

GENDER INEQUITY IN MAHESH DATTANI'S TARA

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequity, contrary to popular belief, does not refer to disparity of female gender rather it is a social phenomenon that occurs when both the genders males as well as females are not treated equally by the society. Differences in genetics, psychology, or cultural norms may form the basis of such kind of treatment. Some of these distinctions tend to be socially constructed, whereas others appear to be empirically supported. Tara, a captivating play, raises concerns about a discoursed society that handles children born within the same womb in two distinct ways. The play explores the issue of gender discrimination, demonstrating preferential treatment towards male children in an ostensibly educated community. The play revolves around the separation of the conjoined twins, Chandan and Tara, who are born with three legs, with Tara having a better chance of surviving. The gender discrimination towards Tara is apparent when the third leg is offered to Chandan by altogether perverting a medical report. The play showcases the predicament towards the female and how she is subjugated by patriarchal culture. It also addresses the issue of cultural discrimination against women in an elaborate and systematic manner. Thus, Dattani's drama depicts the harsh reality of life. The aim of this paper is to bring to forefront how Tara is discriminated on the bases of socially constructed gender by the various characters in the play.

Keywords: Gender Discrimination, Female, Constructed, Patriarchal, Womb, Predicament.

Introduction

As a 19th century Indian dramatist, Mahesh Dattani's plays address various difficulties that Indian society has encountered over time, and Tara is no exception. Tara, being a girl, is subjected to more cruelty and prejudice from her mother than her brother, Chandan. Mahesh Dattani has also depicts the unusual reality of a woman playing a secondary role to a male in this drama. Tara gives us a window into modern civilization, which professes to be open and progressive in thinking and deed. It discusses contemporary male chauvinism and the harsh reality of women playing second fiddle to men. The drama, Tara, is dominated by themes of gender discrimination. Dattani elaborates and comprehensively addresses the issue of cultural discriminatory practices against women in the play, in which the female is dispossessed and overlooked by patriarchal society, remaining only a carer for household chores, children, husband, and other domestic constraints and assignments of fatigue. As a result, Dattani's drama depicts the harsh realities of existence and calls the world's attention to the pressing demands of the day.

Dattani communicates a painful truth about child maltreatment in Indian society throughout the performance. Every girl kid born into an Indian family is exploited in some way. Tara is a typical female character who has been extensively praised and interpreted in various ways based on gender and race. In his work, Dattani bluntly expresses the exploitation of Indian women, since it is quite obvious in the way that favors are intentionally or unintentionally bestowed on the son in Indian homes. Dattani's Tara explores the problem of a Siamese twin by revealing all the forbidden issues from beneath the hat and putting them on the stage for the world to see. In light of the playwright's foresight, reviewers have stated that writers who have had the fortitude to address such vexing subjects and bring them to light should be commended. Tara is Dattani's most moving three-act theater play. It tells the story of Tara and Chandan who are Conjoined twins. The drama switches back and forth between past and current happenings. They have been actually connected at the chest and had three legs. Tara had a better chance of making

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it through the third leg but it was provided to Chandan although preventing a medical report that reflects gender discrimination. Mrs. Bharati Patel, her mother and her politically prominent father made the decision to give Chandan the third leg. Mr. Patel had nothing to do with this wrongdoing. The operation took place in Bombay. Tara is thus a victim of patriarchal society's sex prejudice. It is an unfortunate fact that patriarchy has always structured and ruled a woman's life since ancient times. Dattani appears to imply that the power of wealth frequently joins hands with the force of patriarchy to oppress and subjugate women in our culture. Tara's grandfather uses his political and financial clout to persuade the doctor to give Chandan the third leg rather than Tara. In a crucial way, the patriarchal society, materialism, and political influence all join forces against the survival of a girl.

Tara is a biting reflection on gender discrimination and the forces of society apathy towards injustices committed against even a female infant under the guise of gender dualism. As a result, it is not only a story about gender identity or a medical phenomenon but also about how woman has been marginalized. It depicts how women have been marginalized to the point of distortion. 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 drama depicts how the demon of gender discrimination destroys all other familial relationships, and how socio-cultural myths and traditions govern constrain the conduct of life. Bharati's love for Tara is pure and unwavering, but as a woman, her maternal love is marginalized, and her subordination forces her to compromise her maternal love in order to meet social standards. Mother-daughter relationships are pushed to the margins by patriarchal values. Though maternity is a female experience, Adrienne Rich correctly observes that "the institution of motherhood is under masculine control, and the bodily situation of becoming a mother is disciplined by males. Women's entire lives are conditioned by the lovely motherhood thrust on them". (Adrienne Rich, p. 45).

The play also implies that the patriarchal societal structure prevents women from achieving financial security. Along with the tragic story of gender discrimination, the text of the play also contains a painful document of material discrimination against women. Because Bharati was her father's only child, he has left Tara and Chandan a house in Bangalore. Tara, on the other hand, is not included in the grandfather's financial legacy. Chandan is the beneficiary of a large inheritance. Tara is not just an expression of Dattani's theatrical art; it is also a realization of the complexities of human relationships in a culture where life is dictated by gender bias. The play's principal characters' lives are dominated by the horrors of imposed harmony and man's inborn enslavement to cultural inhibitions. The drama delves into and exposes the conventional Indian mentality, which has always chosen a boy child above a girl child. Discrimination, sexism, hypocrisy, and age-old myths are all investigated, resulting in a piece that both excites and shocks the audience. Every female child born in an Indian home is subjected to some form of exploitation, and she is acutely aware of it, as the privileges denied to them are intentionally or unconsciously extended to the son. Tara delves into and exposes the conventional Indian mindset, which has always chosen a boy child over a girl child throughout history. The drama explores the victory and failure of an Indian family dealing with the trauma of disability, which includes the father (Patel), mother (Bharati), and children (Tara and Chandan). Tara is discriminated on the bases of socially constructed gender by the various characters in the play.

Gender Disparity by Dr. Thakkar: Dr. Thakkar betrayed his divine profession by allowing himself to be bought by Bharati's father into participating in the odd act of leg amputation. He should have honoured his professionalism by criticizing the choice from the start, however by slashing Tara's leg, he effectively killed her. Tara may have had a protected, stable, safe and complete existence if he had made the right choices. Bharati's powerful and political father bribed the doctor with a parcel of property in Bangalore for his wicked behavior.

Gender Disparity by Bharti (Mother): The reality that Bharti favors Chandan during the procedure demonstrates that male self is prized in Indian society. It demonstrates that a woman is her own worst adversary. The mother favors the male child, reinforcing the cycle of unfairness. She later tries to relieve her guilt by expressing mother care and compassion for her daughter.

Mrs. Patel's decision leaves Tara paralyzed for the rest of her life, and her guilt is displayed periodically throughout the play. She attempts to make up for her bad judgment (regarding their daughter) by being too concerned about her. Her regret is so strong that she offers to donate her kidney to her daughter in order to extend her life for a few more years. During a conversation with her son, she says to him: "I plan to give her happiness. I mean to give her all the love and affection which I can live. It's what she... deserves. Love can make up for a lot". (P 80)

Gender Disparity by maternal Grandpa: Chandan and Tara's maternal grandpa was a powerful politician who was on the verge of becoming Chief Minister. The character of Bharati's father, who distributes all of his property and fortune to the male kid, exemplifies male dominance. He reinforced gender prejudice by not leaving a single Penny to Tara after his death.

Gender Disparity by Mr Patel (Father): Mr. Patel, a symbol of male chauvinism, permits Chandan to have more privileges while Tara is forced to work as a subaltern. The fact that all of the perks are offered to the son, deliberately or unconsciously, is evident from Patel's plans for Chandan's schooling and future career. Despite the fact that Tara is smarter, he consistently favors Chandan whenever it comes to providing him with further education abroad.

The relationship between Chandan and Tara debunks the idea that the play *Tara* is a protest against female subjugation. Tara and Chandan's brother and sister connection is a manifestation of the identity of distinct selves functioning together in the grand scheme of things. Chandan's psychopathic distress following Tara's death and his subsequent flight to London supports the thesis that male and female are not different entities symbolizing dominance and subordination in social order. Mahesh Dattani demonstrates how patriarchy and gender bias are wreaking havoc on women. To lay the foundation for a strong and unshakeable nation, healthy family construction is essential, as it is the brick in the nation's foundation. Furthermore, our first society is our family. If this early group or society is founded on prejudice and norms that are wrong, the nation, the wider society, will not be able to endure, prosper, or progress. Tara muses on the plight of women in the past, makes observations on their current position, dramatizes his understanding of who he holds accountable for their plight, and exhorts us to let go of our long-held biases in order to achieve peace and harmony in the home and society. In one of Mahesh Dattani's interviews with Laxmi Subramanian, he said: "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". Dattani dramatizes the metropolitan family's distress. In the play, there is a sense of dissatisfaction among the Patel family members. Mrs. Bharati Patel is suffering from hysteria, while Tara and Chandan have physical deformities. Between husband and wife, there is no familial harmony. Some unsolved mysteries put a gloomy pall over their existence. It has been claimed that this is a drama about the injustices committed in the name of gender identity creation - this hierarchization and role demarcation harms men and women equally. Dan suffers just as much as Tara from the unjust weight this places on him. (G J V Prasad, p. 141)

Conclusion

Tara isn't Chandan's tragedy, and it is not even Tara's. The sad events described in the play are similar to those that occur in everyone's life. Dattani uses society as a backdrop to present us with today's hot topics. Dattani transforms Tara into a juggler in his play, juggling relationships such as husband and wife, doctor and patient, son-in-law and father-in-law, parents and children, and brother and sister. Tara focuses on the father-daughter, mother-daughter, and grandfather-granddaughter relations. It's worth remembering that Dattani wrote his dramas to be seen and heard, not as fiction to be read on its own. As a result, Tara serves two purposes:

To expose the devotion of the modern schooling urban family to the traditional attitude of preferring anything manly. The bureaucratic society and the medical profession's ethical degeneration are being exposed in order to uncover the widespread corruption. Tara, the hapless girl who hasn't had as many possibilities as her brother, dies. Chandan tries to keep his remorse over Tara's death hidden. Dan apologizes to Tara at the end of the performance, describing his trauma and agony as follows:

"Forgive me, Tara, Forgive me,
For making it my tragedy"

In simple terms, Tara is more energetic and full of life, with lofty ambitions that have remained unfulfilled due to her handicap. Throughout the play, she harbors some sort of resentment at society. She appears to dislike the outer world, despite the fact that her world comprises solely of her parents and her brother, with whom she has always been close. The drama delves into the conventional Indian mindset, which has always chosen a boy child over a girl child. Mahesh Dattani has deftly addressed the issue of gender inequality. The goal of this play is to educate females about the importance of not favoring a male child over a female child. He encourages females to reflect on their life experiences. This play also teaches women many things, such as not being upset at their daughters' birth, not treating them with contempt, and not preventing them from reaching new heights in their lives.

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