

## Prejudice against Women in Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara*

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### Abstract

Patriarchy society is still chaining the women lives; they are not free to express themselves in society. Orthodox minded people controlling women from her birth till her last breath. Women fate is decided by male members of her family. Even her future is also controlled by male members. There is no room for any girl child to live according to her wish. There is no freedom of choice for women to get an education or to make a career of her own everything is dominated or hold by men. The condition of women is worse even in an educated urban family. They are sufferer creature in the hands of men of the family. The question of survival a girl child without injustice is unthinkable. The present society is also disagreeing with giving property rights to women. Their mentality is blocked with age old traditions. Mahesh Dattani's Play questions the prejudice against women every nook and corner of life. He shows us the status of women still not yet changed in the society.

**Key Words:** Orthodox, education, career, survival, property rights, prejudices.

### Introduction

The Indian English drama has particular articulate to the unspoken section of our society. It is a vehicle to expose the mean, hostile, and forlorn aspects of life. Drama is deemed to be the nearly all operative and strong genre in the world literature. The birth of Indian drama emphasizes that it is an essential division of our society and culture. Earlier the themes of drama were concentrated on the religious convictions, philosophical approaches and the political changes of the country. Later on, there came the issues connected to contemporary politics, social and economic problems, art, human life, etc. The prevailing Indian drama concentrates on the number of side issues and the heartfelt verve problems. Some of the modern drama writers include Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan, etc.

Here I am talking about the Mahesh Dattani who stands out among his contemporary drama writers because of his themes like criminality of the politicians, gay characters,

communal hatred, misbeliefs about dancers, etc. Mahesh Dattani is one of India's best and most serious contemporary playwrights, writing in English. He is the first playwright in English to be honoured with the "Sahitya Akademi Award". About Dattani's writing style, R.K.Dhawan says, "very recently Indian English drama has shot into prominence. Younger writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan, have infused new life into this branch of writing." (24)

Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions and Other Plays* won the Sahitya Akademi Award in the year 1998. 'Collected Plays' contains eight plays: *Seven Steps Around the Fire, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, Do the Needful, Final Solutions, Bravely Fought the Queen, Tara, Dance Like a Man and Where There is a Will*. In his preface to "Collected Plays", Dattani points out: "I am certain that my plays are a true reflection of my time, place and socio-economic background." Dattani has written his plays about contemporary reality that "one encounters in the metropolis of our country." He explicitly writes about hijras, homosexuality and politics in modern society. But the Indian audience is still not so unconventional so Dattani's plays make him unacceptable to the conservative Indian audience. But he tries to win over this by his "forceful dialogues and deep insight into human nature." His plays are a mirror of contemporary Indian society in certain respects. "The struggle for individual human beings for a space in the society is uppermost in his mind and therefore, he makes an attempt in his plays to create this "space" for "them". Dattani himself explains his themes, thematically; I talk about the areas where the individual feels excluded. My plays are about such people who are striving to expand this space." He further says: "They live on the fringes of society and are not looking for acceptance, but are struggling to grab as much fringe-space for themselves as they can."

In the sphere of Indian English drama, Dattani's plays have emerged as 'fresh arrivals'. His plays represent honestly tribulations and occasionally affect controversy. Dattani's plays are "about the marginalized sections of our society: minorities, women, gays and hijras". They expose the cruelty of our private thoughts and the hypocrisy of our public morals. His work expresses his political beliefs without being instructive or revolting. His plays examine the all kinds of discrimination, including religious prejudice, gender discrimination and homosexuality. The subject of recognition and power struggles, run right through all his plays. His plays not only raise the question of the gender issues and the place is given to women in a patriarchal society, but also the convention with gender biases and prejudices which tranquil disturb the lives of many girl-children even among educated, urban families.

Tara is a play about the girl child which has its limitation by her parents. The story of the play is narrated by male character Chandan, who is the twin brother of Tara. He is expressing the life events of Tara in which he also part of it. Tara is born in the educated urban family, but her life is not very different from a girl child, who is born in not well condition families. Her fate is decided by her parents, who are irresponsible, which is led to her death. Because of she is a girl; her fate is dominated by her parents.

Tara is a play which focuses theme on prejudice against women in family and society. Here, women characters are dominated by male characters. Tara is a girl born in educated urban, family, but her suffering is not very different from a girl, who is born in not so well condition families. In this play, Tara has a twin brother, who is getting more favours from parents than Tara. The male child always gets good facilitates and opportunities either from society and family contrast to a girl child.

The author has skillfully related the question of women's career with the bigger and more important issue of female foeticide and upbringing of girls. Mr.Patel who is Tara's father, who has more dreams for Chandan, his male child than for Tara. He always wanted his male child should get good quality of education and life. He has a high dream for Chandan. Throughout the play, we see Mr.Patel and Maternal Grandfather giving supports to Chandan only.

Tara, the central character of the play, has been a victim of the exploitation by the family. She is high-spirited, dreamer, and jovial character in the play. She has high aspiration which she cannot accomplish because of her handicapped condition. She is an energetic girl who wants to twinkle and shine, just like her name. But she does not get enough opportunities and life, as her brother gets, eventually dies at the end of play at a young age.

Today's modern world education is an important foundation for every human being to lead a satisfied life. In Indian society, education is deprived to a girl child. Every parent tries to get a high education for male child only. In the play, Mr.Patel is also worrying about only Chandan's education. Mr.Patel who was irritated to see Chandan helping his mother in knitting because he has a tradition attitude, it considers this work meant for girls only, not for boys.

Patel: Chandan is going to study further and he will go abroad for his higher studies.

Bharati: And Tara? (CP 352)

These lines illustrate that Mr.Patel concern about Chandan. Bharati, the wife of Patel, was dismayed to see that her husband had no such plan for Tara. Mr.Patel has conventional mind set which makes him abandon Tara. Even Tara is physically not fit, which is another reason to ignore.

On another, the occasion also, Patel indicates that Chandan would go abroad. He has future plans for Chandan. He is doing partiality between Tara and Chandan.

Patel: ....I have plans for him. Your Praful uncle will help him get into a good university in England. I know he can get a scholarship on his own if he tries. But Praful will take care of the... special requirements for him. With a solid education, you just can't fail. Not to say that Chandan will have to work for a living. Your grandfather has left all his

wealth to you. Since your mother was his only child, you and Tara inherit their home in Bangalore. (CP 360)

This further goes to show that Patel had made arrangements for Chandan's education and career. He said with satisfaction that Chandan would not have any financial problem since a good education would enable him to earn his livelihood. But he did not think or dream in this way about Tara. Mr. Patel is always paying no heed to Tara's future prospects. In another scene, Dan recollects a conversation Chandan had with his mother about Tara's career.

Bharati: I wish your father would pay more attention to Tara.

Bharati: Don't tell me about your father. He is more worried about your career than hers. (CP348)

Bharati carried the impression that her husband did not care for Tara's career, which she thought was necessary for women to get an honourable position in the society. Bharati wanted more than anyone else that Tara must have a career for herself. She was critical of her husband who she thought did not pay any attention to Tara. Bharati complained again that her husband had a lot of future plans for Chandan, but none for Tara. We don't see Mr. Patel. Showing love and care towards Tara, the way Bharati is doing to her daughter, Mr. Patel never does and thinks about Tara's happiness. Bharati had to say with a greater force about Tara's future condition in half-hearted voice.

Bharati: 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. Thirty is unthinkable. And what about forty and fifty! Oh God! (CP349)

Even we can see that maternal grandfather has never cared for Tara. When Chandan says to his mother that she should stop worrying about Tara's career since their grandfather's trust will leave sufficient money for both of them, but he does not know that Tara's name does not appear anywhere in his grandfather's will. Patel informs Chandan that his grandfather has left a lot of money for him, but not for Tara. Maternal grandfather is a staunch follower of traditional, which made him not give any inheritance property to a girl child. The older people believe that a girl can't represent family name and the property should transfer to a male child who is able to carry the family name to next generation. This of the kind frame of mind still exists in Indian society.

Patel never gave a hand to make Tara economically independent and official responsibility is never put on her shoulder. Dan recollected that his father once suggested that he should go to his office with him. He did not want Tara should also go with Chandan. Tara was stunned to find that her father was making a gender distinction. In order to protest against her father's view, she said to Roopa the following lines.

Tara: The men in the house were deciding on whether they were going to go hunting while the women looked after the cave. (CP328)

Tara said sarcastically that her father was still primitive in his views. Like cave man, he wanted men to go hunting to find food and women to remain at home to cook and wash. Tara wanted to work with men in all the departments of life. She disagrees with idea that women should stay within the four walls of the house to do the household chores “Man for the field, women for the hearth.” But Patel wanted his son to make his career while the daughter he thinks had no necessity of it. He holds the orthodox view that women were to remain, only housewives, doing household chores, such as cooking food, washing clothes, etc.

In another scene, we see Roopa is open up the blind custom among Patels, which she reveals to the Tara. Bharati knew that there was an innate repugnance among Patels against girls, as Roopa unveiled in front of everyone.

Roopa: 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.

Tara: In milk?

Roopa: So when people asked about how the baby died, they could say that she choked while drinking her milk. (CP349)

This scene shows still people following blind customs treating towards a girl child in a heinous way in society. Even modern people also unhappy with girl child they disgust with it. They don't value girl child with same proportion, the way do with the male child.

In this play, we also come across a scene where the cruelty of grandfather is revealed. Tara's present bad condition was done by her maternal grandfather's decision which made her suffer till now. This one is secret is revealed by Mr.Patel to his both children. He told his children that his wife and her father together asked the Doctor to give the third leg that the twins had at the time of their birth to Chandan, though that leg was getting blood supply from Tara. These instructions were given to the doctor against medical ethics because “A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl...The chances were slightly better than the leg would survive.....on the girl.” But the MLA father of Bharati used his political influence to help the doctor acquire three acres of prime land. It was a bribe that he had given to the doctor to do the unethical act of transferring the third leg to Chandan. But Chandan could have two legs only for two days. It had to be amputated. This act shows that people prefer the male child over girl child.

Patel and maternal grandfather are joining the hands for discriminating and weakening Tara because she is a girl. They didn't support her since her birth till her last breath. Tara is treated badly male members of her family who are orthodox mentality.

## **Conclusion**

Tara is an alluring play that questions the role of a society that treats the children of the same womb in two different ways. It is also present us how patriarchal society prejudice against women in many ways. Till now every girl child born in an Indian family suffers from some kind of exploitation and if there is a boy child in the family, the mistreatment is very much visible as consciously or unconsciously all the privileges are offered to the son.

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