the men of Tara make all the important choices exemplifies a patriarchal culture. People in this culture view a woman's value primarily through the lens of her relationships with men. Everyone in Patel's family is worried about the about Chandan, this son's future. While he keeps mum about his intentions for Tara, he has grand plans for Chandan and wants him to go to college. When Patel goes to his office, he wants Chandan to come with him. He hopes Chandan will act confidently and extrovertly. Upon discovering Chandan assisting his mother with her knitting, he becomes enraged. For having his son perform anything that is seen as feminine, he scolds Bharati. These lines make it clear:

Patel: Chandan, leave that damn thing alone!

Bharati: (Frantic) Go! Chandan, just go!

Patel: (To Bharati) How dare you do this to him? (Tara, 256)

Patel feels depressed at the growth of his son without any responsibility in life. He says: "I am disappointed in you. From now on you are coming to the office with me. I can't see you rotting at home!" (Tara, 256)

Bharati and Tara's relationship, that of mother and daughter, deserves special emphasis.

To fulfil her dual roles as a mother and a lady, Bharati's inner self is torn. Her passion for Tara is overshadowed by the fragmented pictures of her inner self. The guilt she felt causes her to lavish Tara with affection. Her worries and concerns for Tara and her future never go away. "The world will accept you-but not her!" she tells Chandan in another setting, revealing her inner sentiments toward Tara. How heart breaking it will be for her to see herself when she's twenty-one or eighteen years old. Thirty is ridiculous. Where do we stand with forty-five? (Tara, 254)

Only Bharati intends to do something with Tara. She claims, "I plan for her happiness," which may be an attempt to assuage her guilty conscience by ensuring her daughter's safety. I intend to shower her with as much love and care as my heart can contain. It's truly fitting for her. (Tara, 255)

The way Bharati handles her daughter makes Patel unhappy. Tara is treated "as if she is made of glass" throughout her treatment, according to him. (Tara, 257)

The emotional anguish Bharati has been through finally gets the best of her. Upon her return home after her kidney transplant, Tara is devastated to hear about her mother's condition. It seems as though she has lost the love of her mother, the one person who loves her, for all time.

Dattani has expertly exposed the play's issue of gender discrimination via Tara. The gender gap in education is a product of entrenched cultural practices, low economic standards, and societal expectations. All of these things come together to form the social structure that the girl kid must endure. In this passage, Dattani conveys the notion that readers should grant women equal opportunities to reach their full potential. People need to realize that in order to have a full life, they must learn to value their masculine and feminine sides. Once that happens, they'll be able to see a limitless universe of opportunities.

CONCLUSION

A more fitting way to conclude this paper would be to state that "Dattani takes the family setting again and again and uses the family home as his locale and fragments them" (ix). Using cultural ideas as a catalyst, Dattani depicts a fractured Tara family that forces a girl's life to be sacrificed in the sake of gender. Being a woman is the sole justification for her murder. The majority of women still do not get to choose their own jobs. Society establishes regulations so that individuals can walk, speak, and demonstrate their abilities. Social norms keep Tara and Chandan apart, but their minds are never apart.

Siamese twins Tara and Chandan share a body with one another and walk on all threes. Their surgical separation was a result of Dr. Thakkar's immoral pursuit of a nursing facility site in the heart of Bangalore city, as well as the money and land it would require.

The surgical separation was necessary because Dr. Thakkar engaged in unethical practices in exchange for funds and property in the heart of Bangalore city, which he planned to use to build his own nursing facility. Due to a shortage of blood flow, he soon severed their surgically connected limbs and severed Chandan's two legs from his body. Dattani does not make Tara a safe place for women and girls to live their lives to the fullest.

REFERENCES :

1. Agarwal, Beena. Mahesh Dattani's Plays : A New Horizon in Indian Theatre. Jaipur : Book Enclave, 2008.
2. Chaudhuri, Asha Kothari. Mahesh Dattani An Introduction. New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2005. Print

3. Das, Sangeeta. "Identity Crisis of Women in Tara". The Common Wealth Review, Vol.13, No.2, 51-59. Print
4. Das, Vijay Kumar. Form and Meaning in Mahesh Dattani's Plays. New Delhi: Penguin Publishers, 2000.
5. Dattani, Mahesh. Collected Plays. New Delhi: Penguin Publishers, 2000.
6. Dattani, Mahesh. Final Solutions and other Plays. Madras: Manas, 1994.
7. Dattani, Mahesh. Tara. New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1995.
8. Kimmel, Michaels. The Gendered Society. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
9. Kumar, Gajendra. "The Elements of Alienation and Death in Tara : A Psychoanalytic Study". The Dramatic World of Mahesh Dattani: A Critical Exploration. (ED.) Amar Nath Prasad. New Delhi : Sarup, 2009.
10. Manikrao, K.G. Gender Discrimination and Social Consciousness- Tara by Mahesh Dattani. Naikar, Basavaraj. "Tara: A Study in Gender Discrimination". Mahesh Dattani's Tara: A Critical Study. Ed. Santwana Haldar. Prestige, 2009. p.132.
11. Pal, Satyabrata. "The Statistics of Gender Bias". The Hindu. Tuesday, March 25, 2014. P.7. Prasad, G.J.V. "Terrifying Tara: The Angst of the Family". Mahesh Dattani's Plays: Critical Perspective. Ed. Angeli Multani. Pencraft International, 2007. p. 141.
12. Prasad, G.J.V. "Terrifying Tara! The Angst of the Family" Mahesh Dattani's Plays: Critical Perspective. (ED.) Angeli Multani. New Delhi : Pencraft International, 2007.
13. Rajan, Anish. "The Theme of Gender discrimination in Dattani's Tara". Mahesh Dattani: His Stagecraft in Indian Theatre. Ed. Vishvanath Bhat. Authorpress, 2013. p. 69.
14. Sharma, Dr. Jyoti. "Mahesh Dattani's Tara: Paradoxical Existence of Girl Child in Contemporary Indian Social Reality". The Criterion-An International Journal in English. Vol. 4 Issue-II. 2013, April.
15. Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. Harcourt Brace & Co., 1989. p.53. <http://www.nascentemissionn.com>