

Gender Discrimination In Mahesh Dattani's Play *Tara*

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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.

Mahesh Dattani is one of India's best most serious contemporary play wrights, writing in English. He is the first playwright in English to be honoured with the '**Sahitya Academy Award**'. Before entering the world of theatre, he worked as a copy writer in an advertising firm. Dattani's plays are about the marginalized sections of our society: minorities, women, gays and hijras (eunuch). They expose the violence of our private thoughts, and the hypocrisy of our public morals. His plays question all kinds of discrimination, including religious prejudice, gender discrimination and homosexuality. The subjects of recognition and power struggles, run right through all the plays. His plays not only focuses gender issues and the space allotted to women in a patriarchal society but also they deal with gender biases and prejudices which still affect the lives of many girl-children even amongst educated, urban families.

Gender Discrimination in India is considered to be the discriminatory attitude towards men and women have existed for generation and affect the lives of both genders. Although the constitution of India has granted men and women equal rights, gender disparity still remains. Gender discrimination violates human rights. These are mostly seen in family and sharing among sisters and brothers. Due to a lack of object research on gender discrimination against men, it is perceived that it is only women who are suffering. Women are perceived to be disadvantaged at work. Indian laws on Rape, Dowry and Adultery have women's safety at heart, but these highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate. The plays of Mahesh Dattani shows life of common men of India. Family construction in India is different. Dattani shows power of male dominant in the Indian society. Here in India, importance of male and female is different. Women's place is in the kitchen and home affairs and men's place is the outside world. It means men is free to do whatever he like. But women can't do anything without the prior permission of her husband. It means, Dattani shows that discrimination of gender is the result of evil construction of

society. Gender discrimination is when people of either gender are treated unfairly within society because of their gender. Among the various plays of Dattani, I have selected *Tara* for the study of Gender Discrimination.

Dattani's play *Tara* revolves around the family of Mr. Patel. It is related with the life of congenial twins, one girl and one boy who are joined together at the hip. Chandan and Tara are to be separated through a surgical operation which will cause danger to one of them. Their mother Bharati insists on giving the third leg which was common to them, to Chandan so that he may lead a healthy life. Mr. Patel remains a mute witness to the injustice imparted to their daughter. But the operation leaves Chandan with a slight limp and Tara crippled. Thus it turns out to be futile for both children. Bharati is shocked and goes out of her senses and tries to repay Tara with all her love and affection. Patel becomes violent and aggressive. He ignores the identity of Tara and does not care for the consequences involving the risk of life of Tara. It directly indicates the gender discrimination prevalent in society.

The most striking part in the play is that Tara is discriminated by her mother who herself is a woman. Dattani brings out the root of gender discrimination by making the woman, the destroyer of another woman's life. Though Bharati's father also plays part in this crime, it is Bharati who has to bear the brunt of blame ultimately. She might have done it also because of the huge fortune of her father, which he wanted to be inherited by Chandan, his only grandson. We see the purpose of crime lying hidden in the patriarchal system in our society, where women are considered inferior to men.

Tara, who is the innocent victim of the society's injustice has to carry the burden of being physical disabled all through her life. She secretly desire for two legs, when she says:

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

Chandan : Two Jaipur legs?

Tara : No, silly, the real ones. (Tara, 266)

she thinks that it is only her mother who strongly loves her same how, Tara begins to assume that her father hates her. But she appears to be a bold girl, who cheerfully faces her critics and opponents. Her brother Chandan always support throughout her life.

A patriarchal society is perfectly shown in *Tara* where the major decisions are made by the male members. In such a society, a woman's identity is defined by others in terms of her relationship with men. Patel, the head of the family is very concerned about the future of this son, Chandan. He has great plans for Chandan and want him to join college, whereas he does not speak about any plans for Tara. Patel wants Chandan to accompany him to his office. He wants Chandan to be bold and outgoing. He gets furious when he finds Chandan helping his mother with her knitting. He rebukes Bharati for making his sin do something considered to be feminine. It is visible in these line :

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 dsappointed in you. From now on you are coming to the office with me. I can't see you rotting at home!” (Tara, 256)**

The relation of Bharati and Tara, mother and daughter needs specific mention. Bharati's inner self is divided for double role performance as a mother and a woman. The fractured images of her inner self cast it shadows in her love for Tara. Her guilty conscience makes her shower love on Tara. She is always very concerned and worried about Tara and her future. In another context she reveals her inner thoughts to Chandan about Tara: **“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!” (Tara, 254)**

It is only Bharati who has plans for Tara. It might be her guilty conscience which causes her to make secure her daughter's life she says: **“I plan for her happiness. I mean to give her all the love and affection which I can give. It's what she deserves”. (Tara, 255)**

Patel does not seem happy about the way Bharati treats her daughter. Accordingly to him she treats Tara, **“as if she is made of glass”. (Tara, 257)**

Bharati's mental trauma makes her to go out of her senses and she breaks down finally. When Tara comes back to her home after kidney transplant, is depressed to hear about her mother's illness. She feels that only her mother loves her and she has lost it forever.

Through the character of Tara, Dattani has very deftly revealed the theme of gender discrimination in the play. The social norms, economic standards and cultural factors have been responsible for the injustice against the girl child. All these factors combine to create the social system in which the girl child has to live and die. Here Dattani gives a message to readers that women should be given equal opportunities to develop their potential. People should understand that a complete life is possible only when one learned the importance of their both aspects, masculine and feminine. Then they will able to realize a world full of possibilities.

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