

TRAUMA OF A GIRL IN MAHESH DATTANI'S TARA

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Abstract

Mahesh Dattani's plays address social problems such as gender identity, gender discriminations, sexual abuse, child abuse, dominance of social system, identity crisis, conflicts between tradition and modern and communal pressure and issues of the LGBTQ community. This paper offers an insight into the traumatic issues undergone by a girl child born in an Indian family. A concealed truth shatters the life of every one in a family. The mental agony experienced by every character is captured realistically by the dramatist. Tara is the main character who is snatched of the rights to live. She exemplifies the life of so many victims like her.

Keywords: Trauma, Agony, Gender issues, Discrimination, and Society.

Introduction

Mahesh Dattani is a great Indian dramatist, actor, and director. His plays bring attention to the society's indiscernible problems. He has written more than one and a half dozen plays with different themes, tones and treatments. His literary career begins with the first play "Where There is a will". It is the first long drama that deals with the emotions of the Gujarati community of the middle class. Dattani's entire dramas can be categorised into three forms: Stage plays, Radio plays, and Screen plays. He has written plays, Such as *Where There is a Will*(1988), *Dance like a Man* (1989), *Tara*(1990), *Bravely fought the queen*(1991), *Final solutions*(1993), *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*(1998), *Seven circles Round the fire* is a radio play for BBC(1998), *The Murder that never was*(2000), *Thirty days in September*(2001), *Brief candle*(2009), *Where did leave my Padua*(2012), and *The Big fat city*(2012). As an Indian writer, he has won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi prize for the play "Final solutions" in 1998 and "Dance like a Man" received the National Panorama award for best picture in English drama.

Review of Literature

Yaqub, Huma (2013) in "Exploring Identity: A Reading of Mahesh Dattani's Tara" says, Dattani's central characters are always exclusive. His choices are more modern in nature and characters signify the psychological trauma of the present. The research concentrates on identity of the self and self-integration. According to Huma, the movement from past to present and vice-versa help in understanding the pain, mysteries, human connection and viciousness of the society one lives in.

Walia, Divya (2014) has analysed the work of Mahesh Dattani with different notions in mind, in her "Echoes of Feminism in Mahesh Dattani's Tara", she talks about the touch of feminism in this particular work *Tara*. The research focuses on the discernment faced by girl child in Indian society. According to Walia, Tara reverberates the cry of each and every

marginalized female in the society. Women are not allowed to be decision makers, they do not have an identity, they are not allowed to edify themselves, they are deprived of even the basic rights.

Babu, G (2014) in his article "Gender-Based Injustice in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*", talks about the gender-based issue. He points out the implication given to male children in the Indian society. This is not an issue of the past but is predominant in the present too. He has also dealt with child abuse and the ways in which a girl child born in India undergoes some kind of exploitation.

Traumatic experiences of Tara

Tara which is set in the early stages of scientific advancements shows the underdeveloped thinking of the people. Giving prominence to a male child, and sidelining the emotions of a female child is the focal point of the drama. This particular play set in the early twentieth century throws lights on scientific advancements; wherein the doctors successfully operate on the conjoined twins, but as a doctor he fails in his authenticity by abiding by the words of a rich man and his daughter which ultimately results in the death of the girl child. A glimpse of modernity is provided with the appearance of Dan and his father. The father figure wants the son to get educated and settle in life, on the other hand doesn't bother to think of a future of his daughter. Thus, he remains a conventional father, with the desires to educate only the son. According to him there are differences in the way a girl child has to be brought up, and the works to be undertaken by the boys, he hates the way Chandan tries to help his mother.

The shift from London, to the hospital in India, to the house of Patel's reveals the interconnection between the events and the seriousness hidden behind. Human emotions exude through the dialogues of every character, until the end the truth seems to be partially translucent and none could guess what might have occurred. The playwright has completely controlled the transfer of elements and audience are made to sit through until the climax of the play. Every scene, whether is the watching a movie, or visiting a doctor and trying to pen down thoughts they are inter-related. Thus, there is a natural flow as the play progresses. The characters are introduced in the first act and as the play progresses into the second the incidents are revealed which in turn gives the glimpse of the grave secret hidden by the parents.

Tara, by Mahesh Dattani is a play centring round an Indian family consisting of a mother named Bharathi and the father Mr. Patel who seem to be showering infinite love upon the twin children Tara and Chandan. They are born as conjoined twins and do not share many internal organs vitally, so the parents desire to make them undergo an operation to separate them. The doctors show their concurrence in separating them and both are given one prosthetic leg each to lead a normal life.

From the outset of the play, it is evident mother is more of a caring type and father does not involve much emotionally when it was about Tara. Tara remains perpetually weak physically, but her mental strength is admirably strong and she every time proves to be a brave child than her brother Chandan. Bharathi on the other hand is always prepared to make Tara a weakling; she is shown to be worried of her not eating properly, not being physically strong, not mingling with other kids and not making new friends. She even requests Roopa to befriend Tara compulsively. Despite her nervous breakdown Bharathi is also ready to give one of her kidneys to Tara and she keeps insisting upon it to the doctor and to her husband. With the

successful operation comes the revelations, the true love is showered by the father and not the mother. She wanted the son to have two legs out of the three; though there were possibilities of the girl surviving better with the two legs the mother made the doctors do the opposite. A private meeting of her mother and grandfather and the doctor had changed the fate of the two children. They had decided to leave Tara with one leg which eventually led to amputating one of the two legs of Chandan immediately in two days. This revelation shatters Tara and Chandan is left with the guilt forever even after the death of Tara.

The metaphorical truth associated with the existence of Tara reveals, in every way she is looked upon as an additional burden which they wanted to get rid of. Dan, who is filled with remorse wants to get rid of the memories of Tara, though he tries his best, he is haunted by the thoughts of Tara. The mere thoughts of Tara, do not allow him to live a happy contented life and Dan remains a failure. Dan is indebted to Tara, it is her life which Dan is living. What Tara is offered by the members of the family, do not allow others to live happily even after she had left them, they were only haunted by the memories of Tara;

Dan: To tell you the truth, I had even forgotten I had a twin sister. Until I thought of her as subject-matter for my next literary attempt. Or maybe I didn't forget her. She was lying deep inside, out of reach...(4)

Though a girl child, Tara has all the rights to live her life. Doctors do their best to give her the chance to survive just as Chandan. They are considered to be miraculous kids, who have the grit to survive the difficult operation. The almighty bestows on Tara, the blessings to live a beautiful life, but sometimes people steal the rights and the same happens in the case of Tara. Her own mother steals her blessings of survival.

The mother has done the hideous crime with her father and snatched the birth-right of the girl. Tara's father steals the desire of living from Tara. At every point he tries to lower Tara, and instigate in her the feeling that she is the weakest amongst the two, and she does not have the rights to live strong and be braver than Chandan.

Tara is given the impression of being a weak girl who has least chances of survival. She is given the worst feelings by her own people. She has to lead a hard life, the pain of Jaipur artificial legs on one hand and physio therapies on the other, improper food intake, abnormal life all make Tara weak from within. Roopa, Nalini and Prema are the outsiders who contribute to weakness of Tara as well. They hate Tara, and Tara hates them, at least they show the true colors and do not hesitate in showing her who they are, but the members of the family though pretended to be loving, are the actual enemies of Tara.

The father makes Tara the weakest by his attitude, he makes her believe she could not do anything and is fit to sit at home counting the days of her life. He treats Tara as if she is strong and could handle anything boldly, forgetting the fact that Tara needs love and care;

Patel: Yes! Look at the way you treat Tara. As if she is made of glass. You coddle her, you pet her, you spoil her. She's grown up feeling she doesn't need anyone but you!

This attitude of the father makes the girl feel low in her morale. The fact of the mother's nervous breakdown breaks Tara. She feels the only person who loved and cared for her has had such a fate. Tara pretends being happy without her mother, she pretends being strong and her weakness reflects on Chandan as well. Though Chandan was a boy, well favoured by his mother and grandfather, they forget the truth he is the half of Tara, and they both share similar emotions. They try to give separate identity to Chandan forgetting the fact that his physical and

mental stabilities are similar to those of Tara. Chandan is in fact the weakest of the both and he is in need of support and not Tara. She is the boldest and faces the challenges of life strongly.

Tara: You're scared. You're scared you'll find out you can't do very much on your own!

Chandan: well, I'm sorry. Not everyone has your strength!

Tara: You're afraid. Afraid of meeting new people, people who don't know you. Who won't know how clever you are. You are afraid they won't see beyond your...

Tara: I don't. It's all the same. You. Me. There's no difference (41)

Conclusion

Thus, both the siblings share similar emotional imbalance, the trauma they undergo are of similar nature. Though the parents have different plans and want to give a new life to the boy, they forget the fact they are born conjoined to each other and have similarities in everything. The thought of separating and favouring the boy rather ruins every life. The girl dies of sickness, the boy continues to live with the pain forever, mother has nervous breakdown and father could never see his dreams getting fulfilled. The forceful separation of physique, emotions and the bonding make their lives tragic.

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