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Tara: Some Stars are not allowed to Twinkle

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Abstract:

According to the laws of Manu (“begetter of male child only”) if a woman gives birth to a son her status is even further enhanced. Giving birth to sons vastly improves her standing with her mother-in-law and with the rest of her husband’s family. This ancient saying of Manu and the proverbial saying pinpoint the attitude of the patriarchal society. In the contemporary society, the females were ignored and were not given any chair of importance. So to get importance and with a view to becoming the mother of male children, the female babies were killed or deserted or abandoned in the dustbin or river in their infant age. At that time, the society was not so developed in education and most of them were in darkness of superstition and ignorance. But there is no sign of change in our present social system. It seems to us that the bottle has been changed but not the wine- the same wine has been kept. So the obvious result will be the same i.e. discrimination is still here. But the discrimination can now be felt not be seen because the bifurcation is being smoothly done by so-called educated people (though I want to say that they are not educated). Rather I want to look upon them as literate having the certificate of college or university degrees. To me ‘educated’ means the persons who are free from the narrowness of any kind.

The picture of discrimination between male and female child is more or less same either in rural or in urban family. Generally it is expected that the gender bias may not be seen in urban and rich family. But it is not so. The biasness can be felt as the undercurrent of an ocean but not to be seen openly but can be felt. My paper entitled as “Tara: Some stars are not allowed to twinkle”

” has the purpose to show with a poke in the eye with a sharp stick how a female child has been ignored or to some extent deprived due to her gendered identity in reference to Mahesh Dattani’s famous play “Tara”.

Keywords: discrimination, ignorance, gender bias, injustice.

Sahitya Academy Award winner Mahesh Dattani is a versatile artist. He is famous as actor, playwright, stage director and dancer. Like George Bernard Shaw, he also uses the stage to tell the untold truth prevalent in the society. He has used the stage as a medium to present the realistic picture of the society. Like G. B. Shaw he exposes the evils which were present in the society. The plays of Dattani never deal with fiction and fantasy but with fact.

We can say that Dattani is a realistic writer. For writing realistic plays for the stage, he probably has followed the footsteps of Henrik Ibsen who wrote some plays on realism, such as *The Doll's House* which deals with the problem of the position of women in the society and other play is *The Pillars of Society* that also deals with the matter of women rights. Like Ibsen, Dattani has also sketched some problems dealing with the gender issues and sexuality. In "Thirty Days of September" he deals with the result of child sexual abuse. He deals with homosexuality in "Bravely Fought the Queen". In "Tara" he deals with the matter of priority over male child and ignorance over female child.

The gender discrimination is one of the burning issues of our present society. This problem is not fictional; rather it is a burning problem not only of India but also of the entire world. The deprivation due to gender bias is not the real scenario of a particular family whether urban or rural; it is the picture of the whole world. The gender bias has become so deep rooted and acute that the partiality is seen not only in uneducated family but also educated rich families also. My paper entitled "Tara: Some stars are not allowed to twinkle" has the intention to show the realistic scenario of ignorance towards the female child with special reference to the play "Tara" of Mahesh Dattani.

Literature is the mirror of society. What happens in society is reflected in literature either partially or fully. After reading this drama, we come to know how the injustices were done to Tara. The family of Patel and Bharati, a miniature of society, is male dominated family where each and every vital decision is generally taken by the male head of the family. In this play also we see the vital decision of amputating the third leg from the conjoined twins- Chandan and Tara –was taken by the maternal grandfather of Tara, who was a politician and financially affluent person. It is he who forces Dr. Thakkar to carry out the operation for giving the third leg to the male child i.e. Chandan (though it was the suggestion of Dr. Thakkar that the third leg should better be supplied to Tara, as the blood circulation is flowing from the body of Tara). But Bharati's father, one of the members of male dominated society does not pay any heed to this suggestion. India's male dominated society always thinks that the male child will carry the name and fame of the family heredity. So to execute the blind belief into action, Bharati's grandfather and mother's hands do not quiver for a single time to throw the female child i.e. Tara in jeopardy. Not only Bharati's grandfather and mother planned to execute their will, but her father i.e. Patel is also to some extent indirectly supported the matter regarding the operation. But Tara's father, probably, did not know the matter; even if he knew the matter, he had not enough courage to protest against the wrong decision, taken by the more powerful person- Bharati's father, a powerful man in the field of money and politics.

In India, the realistic picture of the patriarchal family is that they are worried for the education and future career of male child only if there may be female child or children. In "Tara" what we see is that Patel is deeply ruminating over the education of his son Chandan. It is also noticed that when Tara is unwilling to go to college, her father becomes very sad and morose.

But the surprising matter is that he is sad not for his own daughter's education but for his son's education as he (his son) was also unwilling to go to college as his sister is not willing to go:

“Patel: I am disappointed in you. From now on you are coming to the office with me. I can't see you rotting at home!

Chandan: I don't want to go the office!

Patel: You will come with me to the office until your college starts.

Chandan: I don't want to go to college! (Fighting his tears). Not without Tara! If she is going in for surgery, I'll miss a year too.”

When Patel forces Chandan to come his office, he tells him that he along with his sister Tara will go to the office. Actually Mr. Patel wants only Chandan to come not Tara, but later he agrees:

“You may both come – if you want to.” (Page no. 351-352)

Again discrimination is also noticed from the conversation between Patel and his son Chandan:

“Patel: You two are old enough to sort this out amongst yourselves. I won't interfere. But this is certain, Chandan has to join. I have plans for him. Your Praful uncle will help him get into a good university in England. I know he can get a scholarship on his own if he tries. But Praful will take care of the ... special requirements for him. With a solid education you just can't fail. Not to say that Chandan will have to work for a living. Your grandfather has left all his wealth to you. Since your mother was his only child, you and Tara inherit their home in Bangalore.

Chandan: That huge house. It gave me the creeps, I remember.

Patel: He left you a lot of money.

Chandan: And Tara?

Patel: Nothing.

Chandan: Why?

Patel: It was his money. He could do what he wanted with it.”(Page no. 360)

So from the above conversation we come to know that for better future Patel already had planned for him but nothing for his own daughter Tara. Chandan's Praful uncle would help him get into a good university in England and he will take special care of him. But he never thought such type of planning or any promise of help for building the career of Tara. Even his rich and one of the political influential father – in- law of Bangalore had also left all his wealth to Chandan as the mother of Chandan was the only daughter of him. But he has not arranged or donated anything

for Tara. What a sad matter it is! What is the reason behind it? As Tara is female, she was chosen to have no choice. Everywhere she will be neglected. The male members of that family feel antipathy for Tara for biological difference with Chandan. Like her brother, she is also a physically challenged person. She will also need financial support in future for her livelihood. But probably they thought that after her marriage as would go to her in laws' house, there is no necessity of thinking for her better future. To them, as Tara belongs to second sex, her future will be thought not first.

For the misfortune, her parents are not only sole responsible but the doctor Mr. Thakkar is also a partaker. From the reports of medical tests, X- rays, scan results of Tara, he came to know that the third leg would be fit if it is given to her as the blood circulation is coming to the third leg from the body of Tara. But it is the male dominated society who takes the risk of donating the third leg to Chandan. Now, my question is why the doctor agreed to do so. It was his unethical medical practice. This is for greed for money. I can quote here the speech of Mr. Patel:

“The doctor had agreed, I was told. It was only later I came to know of his intention of starting a large nursing home- the largest in Bangalore. He had acquired three acres of prime land- in the heart of the city from the state. Your grand- father’s political influence had been used. A few days later, the surgery was done. As planned by them, Chandan had two legs- for two days. It didn’t take them very long to realize what a grave mistake they had made. The leg was amputated. A piece of dead flesh which could have- might have- been Tara. Because of the unusual nature of operation, it was easy to pass it off as a natural rejection.” (Page no. 378)

I can say the doctor Mr. Thakkar being the representative of male class supports unethically to curb the female class not directly but indirectly.

To give blood to my opinion on the gender discrimination, I want to refer to an anecdote in my life. Once I was gossiping with two friends on the topic of admission of their children in a school. I heard my first friend being the father of a male child advises my second friend, who was the father of a girl child, not to think of better education for his daughter, as he thinks that his daughter will go to her husband’s house after her marriage. I wonder in which age we are living. Like me, both of my friends are highly educated. But from their attitudes, the present position of female child in the society can easily be guessed. It seems to me, that my first friend who may be considered as the representative of male society wants wife but not female child who may be the future wife of someone.

We can cite an example from a literary criticism of Virginia Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own” where we see that the narrator emphasizes the fact that women are not treated with equal emphasis or importance in her society and for that reason they have produced less impressive works of writing than men. Virginia Woolf with the help of imagination creates a woman named Judith Shakespeare, the imaginary twin sister of William Shakespeare. The narrator pinpoints

how the society takes the role to raise a glass ceiling between a male and female. Judith is just as talented as her brother William Shakespeare, but while “his talents are recognized and encouraged by their family and the rest of their society, Judith’s are underestimated and explicitly deemphasized. As Judith was a female, she was not sent to school or even she was not encouraged to read at home. She was not allowed to get the opportunity to experience the outer world and to take the taste of displaying her genius. The society at last finds a policy i.e. marriage to control her; though the marriage was not arranged taking her consent. Rather she was threatened to forced marriage. So being afraid of forced marriage, she decides to elope to London with a view to taking Acting as her career. But what we see is that her ambition was ridiculed and she was driven to become a man’s mistress not the wife of someone. She was impregnated. She eventually commits suicide. This or something like it, the narrator imagines, would have been the fate of any woman who had Shakespeare’s genius. Here Virginia Woolf thinks that certain requirements that are indispensable for the growth and development of genius of women. Woolf observes that:

“Genius, like Shakespeare’s is not born among laboring, uneducated servile people. Undoubtedly, it has existed among such people, but it lacked a mode of expression.” The narrator invents the tragic figure of Judith to prove that a woman as talented as Shakespeare could never have achieved such success. Talent is an essential component of Shakespeare’s success, but because women are treated so differently, a female Shakespeare would have fared quite differently even if she’d had as much talent as Shakespeare did.

In Bibhuti Bhusan Bandopadhyaya’s “*Pather Panchali*” we get the similar picture of ignorance in the treatment of girl child. In this novel, we see that Sorbojaya, the mother of Apu and Durga, gives extra care and importance on her son Apu not on her daughter Durga. Her daughter Durga was not sent to “*Pathshala*” or school as she is a girl; but she was concerned for the education of her son as he is a male child. The financial condition of the family of Sorbojaya and Harihar was not so good. In spite of that the family was conscious of the education of the son but not of the daughter. So what we see from the treatment of her children is that Apu is more pampered and protected.

In Rabindranath Tagore’s short story “*Khata*” we see that Uma, when she was merely seven year old girl, wrote haphazard writing on the copy book of her brother Gobindo Das. But she was not encouraged; rather her pencil and sheet have been snatched away from her. Her brother was an obstacle in the way of development of childhood experience. In a nutshell, she tried to destroy nip in the bud the talent of writing in Uma. Even after her marriage, she could not give up the habit of writing. She liked to write whatever she wished to write on a new khata (copy book) provided by her brother before her marriage. In the father-in-laws’ house, when Uma tried to write something on the “*Khata*”, her sister-in-laws tried to snatch away the “*khata*” and having failed in doing so, they informed the matter to husband Pyarimohon, who was also an essayist. At the end of the story we see that her copy book or “*khata*” was taken away from her. The short story ends with a question if anyone has the courage to snatch the copy book of

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Pyarimohon. But why the discrimination is and what the reason behind it is. The answer is that Uma is a woman and Pyarimohon is a man. In the patriarchal society, a woman is not supposed to read and write. The society wants that they must be kept in darkness. The light of knowledge will not be given to the women. The patriarchal society thinks that they should be kept in the four walls of the kitchen and they were born to rear the children and no more than that.

After reading the drama, we see how the female character Tara has been deprived by the male dominated Indian society and we see how the bull dozer of patriarchal society shatters her dreams, hope and mental strength. The hands of patriarchal society do not quiver to take a strong decision against her and to do something better that is favourable to the male child of that family. This is not the real picture of a single family; it is not the real picture of a district; it is not the picture of a state; it is not the picture of India. It is a single slice of realistic picture of the whole world. Each and every corner of the world the male child is being given priority, advantage and scope but not the female child. Even if the female child is talented and inborn genius, her talent is not given any priority. They may be compared to the stars in the nocturnal sky. But the sad matter is that the stars i.e. the star- like females like Tara do not twinkle. Rather I want to say that they are not allowed to twinkle in the sky.

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