

Familial Fascism: Treatment of Woman as Other-Sex in Mahesh Dattani's Tara

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ABSTRACT: The first Indian English playwright to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi award is Mahesh Dattani. The Byzantine complexities of the contemporary Indian family are already well known. He deals with countless issues in his plays, such as gender inequality, specifically dealing with the challenges encountered by the woman (other sex), LGBT studies, particularly abortion, feminism, and child mishandling. Dattani questioned Indian society's uncanny social system. *Tara* deals with the components of twins that are believed to be the two sides of the same coin. As reverberated by the multi-level set, the play addresses the tension between deceit and genuineness. In this play *Tara*, Dattani, as quoted by Simone de Beauvoir, attempts to bring about gender-based discrimination and how the male child was granted predilection over the female child in a middle Indian household, which gave the male upper hand. The critical division of two Siamese twins is dealt with by Dattani's *Tara*. It also deals with the idea that is still practiced by the Gujaratis of female infanticide. The family managed to influence the Siamese twins' mother and their grandparents in favor of the boy child over the girl child. *Tara* also reflects on class and societal concerns and common beliefs.

KEYWORDS : Gender, Other Sex, Female Infanticide, Discrimination, and Siamese twins.

INTRODUCTION

In Indian Writing in English, Mahesh Dattani is one of the celebrated playwrights. In 1998, he was the first English dramatist to receive the Sahitya Akademi award for his popular play *Final Solutions*. The ideas and themes of his play have intrigued the consideration of a multitude of not only Indian theatre readers and viewers but also the lovers of world literature. He is also taken secret problems of social inequality, including the plight of Homosexuals, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgender; gender discernment; child sex abuse; mistreatment of female children, and male chauvinism into the sunlit alley with the help of his plays. In the field of Indian drama in English, Dattani grasps a rather diverse status. He has an excellent innovative style that distinguishes him from other contemporary dramatists. Through the use of his dramas, the light on the lives of degraded people in society is lit.

Tara is Mahesh Dattani's third theatrical production, which is considered one of the beloved plays in English by lovers of Indian literature. The play, *Tara*, tackles in various customs the questioning of gender, but not inevitably by prosaic pigeon-holes of 'prejudice towards the girl child'. Dattani is worried about the problems with sex-based discrimination. *Tara* is an anecdotal story about a girl who wants to shine and glitter like her name, meaning shooting star. Dattani has magnificently brought the torture and torments faced by a girl in mediocre Indian society, the discovery of male chauvinism, and the unwillingness of the feminine gender to express themselves openly. In *Tara*, we can see the distinction between a male child and a female child.

GENDER INEQUALITY IN TARA

Throughout this play, Tara, Dattani tries to bring about gender-based discrimination and how in a middle-class Indian family the male child was granted predilection over the female child. As quoted by Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex*, Tara often treated by her family members partially and unequally.

Tara is portrayed by the male half of the conjoined twins, Chandan. Dattani has the strange authenticity of the woman playing the second scam to the man. Chandan and Tara are twins from Siamese, who are connected to their ribs. Combined, they both have only three legs. They can be segregated for life, but when the stress for the incomplete, partial operation occurs, the dilemma begins. Despite the knowledge of the doctors that the third leg will match Tara more comfortably than Chandan, her partner. Tara's family starts to conspire in favor of the male child. As a result, Chandan gets the second leg where she becomes paralyzed like her sister.

Although Bharathi, the mother of Siamese twins, is very worried about her daughter Tara's future, she is terrified of competing against her family's decision. She starts to realize that as she grows up, the future will not agree to take tara down. She starts to think about Tara and because of the burden of remorse she has, displays her motherly affection for her daughter. Tara may have lived well except for the family's decision to give her Siamese twin brother, Chandan, an extra leg. It is a surprising moment when the mother of Tara decides that a leg of the conjoined twins would be surgically separated from the twin, while Tara's survival was very likely.

The playwright blasts out an acrimonious truth about child violence in Indian culture in the play. Not just Tara, but almost any middle-class girl born into an Indian family suffers from some sort of violence. Tara is an emblematic female character who, based on gender difference and ethnic inequality, has been generally applauded and viewed accordingly. The playwright firmly describes the cruel treatment of Indian women in Tara it is very much visible as the so-called rights in the Indian middle-class families are knowingly or unconsciously advocated by the male child. In Lakshmi Subramanyam's *Muffled Voices*, Mahesh Dattani communicated, "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 the self and resultant angst" (*Tara* 129).

Women are never considered equivalent to men in male chauvinistic male culture. A male and a female infant are separated from each other. All the inadmissible themes have been revealed by Dattani. In *Tara*, the predicament of a conjoined Siamese twin is examined. *Tara* circles the twins, Chandan and Tara, around them. Tara leaves her entire life crippled by the critical surgical operation to spilled the conjoined twins. A sort of wounding in her heart was also generated by the family's decision to give the send feet to the boy child. The traditional

Indian middle-class psyche, which always favoured a boy to a girl child, is discovered and leaked by Tara. In a scientific context, the play discusses a different type of female infanticide. Intricately studied are biased sexual inequality, chauvinism, the meaning of two facades, and historically blinded theories. In the Indian English Drama, which deals with imperceptible social problems, Erin Mee praises Mahesh Dattani as “a young dramatist who can generate a new generation” (52). Erin perceives in her “A Note in the Play Indian Social Issues” that are the indistinguishable concern of Dattani in Tara. Further, Erin Mee includes:

Class and cultural problems are integrated into the script, and the clash between conventional and contemporary lifestyles and beliefs,' the play deals with the emotions of Siamese twins is also about the gendered self, about coming to terms with one's feminine side in a society that still prefers what' male 'is. (Mee56-57)

Mahesh Dattani is therapeutically free and focuses primarily on the Siamese twins' “sensitive emotional separation” rather than their surgical separation. In Sachindananda Mohanty's interview, Dattani revealed:

I've taken medical liberties over here because Siamese twins are invariable of the same-sex and are surgically split at birth. Tara's for a boy and a child, Siamese twins. For their life, it was necessary and the play deals with their emotional separation. Tara's play is also a metaphor for the male-female entities that are conjoined and divided and the male preference granted over the female. (134)

The playwright continues to examine his art with Tara, and formerly with his strict issues of gender bias, identity struggle, self-identification, and the crack in the bond between the families. While in the play there are many ‘freaky’ elements, it continues to be one of the cultures that deals in two conflicting directions with the children in the same womb. The sardonic reality is the victim's own mother is carrying out the injustice. It is the mindset of most rural Indian women whose favouritism to the male child makes the game more distressing and implicitly advises that women, not men, are the only hurdles that continue to shackle women's rights with inequality.

Not only is Tara the story of Tara, the play's heroine, but it is the story of a girl born into an Indian middle-class household. If the girl is bodily or mentally disabled, the conditions get exacerbated and turn shoddier. The play is the best example in Indian Society of female infanticide and child abuse of girls. A certain kind of mistreatment and abuse is suffered by many baby girls born in Indian middle-class families. In the viewpoint of Dattani, Tara modeled loosely on the play *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams, which is close to the biography of Williams. In the case of Mrs. Bharathi Patel, who resembles Williams's mum, Tara's father Patel belongs to a middle-class family man as well as Williams' father. The Patels also quarreled over a woman's role in William's household.

Chandan, Tara's lucky brother, wants to document his anguish over his sister's childhood resentment in the drama. In her conversation with Chandan, Tara's warm friendship with Chandan and inner pain is conveyed. She says: "Maybe we still are. Like we've always been, inseparable. The way we started life. Two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb. Till we were forced out... and separated" (Tara 325).

Tara explores the iconic middle-class Indian mentality as well as leaks it which favours a boy child to a girl over the years. In his interview with Lakshmi Subramanya, Dattani clearly communicates this middle-class Indian mentality:

I emphasize the cultural focus on masculinity and how it contrasts with all the characters. The kin, the neighbour's grandfather, are both in that way in conflict with their own sensibilities, as compared to cultural sensibilities they might have subscribed to consciously or unknowingly. (129)

Mrs. Patel's decision leaves Tara crippled for life, and it is noted that the remorse of Mrs. Patel is repeatedly exposed in the play. Through her unnecessary consideration for her, she attempts to compensate for this unfortunate decision (about their daughter). Her sense of guilt is so overwhelming that she decides to donate her daughter's kidney so she can live for a few more years. She tells him during the conversation with her son: "I plan to give her happiness." I say, I want to give her all the love and attention I can live with. This is what she ...deserves. Heart will make up for a great deal (Tara 349). The trilling conversation between Bharathi, Tara's mother, and her neighbor Roopa shows that for the sake of Tara's happiness, the mother is still willing to do anything:

"You can watch whatever you want! Just be my Tara's friend". Bharati's internal turmoil is so intense that it often comes out in the open in her relationship with her husband. She is always complaining about something or the other. Her father's wealth is always a bone of contention between Mrs. Patel and her husband. Mrs. Patel is often seen complaining to her children about their father and especially about his attitude towards their grandfather. "Your father doesn't want us to use them. He doesn't want us to use any of your grandfather's things [like tumblers and plates]" (Tara 325).

Mr. Patel is also aware of the rudeness that Bharathi, through the riches of her father, heaped upon him as a force of economic influence against him. Despite the female members being older than the male, the senior male family members take all the influential decisions. Bharathi, who is senior and older, who was not given as much preference as the man, maybe the perfect example. Among the three senior members of the household, Bharathi's father is an eminent politician and the oldest. He was the one who ruled on the operation issue. He was the one who decided that Chandan should be given the conjoined second leg. Instead of having a solid medical decision of operating the leg with Tara, he also bribed Doctor Thakkar to help in favour of Chandan, he peddled out his own self for the lure of satisfying his ambition.

Bharathi tries her best to stop the news from being spread by Roopa, especially to Tara. Bharathi is the only Patel who displays a great deal of affection for Tara and advises, "Love can make up for a great deal" (349). Bharathi proceeds to knit sweat during the play for her crippled love Tara, during which Chandan supports his mother. As Patel joins, he sets forth his gender identity theories. He told, as accuses Bharathi of purposely expressing more affection to Tara than to Chandan. Dattani raises several socio-equal questions in this scene, such as why Chandan is not entitled to knit; why Tara does not attend office; why the baby girls are killed in the country; why the boys have been given so much preference over the girls, and why multiple gender-discriminatory differences are also asked.

Tara reveals the patriarchal system of society as a complex and strongly ingrained system. Several problems are responsible for the predilection of boys to girls. These challenges are not only related to economic interests, but also social and religious stability. In *Tara*, the Patel family is politically and economically holistic.

Economically, Tara is not a hardship for them. Due to the patriarchal aspect of society, Chandan is also favoured over Tara. Tara is captivating in that it uses a very unlikely freak case to lay open the injustices done to the girl child in the traditional Indian household, a play that reflects on a culture that treats the children who share the womb differently. And the stereotype arrives, as usual, in a friendly grab that hides the ugly facts. On the face of it, the Patels look like the perfect parents who have survived because of their devoted parents, unique as Tara and Chandan need to survive. Yet more items have to be disclosed. (Chaudhari 38)

Men are granted greater rank than women based on the positions allocated to men and women. Patel keeps on having his son Chandan do business with him. But he expects Tara, on the other hand, to be supportive to her mother in her domestic work. This gender-based detachment from social employment is the most dangerous root cause of gender discrimination. By the essence of *Tara* and Chandan, Dattani deconstructs this injustice of social domestication. Chandan wants to become a novelist, while Tara, like her aunt, wants to design her career. It was only because of the intervention of Bharathi and her father during the procedure that the second leg, which could well fit Tara, was given to Chandan.

With Chandan, the leg only lasted for a few days. Had it been given to Tara; she would have been helped in her whole life. She was shocked when this letter was revealed to her. In certain places, the author reveals Chandan's guilty conscience. He apologizes to Tara in several ways for obtaining the second leg that should have matched his sister well. Dattani also shows, through Chandan's character, that not every male is corrupt and evil. When she learns that her mother Bharathi is interested in the story of her prejudiced separation from Chandan, Tara dies because of the shock. In the play, Chandan emotionally bears this pain. We will find the challenges, turmoils, and difficulties faced by Tara in the play, becoming a scapegoat of 'Other Sex' by her intimate circle, emotionally, psychologically, physically, and even medically.

CONCLUSION

Tara is a play that achieves its dramatic function effectively. In the world of male chauvinism, it brings out the genuineness and emotion of a female to encourage her to resolve. She was a happy and excellent light, close to the world *Tara*, meaning a star. For her kin, she is a prime source of cheerfulness. For *Tara*, also *Dan*, the name adopted by *Chandan*, may not have has a full life. To enhance the immediate future of *Chandan*, the father of the two also bends downwards. When the dilemma of preference between a male and a female occurs, the gender crisis becomes a cord in which a female is shackled. The play reveals the odd prejudice against women that flinches when the baby is an embryo even from the womb of the mother. In our culture, female infanticide has become normal. A girl is seen as a liability by the male-controlled Indian culture. Dattani has skillfully pulled out the sexism against a female child (Other-Sex) in this play.

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