

Social Discrimination between Men and Women in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*

Prof. Bheemappa Veerabhadrapa Enagi

Associate Professor of English, Government First Grade College, Navalgund -582208 Dist: Dharwad
Karnataka

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the idea of gender inequalities, misery and dejection faced by both men and women. This play examines gender inequality and the prohibiting of women and disable persons. Chandan's drive is one of guiltiness and displeased potential, but Tara's story representation is the basic prejudice faced by girls from birth, making it an influential assessment of societal principles. This paper investigates the emotional detachment that grows between two conjoined twins, following the discovery that they share a total of three legs. The play explores themes of self identity, gender bias, social system, tradition vs. modernity, and the widespread dilemma of being female.

Keywords: gender, inequalities, prejudice, operations, love, societal and discrimination

INTRODUCTION

Mahesh Dattani explores gender bias, disability and domestic fault in modern Indian society through the story of conjoined twins. In this play, two conjoined twins are separated so that the male twin, Chandan, they can live a normal life, but the female twin, Tara, is harshly drawback. Gender bias is a main subject tackled in the play, flaking glow on the imbalanced action and societal biases stands on gender. Tara's character imitates the ideas of gender positions and societal limitations. Tara looks the anxiety to be conventional but eventually creates choices associated with her attitude, representing the ideas of self –compulsion.

Bharati makes the accusation that Patel has no love for his daughter, Tara. Therefore she says a couple of times, "Ad make up for...for your father, and I will make up for all the things God hasn't given you." Tara has also come to believe that her father doesn't love her. In a chit chat she tells Roopa that her father doesn't love her as much as her mother does. Her mother says, as she tells Roopa, "My eyes really twinkled when I smiled but her father has never made such endearing remarks" (*Tara* 342)

This view of Tara and Bharati gets strength from the fact that Patel has expressed his worry several times about Chandan's career and education but never about Tara's. On the contrary, Bharati is anxious or rather worried about Tara's career. The difference between the two sides comes to fore since the beginning of the play. "Dattani's plays have been acclaimed for their social realism and for portraying the uncomfortable truths of social evils. One such evil is the much discussed belief that a woman should always be unsubordinated by a man"(Shrabani Basu- web).

Bharati is, no doubt, a doting mother. She wants her daughter to drink milk even though Tara is reluctant to take, because Tara has lost half a pound in the last week. Losing half a pound or a should not be a thing of concern, but Bharati takes the warning that her daughter may lose more in a month if this trend continues. When Patel says that doctor is rather surprised with the unexpected progress the two children have made and wants to mention them in the medical journal for the information to others, Bharati instead of being happy gets worried due to the inherent motherly instinct that publicity can harm the children. Patel tries to remove his wife's unfounded and unscientific fears saying "it will only be read by other doctors. It might help them with other such Patel is right, but he still loses to his wife in showing love for the children.

Neglects Tara: This game continues. In the next episode Patel asks Chandan responsibilities. The fact, that he does not ask Tara to go to his office with him obviously to train him for future office pricks Tara's psyche. She tells Roopa satirically, "The men in the house were deciding on whether they were going to go hunting while the women looked after the cave" (

Tara 345). Patel's remark might have been occasioned by the old belief that business is not women's tea-cuppa. Patel, if seen in this light appears an old-fashioned person but Tara is stung so sharply that she finds her father no better than a primitive living in a cave Chandan tries to correct his father with a banter saying Tara will make a good business woman since she cheats so well at cards. Though Patel allows her also to go with Chandan, yet thorn of Patel's indifference to Tara's career is embedded in Tara's bosom. Such situations arise two-three times more to irritate Bharati and Tara Both of them develops the belief that Patel does not love his daughter.

There is custom, Roopa says, among Patels that they kill their daughters by drowning them in milk to make a plausible answer to the neighbors that their daughter had died while drinking milk. Mention of this custom might have also caused rancor in the minds of Bharati and Tara Bharati already knew about this custom and Tara also knows it now. Though Tara laughs away the idea, but nobody knows if the idea has gone into her sub-conscious mind and caused detestation for her father. "In the play "Tara" Mahesh Dattani questions the role of a society that treats the children born in the same womb in two different ways. Tara is sacrificed because she is a girl and therefore she is not allowed to have a better life than her brother. Dattani's play thus brings into open the callousness and the heartlessness with which society discriminates between men and women, thus leading to an identity crisis in Indian women"(Mohan Saha 2023 web)

Bharati shows her concern for the health and well-being of her children. She coddles, fondles, and pampers her daughter, which Patel never does. She loves her daughter partly because she has to undergo operation for kidney transplant and some other operations, and partly because she thinks that world is apathetic or even antipathetic to women. Tara says that going for operation appears to her like brushing her teeth. She knows that Tara has far too many complications to be completely out of danger"(*Tara* 352). It is natural for a mother to give her love to a child who is running a risk of life. Moreover, she knows for certain that women without a career will find it impossible to get an honourable place in the society. It is due to this notion that she tells Chandan in no uncertain terms, "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!" (*Tara* 358) But her predicament is that her husband does not feel like that, he does not care for her education and career. So again she has reason to bestow her love upon her daughter. How can she leave her daughter without the support of a career in a hostile world .Her ardor of love for Tara makes Patel appear apathetic by contrast

Nemesis: Patel does not show his emotions at any stage. Tara has passed through the ordeals one after the other, but he in fact reported to have shown any emotion. A glimpse of it he shows when Tara returns home after an operation, and Patel asks her to go to her room to wash up. Tara is surprised to get this emotion for the first time. She exclaims in surprise, "My, Oh my ! You sound just like mummy! You men can imitate us so well if you want to." It is merely in imitation of her mother that Patel shows sympathy with her. It is perhaps this cold attitude that he gets a rebuff from Chandan in the end of the play. Chandan makes it clear to him that he does not see any point in returning to his father when Tara and his mother are dead. He tells him on phone "Tara has been dead for six years and now that Mummy has gone as well there's nothing left for me to come back to... Yes, maybe I'm hurting you deliberately, but I can't help the way I feelEither you come here or you live in Bombay all by yourself" (*Tara* 361) His language shows that there is no love lost between father and son. Patel is left to languish all alone in his old age. It is his nemesis for his lack of emotions.

But it will be too hard for Patel if it is said that he is bereft of emotions. He knows that his wife is losing control on herself due to pressure of circumstances. He tells doctor Narayan, "I don't look well because I'm not..... Frankly I'm worried..... about her.... needs help. I'm not sure may be some kind of therapy..... Our counseling..... I don't whether I'm prepared for the worst." (*Tara* 364) This conversation vindicates that he is unemotional. Again, when he sees that he is alienated from Tara for several reasons, he takes opportunity to clarify his position. He grabs Tara in a state of agitation to tell her frankly, "Tara, please, believe me when I say that I love you very much and I have never in my life loved you less or more than I have loved your brother" (*Tara* 367) But mere words without action are meaningless waste of breath. As he says this Tara swoons and falls in his arms. In a state of emergency he asks Bharati to bring water and sugar immediately, but Bharati moves not. She only cries, "She is dying. My Tara is laying!"(*Tara* 367) But Patel, seeing that Bharati won't be able to do anything, he carries Tara to the kitchen and rings up to the hospital. It is said that it is due to his love for Tara that he chooses to help her but the way he chooses is a bit too violent to be taken as love.

In spite of all that has been said above, it is difficult to say that Patel loves Tara as much as he loves Chandan. He has said plainly in Cordelia's style that he loves Tara not more nor less than he loves Chandan. He shows no concern for Tara's education and career. Perhaps this is the fact that rancours Dan's mind when he says that Tara did not get what she deserved. The same is the view of Bharati when he tells Chandan that her love for Tara will make up for what she hasn't got. As for his emotions for his wife, his actions show him differently from what he has said to Dr. Narayan He does not allow his children to meet their mother at the hospital lest his wife should speak out some secret about him as Tara

suspects, or his wife should get an opportunity to make a confession. In these circumstances we cannot give a clean chit to Patel, I give him an honourable acquittal for having love emotions in his heart.

In the next scene Patel asks Chandan to go to his office as he is careful about his son's career, but not for his daughter's. Chandan shows concern for Tara's career, but reveals it only in a banter. He advised his father to take Tara instead to his office because she always cheats at cards, implying that a chest is more successful in business. When Patel again insisted on talking Chandan to his office, Tara, who also wants a career for herself, makes a dig at her father, saying "The men in the house were deciding on whether they were going to go hunting while the women looked after the cave," implying that her father still has primitive ideas. His drama intends to "reflect the malfunction of the society but to act like freak mirrors in a carnival and to project grotesque images of all that passes for normal in our world" (Manikrao 132). The sarcasm makes it clear that Tara being a modern girl wants to work in tandem with men. The humorous situations provide a streak of laughter in otherwise grave atmosphere of a tragedy. The dramatist has carefully avoided the tendency practiced by Shakespeare and other dramatist of using humour to heightened tragic effect.

The dramatist does not allow the question of women's care to be lost in laughter. He pursues it again and again to make it one of the themes of his play. Bharati, Tara's mother' is the most worried person about Tara's career. She speaks out her worry every now and then. In a chit-chat she says to Chandan that she wishes his father to pay more attention to Tara. She has observed that Patel is more worried about Chandan's career than about Tara's. She rebuts Chandan's argument that Tara herself is not as serious about her career as he is. He argues, "That's because I am surer of what I want. She is just playing it cool." Whatever the case be, Bharati wants Tara to have a career-"It's time Tara decided what she wants to be. Women have to do that as well these days. She must have a career. She can't be aimless all her life... It's all right while she is young. It's all very cute and comfortable when she makes witty remarks. But let her grow up yes, Chandan. 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 about forty and fifty! Oh God" (Tara 364)

The playwright has cleverly related this question career with the bigger and more important issue of female foeticide about Tara's career, Roopa, the most foolish character though and upbringing of girls. When Bharati and Chandan are doing problem of the modern India. "the image of the woman holding the mirror to her face is the typical feminine image. In a male dominated society, a woman is valued for her beauty and sex appeal. She is always afraid of her beauty withering with time and therefore she holds up a mirror which tells her of her youth, beauty and sexual attractiveness remain intact" (Satwana Halder, 62) Roopa tells Tara, "The Patels in the is, introduces the issue of female foeticide, which is a burning old days were unhappy with getting girl babies you know Query and things like that do they used to drown them in m when people asked about how the baby died, they could say that Roopa and Tara goes alongside the dialogue between Bharati and she choked white drinking her milk." As 'this dialogue between Chandan on the issue of women's career, the playwright perhaps means to say that not to talk of men's desire to think above women's career, they do not want a girl child to survive why t talk about career for women when their survival is in jeopardy.

Even when the question of bequeathing the property arises, is handed down to a boy, not to a girl. Chandan says to his mother that she need not worry 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. He doesn't know why the old man did so. He tells Chandan, "It was his money. He could do what he wanted with it." Bharati is conscious of men's prejudice against women. She does not hope that anybody will allow women to come up. Therefore she takes entirely upon herself to do all that she can for her daughter. It is for this reason that she says, "Yes, I plan for her happiness. I mean to give all the love and affection which I can give. It is what she deserves. Love can make up for a lot" (Tara 368). No man can make such a promise with so much of determination and tenacity Tara also knows that she can hope for love only from her mother. Mahesh Dattani's "Tara" shows the social discrimination between men and women. "Tara' is the main character of this play. This play shows how this girl became a victim of discrimination in her own family. This play questions the role of the Indian society that treats the children born in the same womb in two different ways" (Mohan Saha 2023 web)

She tells Roopa she has been a sickly child. Naturally, everyone in the family felt relieved when she smiled but her mother had always been more encouraging-"Mummy said my eyes really twinkled when I smiled." Mother has always so loved, but when Roopa asked if her father also spoiled her so much, she flatly refused, saying " I don't remember" If Patel is to be believed, Tara's mother and grandfather committed the cruelest act on her" (Tara 370). They conspired with doctor Thakkar to give her leg to Chandan against medical ethics though it was almost certain that the implant would not work. According to the scan 'major part of the blood supply was provided by the girl. Therefore the chances for the girl to retain the leg were better, yet it was decided to take risk of giving both legs to the boy. But Chandan (boy) could have two legs only for two days. The leg was amputated. Tara could probably have both legs forever, but she was denied the chance. It is

the most horrible tyranny perpetrated on Tara for being a girl. Very unfortunate it is that female foeticide still continues in a few States of India with the result that male-female ratio is disturbed to cause anxiety to the demographers.

This play seeks to draw attention to the problem caused by doting mothers. Bharati has given impression to Tara that she is the only one that loves her. She said plainly that her love will keep up for a lot, including the much needed love of a father Patel harbours the grouse that he has been alienated from his d because his wife has put into Tara's mind that she need none but her mother "Yes! You look at the way you treat Tara. As if she is made of glass. You coddle her, you pet her, and you spoil her. She's grown up the feeling she doesn't need anyone but you? He pleads with his wife, "Don't make her choose between us, for God's sake!" You are ruining her life, because you are sick." The over indulgent mothers often cause a chasm between fathers and children. Patel tries to convince her daughter, bring her to believe that he loves Tara as much as he loves Chandan, "Tara, please, believe me when I say that I love you very much and I have never in all my life loved you less or more than I have loved your brother"(*Tara* 373)

As Bharati loves her daughter, Patel loves his son. Patel in worried about Chandan's career, but never about Tara's. He has a plan to send Chandan abroad for higher education but he give gas thought to Tara's education giving feeling of his being partial to both, Tara and Bharati. When Patel says about sending Chandan abroad, Bharati asks what he thinks about Tara's education. His partiality for Chandan irritates Tara also. When Tara comes to know that her father has instructed the hospital staff not to allow Tara to meet her mother, Tara says to Chandan that her father likes him, but hates her though Chandan tries to erase such a notion from her mind and after some time she says to Patel, "I'm going to hate you any way!"(*Tara*, 363).

Strange it is that love causes a rift between husband and wife. Bharati threatens Patel that she would divulge some secret of his to the children. Patel becomes furious. He slaps her and says to her, "You cannot tell them. For their sake, don't! If at all they must know, it will be from me. Not from you" (*Tara* 380) And Patel in turn does ant want to give opportunity to his wife to make a confession before bar children. He asks Chandan not to go to meet his mother because he doesn't want to give her satisfaction of confessing'. It is unchristian to let anybody die, more so a wife, without making a confession. One makes a confession to purge oneself of one's sins. Then, he tells Tara and Chandan how Tara was robbed of her leg. He should not have told this story at all since it was sure to cause ill will against their mother. He told this story when Bharati was too ill to defend herself. It was done by him obviously to revenge himself upon his wife, who was simply abominable Patel might have been full of rancour against his wife for her alienating from her children, yet he should not have told the story whether it was true or false to his children when his wife was in the hospital. By this one stroke he turned even Tara against her mother.

The dramatist has created atmosphere of a tragedy. Dr. Thakkar is brought on the stage every now and then to tell the audience how serious and risky was the operation. Dr Thakkar informs that Chandan and Tara were Siamise twins, conjoined from the chest down, and one in every fifty thousand twin conceptions have a probability of containing this defect. A further complication was that these twins were of different sex which again was very rare. The twins were to be separated by surgery. In order to heighten the element of risk, Dr. Thakkar said, "The parents were warned of the odds against survival" (*Tara* 369). The doctor had to make all the preparations for this operation. He held discussions with the doctors at the Victoria Hospital and he studied reports, X-rays, scan results etc. very carefully. "It was two weeks of exhaustive work" (*Tara* , 375) He was relieved to find that the twins did not share any vital organ. He took further ten days to make plans to obviate miscalculations. The pelvis was fractured in separating the twins, taking care against damage to the bite ducts. He made six rehearsals with the dummies to avoid mistakes. Dr. Thakkar knew that the twins could become sterile. Hence he took help of the latest researches to ensure that the reproductive organs grew normally in both the children. Then the twins had only one leg each. So artificial legs were to be provided at a later stage. There was no point in relating this story except to keep the audience in awful state. In order to increase this element of risk, the dramatist informs that Tara is to undergo a kidney transplant operation which again is very serious. To add to this, Patel is worried about his wife's health. In spite of care and treatment, Bharati became insane and died. Tara also died. Chandan settled in London and left his father to fend for himself. None had a happy life.

There is perpetual contention going on in the Patel family. Patel and his wife do not see eye to eye with each other on any issue. They have squabbles on petty matters as asking Tara to take milk and mentioning good progress of Tara and Chandan in medical journals. They never talk amiably or amicably. Bharati, for example, says in distraction to Patel, "No, nothing you can get. Bharati dotes on Tara, gives her the feeling that her father doesn't love her"(*Tara* 356). She has made a chasm between father and daughter, and Patel in turn makes Tara speak slightly about her mother though Bharati is in the hospital. Tara and Chandan, of course love siblings in the general atmosphere of physical and mental sickness and acrimony.

CONCLUSION

Tara finds the way her journey from a lack of proper learning to pursuing knowledge against domestic prospect. The initiative of going off the network is apparent in the family's separation and confrontation to conventional society, determining the storyline in these initial of the play. The playwright stresses the societal bias, effect even by women like the mother, underprivileged females and rejecting those equal chances and self-respect, tumbling them to familial positions.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Dattani Mahesh (2000) *Collected Plays*. New Delhi: Penguin Publishers.
- [2]. Halder, Santwana (2009) *Mahesh Dattani's Tara: A Critical Study*. Prestige International,
- [3]. Mohan Saha(2023) <https://improvvi.com/tara-by-mahesh-dattani-summary/>
- [4]. Mee, Erin (1992) *A Note in the Play*. *Collected Plays*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House,
- [5]. Manikrao, K.G. (2009) *Gender Discrimination and Social Consciousness- Tara by Mahesh Dattani*. Naikar, Basavaraj. "Tara: A Study in Gender Discrimination". Mahesh Dattani's Tara: A Critical Study. Ed. Santwana Haldar. Prestige,
- [6]. Shrabani Basu- <https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/engp09/chapter/mahesh-dattani-tara/>