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## **Tara, a Commentary upon Male Self and Female Self**

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Mahesh Dattani (August 7, 1958) is internationally acclaimed as the most outstanding playwright of recent times. His plays emerged as fresh arrival in the domain of Indian English drama in the last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. His plays deal with contemporary issues and have treated each subject with a deep seated identification rooted in everyday angst. He maintained himself among some notable playwrights and directors such as Badal, Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, etc. His plays displays deep concern for gendered subaltern i.e. the marginalization of woman, patriarchal domination, gender issue and their miserable plights and contain some important elements such as human pathos, patience, conflict and appeal for human sentiments.

Mahesh Dattani's play Tara is a commentary upon gender discrimination and forces of social apathy towards injustice done to a girl under the cloak of gender dichotomy. Tara is neither a story about gender identity nor a story of medical phenomena. But, it presents how female is marginalized to the extent of distorting herself. The play is a gruesome tale of injustice done to a girl child by her own parents and grandfather inspite for developments in science and technology. Our society is still following the tradition and conventions which suppresses the individuality. Dattani shows how gender discrimination kills all other bonds of familial relationships and how socio-cultural myths and conventions control and construct the course of the human life. Dattani highlights the complex situation in which two conjoined twins are trapped by nature. The manipulation made by the patriarchal society makes it more complex and intricate situation for a girl child, and it brings for the very unhappy absurd situation for a girl child Tara. The play Tara revolves around the theme of favoring the male self and frowning upon the female self with exceptional originality of conception. Mahesh Dattani himself says in an interview with Laxmi Subramanyam.

I see Tara as a play male self and female self. The male self is being preferred in all cultures. The play is about the separation of self and the resultant angst (Subramanyam 134).

Subramanyam, Laxmi. Ed *Muffled Voices* "Women in Modern Indian Theatre" New Delhi: Shakti, 2002. Print.

Dattani's play Tara shows that the familial relationship is governed by male- psyche and female-psyche, which means male writer and haminitic critic. The girl child Tara is used by

male-psyche and female-psyche patriarchal society. Tara represents female-psyche. Women themselves are taught to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology that is the conscious and unconscious pre-suppositions about male superiority, and so are conditioned to derogate their own subordination. Bharti (Tara's mother) is also a victim of patriarchal society; she is subordinate to her husband. But Chandan soon realizes that Bharti is not guilty, fault is his own, so Chandan changes his name to Dan and is described as escapist by Mahesh Dattani.

Tara perceives a sense of resistance in her voice and her refusal to be duped. The gullibility and maliciousness of the people tormenting. She fights against the dogma-ridden society. Tara thinks that there is enough reason and justice. Chandan is always remorseful because of Tara's tragedy. He says that Tara's life is not aimless. When Dan interviews Dr. Thakkar regarding the case history of Chandan and Tara, he reveals the mystery and Chandan came to know wasted leg of him would have been the normal leg of his sister Tara. When Dr. Thakkar talks of having had to operate on them when they were just three months old and their being of different sex, Dan remarks about being "A freak among freaks" (Collected Plays: 365). The remark shows Dan's seriousness and his love for his sister. Tara is particularly sensitive to the frustrations of day to day situations, sometimes she feels reserved, pensive and withdrawn and even powerless to effect change. She says that she is scared as well too and wishes to go back to her school mates. Chandan in response says, "I feel your pain" (Collected Plays: 379). Dattani encourages the demolition of false prejudice and conventions which beset the lives of human beings with pain and misery. Mee Erin observes.

Woven into the play are the issue of class and community and the clash between traditional and modern life style and values.

(Mee Erin:319)

Mee, Erin . "A note on the play Tara" *Collected Plays of Mahesh Dattani*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000. Print.

The problem begins when it is recognized that it has been unequal, unfair operation decided by Tara's mother, grandfather and the surgeon collaborating to afford the male with better chances physically. Dr. Thakkar, the God like life giver, is aware that the third leg would adhere better to the female half and yet becomes party to the decision. As Patel explains "A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl." (Collected Plays: 378) Dan tries to define his other half, the feisty Tara.

She never got a fair deal. not even from nature. Neither of us did.

May be God never wanted us separated. Destiny desires strange things, but even God does not always get what he wants conflicts are the cruxes of life. (Collected Plays: 203).

The play shows that there is unprecedented development in the field of science which has blessed mankind with speed pleasure and perfection. On the other hand, it is also used to cause suffering and pain in the lives of many people. After all, it is the man who operates the machines

for own motives and desires. Dattani establishes that it is not science but human motives that matter much. He holds red torch against pitfalls of advancement of science and technology.

The play more than gender discrimination, dramatizes the gender hierarchy and strong patriarchy prevailing in urban Indian society. When Bharti is being hospitalized, Tara wants to see her personally but her father does not allow her to do so. Hence she begins to hate him thinking Bharti wants to tell her something concerning her father. Hence, Mr. Patel discloses the truth before Tara and Chandan regarding their operation in Mumbai.

Mr. Patel, an emblem of male chauvinism maintains the absolute authority in the decision making about the family. Bharti is a pathetic victim of patriarchy, she was exceptionally conscious for Tara's safety not for Tara's sake, but, for her own sake.

Tara as a play about the gendered self, about coming to terms with the feminine side of oneself in a world that always favours what is 'male', but many people in India see it as a play about girl child. The play explores besides exposing the typical Indian mindset, which has from time immemorial preferred a boy child to a girl child.

It looks at the triumphs and the failures of an Indian family

(Erin Mee, 320).

In Mahesh Dattani's dramatic world, inner-world of human consciousness is a focal point of tragic action. Tara herself reflects her own insecurity. Her anxiety emerged out by three reasons, the tradition of patriarchal society, misery borne out of the apathy of society and Tara's handicapped condition after separated from Chandan.

Tara realizes that life is different for a girl and is particularly for an unmarried girl, but still maintains her stability. After separation the children had realized the social inconvenience. The play Tara is a debate tragedy of the confrontation of individual choices against social conventions. This elevated state of human self is the ultimate reality and it is beyond the concept of gender discrimination. Dan's incompleteness after his separation from his sister justifies that both of them are interdependent not independent. Dattani shows us that woman is not allowed to act out on her own since time immemorial. The wait of tradition is too much with her as the system of systematic discrimination against the oppression of woman. The play seeks to purge the scum layered in the mind of many folds it affects catharsis like a typical Aristotelian tragedy cleansing us of the gross. The reader -also can experience the Purgatorio-Virgil's role being taken upon by Dattani. The playwright attempts to focus on an innovative approach against conventional canons and his darling spirit to bring new and radical issues, to witness a new Dan of Indian drama with Indian identity representing Indian social and influencing Indian sensibility.

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