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## 'Tara': A Voice of Indian Girl

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Mahesh Dattani, one of the significant Indian English dramatists who always throws the light on the marginalized humans of Indian Society such as minorities, women, gay and eunuch. His significant works are like *Tara*; a play portrays how Indian conservative society differentiates between man and woman even in the modern age, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*; focusing on a condition of the gay community, *Final Solution*; deals with the communal riots where innocents become a victim of it. Dattani is the first Indian English Dramatist who won the Sahitya Academi award. As an actor, writer, teacher, director and producer, he focuses on the current issues of fast growing India. Dattani portrays one of the present problems of Indian society in his play 'Tara'. The play was first performed at The Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1990 as *Twinkle Tara*. Subsequently, the play was professionally staged as *Tara* on 9 November 1991. The play portrays a scenario of man and woman in India and focuses on the attitude of a typical Indian society toward woman. When we peek into the mythologies of India, we have thousands of goddesses whom we worship even as Lakshami and Sarswati with the lord Ganesha. As Manu says:

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यते रमन्ते तत्र देवता।

The question is do we follow this old tradition? Do we consider woman as a goddess or only we worship in the form of idols? Is she burden for the parents due to so-called customs and practices like "Dowry system", and constructed rules by the conservative society? Even in the whole world from the many centuries, the question of woman's role and discrimination between man and woman remain debatable. In the Victorian era, the great poet Lord Tennyson also addresses the man-made role of woman in his poem "The Princess",

“Man for the field and woman for the hearth  
Man for the sword and for the needle she,  
Man to command and woman to obey  
All else confusion”

These lines reveal how woman always considers for the works within the four walls. This attitude is seen in every corner of the world. This may be the reason why in all great fields all achievements are on the names of men whether it is a field of science, philosophy or Literature. Women had no right to vote early, New Zealand becomes the first country to give women the right to vote. Mary Wollstonecraft in her pamphlet, *A Vindication of the rights of woman* (1792), states that women are denied proper education, which prevents them empowerment. She argues that women should be treated as rational beings rather than objects.(p.166) There is a remark of Simon De Beauvior, a great French philosopher, novelist and playwright in her work, *The Second Sex* ;

“One is not born but rather becomes a woman.”(p.295)

This shows how man-made society marginalizes women. Constructed society always places her secondary position. From the beginning, women are treated as they are born to get husband and produce children. But now the situation is little bit different. Women become conscious to their so called image. Now, whenever they get an opportunity, they spark, they blossom. In India, today a woman have not achieved her place as men has achieved yet. She has to struggle more to develop herself. No doubt, woman has facing this problem from the centuries, gradually, she has been emerging as a new woman; an empowered, strong, intellectual and independent woman. Mahesh Dattani has brought out the problem of gender discrimination in front of us through his play *Tara*. In all classes: upper, middle and lower class of India at some or other way, woman's voice is suppressed. The degree of oppression may be different. However, tyranny is there. For example, woman from village struggles to get an opportunity for higher study, woman from middle class struggle to establish her identity in her community, woman from down trodden struggles to sustain her against her drunkard husband. Dattani has centralized women, and focused on woman's weaknesses and strength, dependence and feeling of independents, sensitivity and intellectuality. A play “Tara” represents weaknesses of Bharti as a dependent and “dedicated” wife of Mr. Patel, and sensitive mother of Tara whereas the play also shows a strength of Tara which reflects in her dreams of becoming independent girl and to serve the needy people even as a handicapper. Her intellectuality reveals when she answers her neighbor girl, Roopa ;

“I'd sooner be one-eyed, one-armed and one-legged than be an imbecile like you” (p.49)

Here, Tara expresses that she does not want to live her life as living by her mother Bharti and by Roopa. She wants to spark like the star.

Mahesh Dattani has given two voices of woman; one is typical traditional suppressed woman and second is an intellectual woman. Bharti lives her life accepting her position as a secondary, She looks after her husband and family very carefully, never interferes in the family matters and accepts the decision taken by the head of house, Mr. Patel. Before marriage, she remains obedient to her father who is a rich industrialist and MLA. Her father has chosen Mr. Patel as her life partner, she accepts him without raising any question. After marriage, she is “under the shelter of her husband”, Mr. Patel. Here, intentionally using the word “under the shelter because she is economically dependent on her husband. This symbolizes a passiveness of woman and active role of man. She seems like “human without being”. She represents the traditional Indian woman who used to stay at home managing the house, rearing the children and preserving the family tradition. Mr. Patel’s attitude toward her is not like his better half but like a caretaker and someone who is only for carrying out his heritage. When she is giving the birth to conjoined twins, her father takes the decision of joining the third leg. He chooses the male child, Chandan rather than female. At the time of decision, Bharti does not play any role; she could take the decision herself to whom she desired to give the limb. But, she found there helpless. Then after she always feels regret for her decision when she experiences the troubles and ill-treatment of her daughter, Tara who always faces in the patriarchal society. The proud thing is Tara, however she is handicapped, has a tremendous courage to prove herself. Compare to her brother Chandan, she is smart and intellectual girl. She always dreams to be independent and achiever. She does not want to be like Bharti and like other obedient traditional girls who only care for their external beauty. She represents new woman; woman with brain not only with ‘beauty, body and delicacy’. She wants to be like Mother Teresa. And wants to serve her country and down trodden; suppressed people. This attitude reveals in her frankness behavior to all. When Chandan her brother advises her to care for the people around, she replies;

“Selfish? Yes, I am. I have the right to be selfish, like everyone else!”(p.51)

Here, her strength and confidence shows her emerging as an empowering woman. Nevertheless, this strength and courage is ignored by her father and her grandfather. After the death of her grandfather, he leaves all property for the Chandan and not a single penny for Tara. Besides this, when Chandan asks his father why is he (Bharti’s father) not giving any money to Tara who has an equal right in property, Mr. Patel rudely answers him that it is his wish to give Chandan not to Tara. As a head of the family, Mr. Patel plans for the further education of his son, Chandan but not for his daughter, Tara. It shows how he differentiates between son and daughter. When Patel announces to the family about his future plan, Bharti questions;

PATEL: Chandan is going to study further and he will go abroad for his higher Studies.

BHARTI: And Tara?

PATEL: When have you ever allowed me to make any plans for her? (p.30)

The statement of Patel shows his escaping nature toward her girl. It throws the light on how man's decisions for the woman shapes her future in Indian society. But, strong Tara never minds it because she has a faith on her mother Bharti. This faith has been broken when Tara comes to know that her mother in her helplessness took the decision to join the third leg to Chandan not to Tara. Ultimately, this leads her to death at the end of the play.

Chandan is in the play only emerging as a new man who believes in giving equal opportunity to man and woman. So he does not ready to go even college without her sister Tara. Due to treatment, there is a time for Tara to skip her study, Chandan shows his desire not to go without Tara.

“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!”(p.30)

We need today a man like Chandan rather than Mr.Patel and Bharti's father. Mahesh Dattani minutely portrays how women become a victim of Indian conservative society. When woman raises her voice against traditional wrong practices, her voice has been suppressed. Even in the modern 21<sup>st</sup> century India, many girls like Tara do not get social and economical support to educate them from the society. Although Dattani has focused on the issues relevant to middle class people, the problems especially of woman, Dattani deals in his works can be observed in the upper and lower class families also. Women from upper class have expected to take care their husbands and other family members neglecting their desires to do work outside. No doubt, Women from this class get an opportunity of higher study but the difference in treatment and in attitude toward man and woman is still there. Unlike upper class woman, the biggest problem of woman in lower class is education. Today, these women are far away from literacy. They are not aware of the benefits of it, and their mindset is they are born to serve men . For example, in village, many wives bear their husbands' tyranny. Girls are sent either for labour or to keep at home for household work. So, through the Play *Tara*, we can come to the point that Tara and Bharti represent the condition of woman in India. Even today new tension for Girls is their security. We observe around that due to insecurity of woman, parents do not send their girls far from the home, alone for higher education, they do not allow them to stay in hostel. Like Tara who has desire to spark, Mr. Patel makes a plan for Chandan to send him abroad for higher education whereas he never thinks that should he ask her daughter what she wants ? Does she have any desire to fulfill? Even, Mr. Patel has no idea about an intelligence of her daughter. We observe this attitude in our society. Many times, it happens that family takes a loan for higher education of a son. Therefore, Girls do compromise in their education and limit their talent upto the local area. This happens due to the conservative mindset of Indian families of both man and woman like Mr.Patel and Bharti. If Bharti had determined that she would not agree with decision of her father but would take decision of her own. She might save her daughter from suffering. The reason is if woman is handicap either mentally or physically, she suffers more compared to man. The need is to develop strong attitude; to grow confidence in her. It is said that women are emotionally strong whereas men are intellectually. We should not forget that sometimes-

emotional strength compels woman to do bravery. There was a news about girl's courage in " Sandesh Newspaper on 9<sup>th</sup>Oct.2015", It was about an 11 years girl from tribal community of Jharkhand. That girl was carrying her younger brother on her shoulder almost 8 Km on barefoot in order to reach hospital because her brother had a fever. And no one was there to help her. Such emotionally appealing incident but if we see otherwise we can see the courage; " Jajba", determination power of the girl and her dedication toward her brother. If she gets an opportunity, she can transform her courage and strength into her achievement in the field of sport and in other area. The question is do her parents know her skills and if they know, whether they utilize them for her development. The answer is 'No'. She is SHE and belongs to such community where no one knows their rights to raise the voice. In the Play, 'Tara' , circumstances are different ,Tara belongs to educated family. Mr. Patel, Dr.Thakkar and Bharti's father, so called intellectual man who still uneducated due to their mentality. The play ends with many unresolved questions. Like Tara, Many girls want to spark, and the need is equal treatment and equal opportunity by her family and her society. For us, It times to stand and raise the question, should we not give woman an equal opportunity to develop herself? SHE is not a burden, not responsibility, but a boon for our society. Gandhiji says; "when we educate a son, he illuminates himself, but when we educate a daughter, she illuminates the whole family".

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