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## Gender concerns in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*

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### Abstract

Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* explores a surprising account of gender issues informed by preconception and inequality that occurs in Indian society against the girl child. This research paper makes use of Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara*, which elaborates on the concept of social problems such as gender discrimination, sorrow, and melancholy, which are experienced by both men and women in equal estimate. Gender bias, injustice done on the basis of gender, and priority for male children in Indian society are matters that are the focus of this research paper. The play *Tara* dictates the emotional and physical separation of conjoined twins. It represents the society's deep-rooted patriarchal system. The aim of this article is to review and study the play's issue of the female condition in society. Chandan is a boy, which is why he is preferred to Tara, instead of the truth that Bharati is Tara's mother. She ruins her daughter's life and, in the end, suffers as a result of her cruel manners. Thakkar is a doctor who makes a mistake in his ability as a doctor and a technophile. Tara's father and Bharati corrupted him with a piece of land in exchange for Tara's death.

**Keyword:** Gender, Discrimination, Unethical, Conjoined, Twins.

### Introduction

Mahesh Dattani is a director of several movies, which are *Dance Like a Man*, *Morning Raga*, and so on. For his plays, he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1998. He is one of the best-known playwrights in Indian English literature. At present time, he lives in Bengaluru, India. It aroused the interest of many readers and filmmakers because of the themes of his plays. The problems faced by women and transgender as well as discrimination against homosexuals and child sex abuse are some of the subjects that he has tried to bring to light through his dramatic works.

Gender is a relatively new way of approaching men and women. According to gender theories, patriarchy has an effect on the lives of those who fall under its surroundings. Mahesh Dattani has indicated the patriarchal habits of men who assume themselves as the head of the family. It was impossible for these family members, especially women and young men, to gain

freedom. The problems that young men and women face within their own families are explained in the play *Tara*. Mahesh Dattani has emphasized social issues and topics like child sexual abuse, incest, and transgender women's psychological troubles throughout his plays.

This research paper presents the following research objectives;

It depicts class distinction in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*.

It elaborates on gender issues and women's place in a patriarchal society, as explained in the play.

Gender studies and feminist theories have historically modeled the concept of gender and feminist ideology. As a result, gender theories owe a deal to the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. Simone de Beauvoir explored femininity as a gender in historically constituted social structures. She demonstrates the same as others. The concept of gender is the most thriving notion in the world. It is used in a variety of ways to depict gender roles, gender disparities, and bias against women. Gender is inextricably linked to other social structures, including class, race, ethnic origin, generation, and disability.

The treatment of patriarchy and gender issues can be seen in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*. Mahesh Dattani's dramas have variety, and their themes are of contemporary interest. The play gets in its shocking intensity as Dattani makes his female protagonist undergo this discrimination even before she is born while she is still in her mother's womb. *Tara* deals with the tale of two conjoined

twins separated at birth involving a complex surgery by Doctor Thakkar. Both the twins have only one leg each. A scan showed that Tara provided a main part of the blood supply to the third leg, and the chances of the survival of the third leg on the girl were much better than that on Chandan. There was a meeting arranged between Tara's mother and Doctor Thakkar, and grandfather where it was decided they would give both legs to the boy. This decision will provide a robust and good life to the boy at the cost of permanently disabling the girl child. It shows a male-dominated Indian society where people give more importance to a male child than to a female child.

The sorrowful and forcible separation between the twins is made to continue throughout the play. Chandan and Tara are discriminated against by each other by their grandfather, mother, and father. Chandan says:

"Like we've always been Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives  
And one body in one comfortable womb.  
Till we are forced out .....And  
Separated."(59)

In Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*, we find that Tara is always defined and differentiated in relation to Chandan but never in relation to herself. Mahesh Dattani has said, "Tara is a play about the gendered self, about coming to terms with the feminine side of oneself in a world that always favors what 'male' is." Mahesh Dattani mentioned in one of his interviews with Lakshmi Subramanyam:

"I see Tara as a play about the male self and the female self. The male self-being

Preferred in all cultures. The play is about the separation of self and the resultant. Against".(91)

Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara* suggests that gender discrimination brings disaster to humanity. In the play *Tara*, both genders get into trouble due to gender differences in the Patel family. This play depicts to us that patriarchy is multi-layered and deeply rooted in our collective consciousness and has entangled in the social fabric of our so-called modern society. The priority of the male child is not simply due to the economic factors. But in reality, many other factors also make their significant contribution to this priority and biased decision, such as social, religious, and other factors. As a social organization, this family is very loving, caring, and supportive of its numbers, and Tara is not an economic burden for this family, yet it reflects the priority of Chandan in the family, which is more in this society, refers a complex number of this moderated and scientific Indian society.

In this play, Mahesh Dattani has been chosen and simultaneously analyzed the evils spread in society. Mahesh Dattani has put the issues of atrocities on women in front of society in the play *Tara*. The play *Tara* very vehemently shows how women are discriminated against in society. The two major characters of the play, Chandan and his sister Tara, remember their childhood. Chandan, as a boy, has tried to uncover the current patriarchal mindset of society. Tara has an emotive aspect. The play explores a cruel mother and grandfather manipulating their physical isolation to favor the boy over the girl. Tara

has been portrayed as a noble and docile young lady in this play. She was not given the same opportunities that her brother was given to pursue his dreams.

"Although very cunning, he is devastated, dies, and Chandan escapes to London and starts changing his name and tries to suppress the guilt he felt at the death of his sister with a personal history" ( 98).

Mahesh Dattani denies discrimination between men and women in his binary concept. He challenges the prevailing notion that man is better than woman and claims that naturally, both masculinity and femininity are part of personal identity. The concept of Ardhanarishwar in Indian mythology also supports an approach in which gender-based contempt and discrimination become unnatural and immoral. In this play, Tara and Chandan are twin children representing two sides of woman and man. This means that both women and men are equal to humans. Further, the immoral surgery that took place symbolizes the separation of man and woman, with Chandan's side representing a higher position than Tara's. Tara has the appropriate comment. Maybe we still are, like we always have been inseparable. "The way we started in life. Two lives and one body, in a comfortable womb. As long as we were forced and separated" (197).

Gender plays a seminal part in building a society. In this society, men and women have to play their roles separately, and they play these roles daily during their lives. However, men are rated higher than women based on the superiority of their

roles. In the play, Tara, Mahesh Dattani portrays that Chandan in the Patel family is asked to support the business, and Tara is expected to continue with her household chores. That is, the division of functions on the basis of gender is one of the root causes of discrimination in society. Beena Agarwal depicts: " The play *Tara* is not an expression of Dattani's dramatic art alone, but it is a realization of the complexity of human relationship in a society where life controlled by gender bias takes its own courses. The horrors of the forced harmony and man's inborn subjugation to cultural inhibitions dominate the course of life of all the major characters in the play."(69)

The play *Tara* starts with the claim of Chandan representing scientific progress, social, and cultural progress. It can be depicted that despite heavy scientific and social progress, one can observe imbalance and lack of coordination among them. The problem lies in both cultural progress and scientific and technological progress. However, the nature of the problem is different in both cases. To ensure balanced overall inclusive growth and development, scientific and technological progress must be combined with cultural progress and vice versa. The parish is primarily concerned with medical science and the unethical behavior of the physician. It sheds light on some mysteries of medical practice. There are many things that do not fall into the public domain. Bipinkumar Parmar says: "The play *Tara* provides bitter commentary upon gender discrimination and forces of social apathy towards the injustice done to even a girl babe under the clock of gender dichotomy.

So, it is not just a story about gender identity, nor is it a story of medical phenomenon. It presents how women are marginalized to the extent of distorting her self."(70)

Doctor Thakkar represents the scientific knowledge that has also been in the hands of patriarchs for the oppression and subjugation of women. Mahesh Dattani, how many social institutions contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality and discrimination, making them pervasive and deep-rooted ? However, he considers gender inequality inhuman and unethical. Dan considers injustice against Tara an unnatural sin:

"She deserves something better. He never got a fair deal. Not even by nature. Neither of us did. Perhaps God never wanted us to separate. Luck wishes for strange things.....But God does not always get what he wants. The struggle is the cruelty of life. On the one hand, the duality of Death between God and nature and wonderful on the other hand, Dr.Thakker" (203)

Mahesh Dattani has elaborated many levels in the play *Tara*. The lowest level represents the house of Patel's. On the highest level, there is a chair in which Dr. Thakkar remains seated throughout the play. His presence represents the unethical act of surgery, which haunts and affects the lives of Patel's family members. He was partisan in agreeing to give the leg to Chandan despite the leg being medically suited more to Tara. Mahesh Dattani uses characters to portray the psychology of Indian social norms. His art of characterization in this light can be said to

be remarkable in the play *Tara*. His characters seem authentic because of his deep understanding of society and human psychology. It is the main cause that readers feel connected to his play.

Mahesh Dattani has variety, and his themes are of contemporary interest. He has dived deep into the human heart and re-created characters with authenticity and a sense of liveliness.

### Conclusion

Gender and patriarchy form the theoretical and particular point of the plays of Mahesh Dattani. Mahesh Dattani was deeply concerned with the defects and flaws in contemporary Indian society. He shows the reality of contemporary society, where a male-dominated society can be seen very easily. In his plays, Mahesh Dattani depicts to his readers that it is important for us to confront our instincts and prejudice to acknowledge our limitations. Mahesh Dattani is an authentic and realistic voice in the arena of contemporary Indian plays written in English. To conclude, it is conceivable to say that Mahesh Dattani has negotiated the question of gender,

disability, family, and self-identity in the play. The play was a success all over the world and is one of the most loved plays of him. He reflects a bitter reality of society without being didactic and touches various themes with a sensitive heart. The play highlights the plight of marginalized women in a male-dominated society.

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