



## **TARA BY MAHESH DATTANI: AN EXPLORATION OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASPECTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Mahesh Dattani is a man of versatile genius who is well known as an actor, director, playwright as well as author. His name shines as bright as those of Girish Karnad, Badal Sarkar, and Anita Nair in the realm of Indian English Drama. He rendered a memorable service to the granary of Indian English Drama. His play Tara which was published in 1995 highlights modern social concerns such as gender inequality, ethical deterioration of the medical profession, corruption, identity, guilt, and so on. The present paper is an attempt to shed light on the multi-dimensional aspects projected in the play. Dattani speaks truly. He portrays society as it is. Especially, in the play, Dattani addresses the problem of gender discrimination in a detailed and complete manner.*

**Keywords:** Mahesh Dattani, social concerns, gender inequality, corruption, identity, guilt.

### **INTRODUCTION**

*Tara* is a play about a girl who, like her name suggests, wants to glimmer and shine. She just appears in the novel for a brief moment. There are difficulties arising out of her operations, and she eventually passes away. It's a story about a society that favors men. The playwright weaves a variety of aspects in the play and most of them are interlinked with each other. Some of the prominent aspects can be discussed under the following heads.

Gender inequality, or gender discrimination, refers to unequal rights between men and women based on gender roles, resulting in discriminatory treatment in life. Due to gender discrimination, girls and women do not have the same prospects for education, meaningful

**RIYAJ HUSSAIN**

1 Page



careers, political influence, or economic success as boys and men. Discriminatory attitudes against men and women have persisted in India for ages and have harmed both genders' lives. Even though India's constitution guarantees men and women equal rights, gender inequality still persists. Discrimination based on gender is a violation of human rights. The continuation of India's high preference for male children has been attributed to the cultural construct of Indian society, which fosters gender bias against men and women, with varying levels and contexts against the opposite sex. When a boy is born, it is a cause for celebration and pride, but when a girl is born, virtually everyone is unhappy. If we go through the play *Tara*, we will find that this aspect of gender inequality is all pervasive in the play. Dattani has dealt with the issue of gender discrimination in the play in a detailed and comprehensive manner. In the play, Chandan is given more privileges compared to that of her sister. She was assigned to the role of the subaltern. In one of the instances, Tata's mother Bharati says in the following manner,

"BHARTI. Don't tell me about your father. He is more worried about your career than hers." (Dattani, 305)

Here we have seen that Tara's mother, who is educated and modern, believes that her father is more concerned about her brother Chandan's career than Tara's career. Even the father wants Chandan to progress more in life than Tara. This is how the play shows the hypocrisy of modern families because they are more concerned about what the son will become.

Throughout the play, there are various instances where Tara is offered an unequal opportunity. A limb is denied to her and she is nagged by others for being both females as well as abnormal. She is being referred to as the second sex.

We learn that when his grandfather dies, he leaves a large sum of money to Chandan but none to Tara. There are instances like this where the prejudice between the brother and sister is shown.

PATEL. He left you a lot of money.

CHANDAN. And Tara?

PATEL. Nothing. (Dattani, 316)

In an another conversation between Chandan and a girl called Roopa, Chandan asks Roopa,

CHANDAN. What would you do if you had to choose between a boy and a girl? Who would you choose?



ROOPA. A boy definitely! ( Dattani, 320 )

Even at such a young age, this little girl (Roopa) is well aware of the fact that male is always preferred in society. She's also emphasizing the value of a boy. She would rather be a boy if she had the choice.

Another important aspect that Dattani explores in the play is corruption. Corruption exists on all levels. Nobody appears to be immune to corruption in today's world. This particular play addresses the medical profession's ethical deterioration. Doctor Thakkar, in particular, is not immune to corruption.

We all know that government employees are not allowed to establish their own pharmacies or clinic. But this isn't the case. They have their own private clinics everywhere. They spend more time in their private clinic than in government hospitals, and they are seen charging lot of money from the patients. In the play, Doctor Thakkar wants a plot of land for his own private nursing home, so he accepts the bribe of a plot of land in Bangalore that is being given by Tara's grandfather for giving the third leg to Chandan instead of Tara in a surgery.

In other instances, we will find that Chandan also had a strong detest for hospitals. He says,

CHANDAN. I hate hospitals. The smells. The people. The sterility. (Dattani,322)

He despises hospitals since it was there when he and his twin sister were separated. He develops a strong dislike for all that a hospital stands for. It also alludes to the emotional separation he had to go through while in the hospital.

The next important aspect is identity. Chandan was heartbroken over the loss of his beloved sister. As a result, he relocates from India to London, attempting to bury his feelings of guilt over his sister's death by avoiding personal history. Avoiding one's personal history means avoiding one's own identity. He feels that he was the murderer of his sister. He changes his name from Chandan to Dan.

The next important aspect of significance is the crippled mentality. The play explores modern society's damaged mindset. People with disabilities are still looked down upon, although they are well-educated. Since Tara doesn't have a limb. So she is seen as a freak. Dattani has used her as a symbol of social oppression. We understand that she is murdered by the social system. It is society itself that eats up Tara which makes her develop negative feelings about her capability, and about herself. It is society that brings about her downfall. People mocked her calling her a freak. Even her grandfather denied her inheritance.



Forgiveness is another essential aspect that Dattani deals with in the play. Tara forgives everyone despite her maltreatment in the hands of her near and dear ones as well as the society. In the long run of the play, she dies a peaceful death.

Guilt is another important aspect that is being exposed in the play, *Tara*. Chandan is consumed with an enormous amount of guilt that because of him, his sister is deprived of everything and dies. Because of this guilt, Chandan changes his name from Chandan to Dan and he moves to London to repress this guilt. This guilt is not of his own will. He feels guilty from the very beginning. This is concerning his relationship with his sister, that every time he is given a better prospect in life. Tara's mother is also consumed with guilt because she acknowledges the fact that she and her husband decide to supply the third leg to Chandan instead of Tara. She was so consumed with guilt that she was even ready to give her own kidney to save her daughter's life.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it is to be admitted that the play has a variety of aspects. They are all covered with Austen's signature wit, including the literary device of free indirect discourse that permits a particular style of in-depth, sometimes satirical narration. He has added a new dimension and marvelous favor to contemporary Indian English Drama and has a significant place due to his innovative thematic concerns and deals in his plays with feminine sensibility. We can observe how Dattani makes *Tara* more fascinating by effectively combining several ideas and weaving them together appropriately. His play depicts the harsh realities of life. *Tara* is the story of every girl child born in an Indian home, whether urban or rural.

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