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PORTRAYAL OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN MAHESH DATTANI'S TARA

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ABSTRACT

Mahesh Dattani is one of India's best and most serious contemporary playwrights, writing in English. He is the first playwright in English to be honored with the "Sahitya Akademi Award". He arise voice through his writings where he saw the vice of the society against the innocent. He brings out the darkness to the light of the world through his words. Most of his plays are discussed about Taboo issues, Gender bias, social discrimination and marginalised area of the society. This paper is a modest attempt to study the gender-based injustice and how the male given preference over the female in an Indian family. The play deals with the emotional separation of two conjoined twins and the manipulation of their family to favour the boy child over the girl child.

A good art is written to the lead humanity in a right path. Whenever the society chooses the wrong trail, whenever a race is devastated by another one and where a naive is perturbed, writings are the first thing to stand against these evils. Dattani arises through his writings where he sees the vice of the society against the innocent. He brings out the darkness to the light of the world through his words. Most of his plays are discussed about Taboo issues, Gender bias, social discrimination and marginalised area of the society.

Mahesh Dattani is one of India's the best and the most serious contemporary playwrights, writing in English. He is the first playwright in English to be honoured with the "Sahitya Akademi Award". A director, actor, dancer, teacher and writer, Mahesh Dattani was born on August 7, 1958. Before entering the world of theater, he worked as a copywriter in an advertising firm. In 1986, he wrote his first play *Where There's a Will*. Since then he has never looked back. There is a long chain of plays written by him as *Tara*, *Night Queen*, *Final Solutions*, *30days in September*, *Dance like a Man* and many more. One of his films *Dance like a Man* has won the award for the best picture in English awarded by the National Panorama. His plays not only center the tribulations of female from the society but also from their own families too.

Dattani is a silent spectator of the Indian society, he observes everything in a witness manner and passes through his words to the audience. One of his plays, *Tara* deals about the story of every girl child born in Indian family whether in urban or in rural. It is the third dramatic work of Dattani. The play was first performed as *Twinkle Tara* at Chowdiah Memorial Hall Bangalore on 23 oct 1990. It is an enchanting play that questions the role of a culture that treats the children from the same family in two different ways.

In the play *Tara*, Tara is the central character and protagonist of the play. Chandan is a brother of Tara and also a narrator of the story, who lives in the hunting memory of his sister Tara. The play opens in London while

he is writing a story about his sister Tara in the name of Twinkle Tara. It is not just a play but a confession to his sister for the bias done to her in the name of his own. Dan is the second name of Chandan. He has changed his name to free himself from the burden of injustice done to Tara. He considers himself responsible for his sister's death. So he goes to London, he excommunicates himself from others. He tries to live in the new world and he tries to write the story about his sister Tara as Twinkle Tara.

He starts writing a drama on Tara. The play Tara presents the story of a Siamese twin connected with each other down the chest and requires an efficient surgical operation. The problem is a psychological one in which Bharati and Patel's decision plays a vital role. The twins Chandan and Tara take birth with three legs and the biological condition makes it clear that third leg should be allowed to be a part of the female child. But Patel and Bharati favor the male child Chandan and decide to donate two legs to the boy.

The partiality and injustice start here. The reason is that they prefer the male child because he would carry forward the family name. The situation becomes worse, as the girl is physically challenged or there is any physical or mental deformity in her. She would remain unmarried and bring defame to family. The decision was influenced by the maternal grandfather of children, a politician, who favors to make male child physically fit and complete. Dr.Thakkar also decides to fix the 3rd leg on to the male baby's body to favour the boy over the girl.

The leg that had survived only for 2 days with Chandan could have been accompanied Tara's forever. This operation to separate the twins at birth devastated Tara and leaves her crippled for life. It is tragic that the mother also supports in the act of attaching the 3rd leg to the boy's body. It shows that a woman herself is the enemy of women. After the operation, when her mother knows the condition of Tara, she realises her mistake but it is too late to repent on it. She feels the pangs of her past guilt. Now she wants to give more and more love and comforts to Tara. Bharati is much fearful about the future of her daughter. She determines to donate her kidney to give a new life to Tara when there is another donator available, which ultimately turns useless.

Patel disapproves her idea of giving her kidney to Tara. Mr.Patel, an emblem of chauvinism, allows Chandan to enjoy greater preferences and Tara is left to enjoy the position of a subaltern. The fact that consciously or unconsciously all the privileges are offered to the son. Even though Tara is more intelligent, he only gets favours.

The play, beginning itself is carousing that the twins Chandan and Tara were treated in different manner by everyone. The family tries to provide education and carrier to the male child but not for the female one, even though she is smarter than the male child. Patel asks Chandan to go to an office with him but not for Tara, he seeks her to help her mother in the kitchen.

Patel : What are you two doing?

Chandan : Mummy's Knitting and I'm helping her sort her mistake.

Tara : Let Tara do it.

It is not the idea of the independent family about the sexism but Dattani illustrates the world view on the prejudice of having a male child. Throughout the play, the girl bears some kind of bitterness against the society. Some way she hates the outside from her home. Her world is very small, it's about her father, mother and her brother who is very close to her from whom itself, it represents the normal Indian girl children who having very less circle compare to boys. Its shows through

Bharathi: She... she must make more friends. Chandan is all right-he has his writing, but she...

In a culture, where the Gods and rivers are called in the name of women and the very same where a girl is marginalised by her own family in the name of gender variation. Still, there are differences between male and female child. All the promises of equality between male and female, equal opportunities to women in all the fields are false.

The play explains that how a girl is discriminated by her own family. Here Tara and Chandan are born simultaneously to the same parents, but the family cares about his education, career and everything because he is a boy. At the same time, all the privileges are repudiating to her because she is a girl. Tara is a

sympathetic and energetic girl who had all the qualities of a normal girl. If she had been given normal support by her parents, she might have shone like a star as her name signifies.

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