

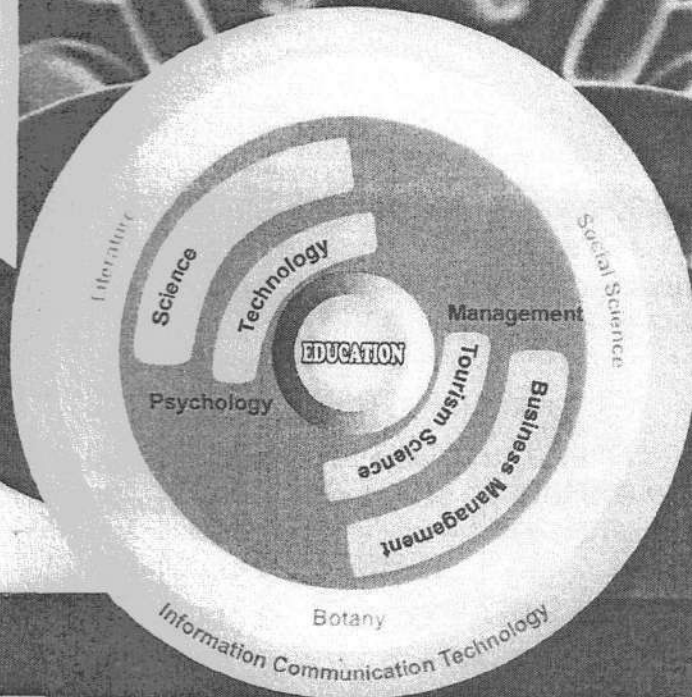
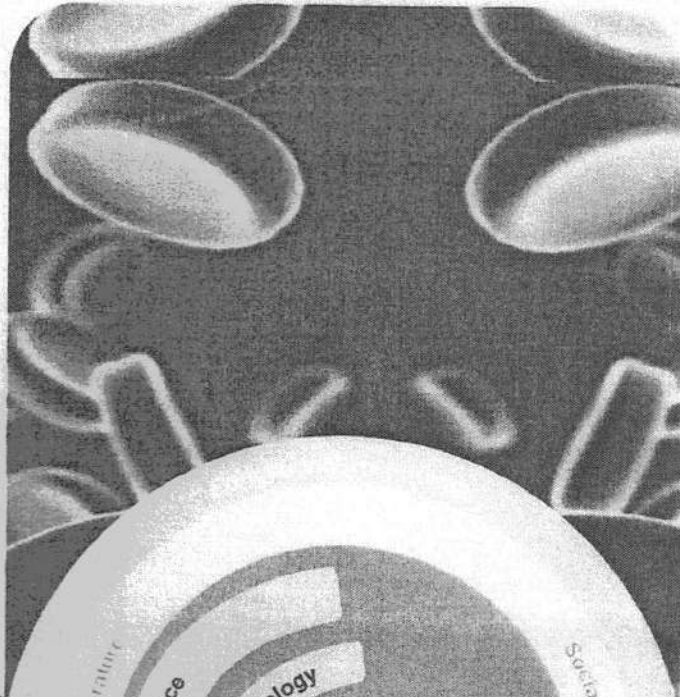
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Prof. R. B. Shinde



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A PSYCHO- SOCIO GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN MAHESH DATTANI'S PLAY: TARA

Mr. Rajendra B. Shinde

*Associate Professor Head, Department of English Arts, Science & Commerce
College, Ozar(Mig)*

The present paper attempts to analyse a psycho- socio gender discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's Play *Tara*. Mahesh Dattani's plays depict unarticulated, queer social issues associated with gays, eunuchs, the child sexual abuse, AIDS and the gender discrimination. There is variety of themes in Dattani's stage, radio and screen plays . The list of Stage Plays to his credit are: *Where There's a Will*(1988), *Dance Like a Man*(1989), *Tara*(1990), *Bravely Fought the Queen*(1991), *Final Solutions*(1992-93), *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998) and *Thirty Days in September*(2001). His Radio Plays are: *Do the Needful*(1997), *Seven Steps Around the Fire*(1998), *The Swami and Winston*(2000), *A Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child*(2000), *Clearing the Rubble*(2000) and *Uma and the Fairy Queen*(2003). He has three screen plays of high repute and recognition to his credit: *Mango Souffle* (2002), *Morning Raga*(2004) and *Ek Alag Mausam*(2005). Successes became darlings for Mahesh Dattani after he turned the first playwright writing in English to receive the central Sahitya Akademi Award for his collection *Final Solutions and Other Plays in 1998*. The utopian socialist **Charles Fourier** coined the word ' **feminisme**' in 1837. Feminist political activists commonly campaign on issues such as reproductive rights (including the right to safe, legal abortion, access to contraception), violence within a domestic partnership, maternity leave, sexual harassment, street harassment, discrimination and rape. Men feminists today argue that feminism is a grass-root movement that seeks to cross boundaries based on social class, race, culture and religion. They also debate on certain issues like rape and incest. Themes explored in feminism include patriarchy, stereotyping, objectification, sexual objectification and oppression. The

women are marginalized and treated as secondary in the family and the society. A **psychological identity** relates to self-image, self-esteem and individuality. An important part of identity in psychology is a significant degree how an individual views him or herself both as a person and in relation to other people, ideas and nature. **Sociology** places some explanatory weight on the concept of role behaviour. The notion of identity negotiation may arise from the learning of social roles through personal experiences. Identity negotiation is a process in which a person negotiates with society at large regarding the meaning of his or her identity. Psychologist most commonly use the term 'identity' to describe 'personal identity' meanwhile, sociologist often use the term to describe 'social identity' or the collection of group membership that define the individual. **Kate Millett** in her *Sexual Politics* (1970) explored the term '**patriarchy**' and finds it the cause of women's oppression. "Sex is determined biologically, but gender is a psychological concept which refers to culturally acquired sexual identity". According to **Cora Kaplan** "An ideology is the universal penile club which men of all classes use to beat women with." **Simone de Beauvoir's** *The Second Sex* (translated in America in 1953) described the women as second class citizens. '**Tara**' is a play that reflects the social and psychological plight and suffering of the girl child Tara Patel and her brother Chandan Patel who are born as Siamese twins. Tara's tragic death is caused due to society's male chauvinistic attitude. Her mother Bharati also dies due to the anguish because of injustice done to Tara by herself. In '**Tara**' Mahesh Dattani depicts the themes like gender identity, discrimination, middle-class life, socio-psychological gender identity, etc... 'Tara' is a play that questions the society that treats the children of the same womb in two different ways. Dattani's 'Tara' is a tragic, problem play about a boy-Chandan and a girl-Tara who are joined together at the hip and have to be separated surgically. It centres on the emotional or psychological separation that grows between two conjoined twins (Siamese twins) following the discovery that their physical separation was manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favour the boy (Chandan) over the girl (Tara). According to **Erin Mee**, 'Tara and Chandan are two sides of the same self rather

than two separate entities and that Dan, in trying to write the story of his own childhood, has to write Tara's story. Dan writes Tara's story to rediscover the neglected half of himself, as a means of becoming whole'. It is the story of every girl child born in Indian family whether urban or rural. The situation is complicated if the girl is physically challenged or there is any other physical or mental deformity in her. The Siamese twins, Chandan and Tara Patel, an operation to separate the twins at birth, leaves Tara crippled for life. Throughout the play we can feel that she bears grudge against the society. All these factors combine to create the social system in which the girl child has to live and die. Tara is killed by social system, which controls the minds and action of the people. Mahesh Dattani has presented the reality of the woman playing second role to man. Both Chandan and Tara suffer due to psychological mindset of society. He escapes to London with his guilty consciousness by changing his old identity by changing his name as Dan. Right from the beginning we can see the difference between male and female in scene where Bharati has finished her pooja, and Patel is getting ready to go to work. Another example is when Tara explains to Roopa about the conversation between father and son,

Tara: The men in the house were deciding on whether they were going to go hunting while the women looked after the cave.

(Collected Plays of Mahesh Dattani 2000 page no.328)

Now, here, we can see the Indian Gender Perspective that man has to work for his family, where as women have to work only in the house. Her work is to look after her house, husband and children. This is her world. She can't break this rule. Dattani establishes that mother and daughter relationship is ultimately subordinated to the directives of patriarchy the relationship of Bharati and Tara is subordinated to her subjugation to the expectations of the society. She has no free will and her compassion for Tara, proves weak in her preference for her son Chandan. Bharati is the victim of this collective social system. According to Adrienne Rich "Though motherhood is the experience of woman, the institution of motherhood is under male control and the physical situation of becoming a mother is disciplined by men. This glorious

Chandan : I didn't forget her. She was lying deep inside, out of reach... (324).

There is another example in which we can see this gender perspective of male-dominance. When Mr. Patel says to Chandan,

Mr. Patel: I was just thinking... It may be a good idea for you to come to the office

with me.

Chandan : We'll both come with you.

Mr. Patel: No! (328)

So, here, we can see that these above words of Mr. Patel represent the male-dominance of Indian society. Mr. Patel says to join the office to Chandan, not to Tara. Mr. Patel very well knows that what is good or bad for Chandan and Tara. "it may be good for you..." this shows that coming office is good thing for Chandan and when Chandan says that he and Tara, both will come to the office. At that time, Mr. Patel completely denies for that. For Tara, the good thing is to work at home or help her mother. And another thing that Mr. Patel always thinks about future plans for Chandan. He never thinks Tara's future. Also, we can see the difference between the two genders. In our Indian family, people always think about boy's future, first, because people give more significance to boy than girl. A girl has to learn how to cook/ how to look after house, how to behave with other. All these things a girl must learn otherwise people criticize her and her family. If we talk about a boy, he has to follow his father. He should become a support of his father. He has to learn, how to make his business progressive. How to deal in such situations in the case of business. All these things, a boy must learn. This is how our Indian society believes in case of boy and girl. These are the parameters in which a boy and a girl have to believe according to their parameters. And this thing, we can see clearly in the case of Chandan and Tara. His father is planning to send Chandan to America for his education but Tara is ignored for further education. After operation, when Bharati knows the condition of Tara, at that time she realizes her mistake but it is too late to repent on it. She can't

motherhood is imposed on woman condition that entire life.” In the play ‘Tara’ in the background of conflict of familial relationship, Dattani shares the anguish of gender discrimination in society. Tara is killed by social system, which controls the minds and action of the people. The social action of the play has been subordinated to psycho-Philosophical issues integrated in gender bias. In ‘Tara’ Mahesh Dattani concentrates on the emotional crisis of Chandan hence the action is almost internalized. All the major Characters in Tara, Bharti, Mr. Patel and Chandan, suffer with uncompromising sense of guilt and everyone seeks an outlet for guilt sharing the suffering of Tara more than social dilemma, the psychological tension of each character is more prominent with a view to compensate for his lost, he alienates from his social environment.

Chandan: My progress so far, I must admit, has been zeroI keep staring at my

Type writer everyday, wondering how best to turn my anguish into drama. (324)

Thus here Chandan expresses his internal psychological conflict .Bharati isn't only guilty but also nervous about Tara's future, her concerns for the future of Tara reflects her own insecurity. This anxiety emerged out of these reasons : The tradition of patriarchal society, her handicapped condition after separation, misery born out of apathy of society, the psyche condition of Bharati. If the process is to be examined in context the conflict is generated out of the gender discrimination. Tara is designed to expose of social perception, Bharati's more pathetic even than that of Tara and Chandan. The play “Tara” without debate is a tragedy of the confrontation of Individual choices against social conditions. This play is a family tragedy in which the members of the family are torn apart in pieces. Mr. Patel, Bharati, Chandan (Dan) and Tara, these four people involve us in their life and realize us what kind of intolerable pain they are enduring. Chandan escapes to London, changes his name as Dan and attempts to repress the guilt he feels over his sister's death .

people asked about how the baby died , they could say that she choked while drinking her milk. (349)

Here Roopa tries to disappoint Tara and make her conscious about her being female. When Tara teases her that her one tit is smaller than the other, she is angry and says,

Roopa: How dare you! You one legged thing! (369) Roopa, Prema, Nalini are representative of social critics who comment and laugh at Tara's artificial leg. The above words represent Roopa's true identity. First, she insults Tara about her leg and then she shows her sympathy towards Tara's situation. She is like a chameleon. She keeps changing her colours in dialogues according to situations towards people. Tara is a very strong girl. She is emotionally strong than Chandan. Life has taught a lot of things to Tara. She is ready to do social work in the following utterance,

Tara: Oh, what a waste! A waste of money. Why spend all the money to keep me

alive? It cannot matter whether I live or die. There are thousands of poor

sick people on the roads who could be given care and attention, and I think

I know what I will make of myself. I will be carer for those people... (370)

The above words of Tara show us her psychological understanding of the poor and sick people. She has seen all the colours of life. In a way, Dattani has shown Tara physically challenged, but mentally strong. She is the victim of the patriarchal society. In a way, Chandan is responsible for that. Because during the operation Bharati and her father favored boy and told the doctor Mr. Thakkar to save the boy. This shows the cruel identity of the Indian society. At that time, Bharati and her father think about a boy, because, perhaps, they thought that boy can hold the heritage of his father and can be helpful to his father in his business. So, a boy is better than a girl. Like Tara, Bharati is also victimized

apologize for her mistake to Mr. Patel because she does not consult in critical situation. So, Mr. Patel never forgives Bharati.

Bharati: I want to give her a part of me. (344)

Though she is ready to donate her kidney for Tara, he rejects it. Now, she shows her strong feelings towards Tara but all in vain. In the beginning of the play, Bharati convinces Tara to drink milk. At that time, we can understand that it is her love for Tara but when we come to know the secret, we can't believe that she had told to save the boy. In both cases, at the time of operation and when she loves Tara, Bharati is forced or pressured to do the thing. In a way, she is victimized by the patriarchal society. In this family drama, Mr. Patel, Bharati, Chandan and Tara, all these four characters try to live in their world and that is why they are talking about future plans. This mechanism requires reviving, which is worse than death. Bharati bribes Roopa because Tara would not feel that she has no friends. By doing this, Bharati tries to correct her mistake. Moreover, she has stopped socializing, because she cannot endure when people ask about Tara. In a way, she is running away from reality.

When Chandan comes across the reality that he is responsible for Tara's death (tragedy). He cannot tolerate more and then he goes to London. He changes his name as "Dan". In a way, he also, like Bharati, escapes from reality. They both are escapists. On the other side,

Mr. Patel has to face the society because of Bharati's mistake. He endures the society's harshness silently. This sows her love for Tara and Mr. Patel takes Bharati's love to Tara as Bharati is pretending. She spoils his children's future; this kind of accusation is accused on Bharati by Mr. Patel. This is how Dattani has the psychological conflict between characters. Roopa represents society. She has a habit of discussing about people and spreading rumours.

**Roopa: The Patels in the old days were unhappy with getting girl babies-you know
dowry and things like that- so they used to drown them in milk...So
when**

by the male-dominant society. Because she did as her father said while operation. Mr Patel tells the truth to both children how a scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl. The chances were slightly better that the leg would survive ...on the girl .But their grandfather and mother had a private meeting with Dr. Thakkar. They decided to give the third leg to Chandan .The doctor was bribed to do so by their politically strong grandfather .The surgery was performed the boy had two legs but lasted only for two days. Chandan repents at the end of the play.

Chandan: I no longer desire that freedom . I move . Without meaning. I forget Tara. I forget that I had a sister- with whom I had shared a body. In one

comfortable womb. Till we were forced out...and separated. But somewhere, sometime, I look up at shooting star...and wish that a long-

forgotten person would forgive me. Wherever she is. Forgive me , Tara.

Forgive me for making it my tragedy.(380)

Conclusion: Thus the play 'Tara' is a play that reflects the social and psychological plight and suffering of the girl child Tara Patel and her brother Chandan Patel who are born as Siamese twins. Tara's tragic death is caused due to society's male chauvinistic attitude. Tara and Chandan are two sides of the same self rather than two separate entities and that Dan, in trying to write the story of his own childhood, has to write Tara's story. Dan writes Tara's story to rediscover the neglected half of himself, as a means of becoming whole. All characters in the play- Tara, Chandan, Mr. Patel and Bharati psychologically, socially suffer a lot. In the play 'Tara' in the background of conflict of familial relationship, Dattani shares the anguish of gender discrimination in society. Tara is killed by social system, which controls the minds and action of the people. The social action of the play has been subordinated to psycho-philosophical issues integrated in gender bias. In 'Tara' Mahesh Dattani concentrates on the emotional crisis of Chandan hence the action is almost

internalized. All the major Characters- Tara, Bharati, Mr. Patel and Chandan, suffer with uncompromising sense of guilt and everyone seeks an outlet for guilt sharing the suffering of Tara more than social dilemma, the psychological tension of each character is more prominent. This gender disparity based on psyche of male centred, patriarchal society, that subordinates women and places them secondary in Indian urban or rural context should be ended somewhere. There should be actual gender equality in the social and psychological context in the whole world.

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