

## GENDER MARGINALISATION IN MAHESH DATTANI'S TARA

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### Abstract

*Mahesh Dattani is one of the most prominent playwrights in India. He deals with all the problems prevalent in the society. With his unique theatrical techniques, he portrays society in different lights. Tara is a play about the injustice done to a girl Tara. It is a play about gender inequality, subjugation of women and the marginalisation of women by women. It also depicts the mother-daughter relationship. In a patriarchal society, women face not only gender marginalisation but also material marginalisation. Women's life is structured and governed by men.*

**Keywords:** *Injustice to women, subjugation, marginalisation, gender, material, mother-daughter relationship*

Mahesh Dattani is one of the most prominent playwrights in India. He was awarded Sahitya Akademy Award. His plays portray society in a different light. His multilevel stage technique is unique to depict the psychological elements. He also shifts the story between past and present using his unique stage techniques.

*Tara* is one of the most tragic plays Mahesh Dattani. It is the three-act play about Siamese twins Tara and Chandan. The play shifts between past and presents. The stage is divided into multi-levels which is the unique theatrical technique of Mahesh Dattani. The whole play is seen through the eyes of Dan. He is the narrator of the play, organiser of the action and also the participant in the play. It moves from his memory.

Dan is the second name of Chandan. He has changed his name Chandan to Dan to free himself from the burden of injustice done to Tara, his sister. He goes to London and tries his hand at writing. He cuts off his relation with others. He tries to live in the new world. The idea that he is responsible for pathetic position of Tara constantly haunts his inner consciousness. She is another half of him. She is the separated self of him. A sense of guilt grips his conscience. Erin Mee aptly puts, "Tara and Chandan are two sides of same self." (CP: 320)

Dan is likely to write a two-act play titled *Twinkle Tara*. But, he can't proceed with writing except the publication details. As the play begins, Chandan and Tara walk on the stage. They both limp but on different legs. Bharati offers milk to Tara saying that she has lost half a pound weight in one week. She shows special love and affection towards Tara but her husband Patel shows equal love on both Tara and Chandan. At the end of the second act, Tara collapses with the failure of health and Dan reads his scripts.

(Reads aloud) Bharati sobs. Patel brings in the revived Tara. Patel picks up the phone and dials the hospital. The act ends with the explosive opening of Brahms 'First concerto'. (CP: 354)

Chandan and Tara are Siamese twins. But they don't resemble each other. They are separated after three months of their birth. They were conjoined from the chest and had only three legs. During the separation, the doctor suggests that the third leg will have a better chance of survival with Tara. But ignoring the medical report, Mr. Bharati Patel with the political influence of his father silences Mr. Patel and decides to give the third leg to Chandan. The surgery was done in Bombay. Thus, Tara is done injustice. She is the victim of gender discrimination. In a patriarchal society, women's life is always structured and governed by men. With political and financial power, women are more suppressed in the

society. Patriarchy, capitalism and political power make a great deal of injustice even against the existence of a girl. *Tara* centers on the emotional separation that grows between two conjoined twins following the discovery that their physical separation manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favour the boy (Chandan) over the girl (Tara). Tara, a feisty girl who isn't given the opportunities given to her brother (although she may be smarter) eventually wastes away dies. Chandan escapes to London, changes his name to Dan, and attempts to repress the guilt he feels over his sister's death by living without a personal history.

In a patriarchal society, not only men but also women subjugate women, do injustice to women Bharati's love for Tara is pure, unceasing. But, her love as a mother is marginalised and compelled by social expectation. The partial society pushes a mother-daughter relationship on a periphery.

Though motherhood is the experience of women, the institution of motherhood is under male control, and the physical situation of becoming a mother is disciplined by males. This glorious motherhood is imposed on women condition her entire life.

Bharati's excessive love for Tara is the result of her past guilt. She, along with her father did a great injustice to Tara. Now, she wants to give more love, affection, and care. So, she decides to give her kidney to Tara even though there is another donor available. She keeps on struggling to construct her maternal love until she undergoes mental breakdown. She gets hospitalised. Tara wants to see her, but Mr. Patel refuses her to see. So, Tara begins to hate her father. Hence, Mr. Patel discloses the truth before Tara and Chandan.

Tara is revelatory in nature. Dan feels the pressure of the past. He is weighed down with the pressurable tension resulting from deeds. They are of his mother and grandfather. At the time of the gruesome decision of giving the third leg to Chandan, the doctors opined that chances of survival of leg were more with Tara than Chandan. Gender hierarchisation comes in the science. Bharati and her politically powerful father without talking Mr. Patel in confidence decided to give the third leg to Chandan. The doctor was persuaded by giving some acres of land in Bangalore by Bharati's MLA father. As Patel explains "A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl." (CP: 378)

The play shows how even the scientific developments are used to subjugate women. In fact, they are not the technology but human ideology that subjugates women. Mahesh Dattani shows how women are oppressed under the clutch of patriarchy and gender bias. He also indicates that the patriarchal society deprives women of gaining economical stability. Along with the gender discrimination, a kind of material discrimination is also found against women throughout the play. Since Bharati was the only child of her father, he has bequeathed Tara and Chandan with a house in Bangalore. However, Tara is excluded from the bequest of money while Chandan inherits a lot from his grandfather.

Thus, it is a play about the injustice done in the name of construction of gender identities – this hierarchisation and demarcation of roles do as much harm to men as to women. Dan carries as much harm of the unfair burden this imposes as Tara.

## References

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