

A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CULTURE AND GENDER IDENTITY DISCRIMINATION IN MAHES DATTANI'S TARA

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Abstract

It is argued, 'Every work of art is a projection from the interior realm into exterior space where in becoming incarnated it achieves consciousness of elucidation of external reality has a greater authenticity and significance. In order to reconstruct the concept of 'self' within the limits of a literary work, a creative artist must keep his 'creative self' apart from his creative work. A dramatist in comparison of a poet has a better opportunity to eliminate his personality from his work and the issues taken in the literary text to be developed through the consciousness of the characters. Dattani possesses an exceptional sensibility for the suffering in society born out of gender discrimination. His vision not confined to socio-religious myths only, but he delves deep to examine the Psychic reactions of those who are the victims of them.

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'Self' and 'society' are two distinctive entities; still it is the harmony of the two that constitutes the balance of human life. The 'self' of an individual seeks its fulfillment through social contacts, familial relationship, societal commitments and religious faiths. The invisible 'self' interacts with the visible variables of social order and the harmony of the two, is the essence of human existence. On certain occasions, this harmony breaks and it results in uncompromising sense of loss. Dattani's vision is that individual can't survive in isolation but he has to make perpetual struggle to coordinate his 'will' with the scheme of nature and society.

The play Tara is basically related with the issue of gender bias. It is a pathetic dramatic representation of the suffering of two Siamese twins. Tara is about a boy and a girl, Siamese twins. I have taken medical liberty over here because Siamese twins are invariably of the same sex and they are surgically separated at birth. It was important for their survival and the play day's deals with their emotional separation. (2)

Besides the issue of gender bias, the play Tara has a more significant message to convey. The social relevance of the play has been subordinated to psycho-philosophical issues integrated in gender bias. Like several other plays, the plot of Tara is arranged around familial relationship where each individual in his own way has to bear the burden of

social values and their efforts to go beyond them bring helplessness in their lives. In Tara, Mr. Patel, the native of Gujarat, is married to Bharati, Kannadiga Cultural diversities and cultural prejudices make their relationship a failure. After this marriage, Mr. Patel was forced to leave his parental home because this relationship was not accepted by his parents. The shadows of insecurity loom large around him. He had a painful realization, “My father had to leave his parents because of the marriage . . . my mother’s father, and was a very influential person. But my dad didn’t take any help from him. Today my dad is the general manager of . . .” (CP 388). The insecurity of the separation from parents and subsequently the birth of Siamese twins, Mr. Patel find himself isolated. The insecurity increases with the interference of Bharati’s parents in his marital life. He was forced to decide for the surgery of kids for their separation.

In this surgery, the tragedy was imminent. The surgery was conducted, Tara becomes crippling, Bharati gone insane and Mr. Patel becomes violent and aggressive. Bharati was helpless to assert herself against the stigma of society and yielded to the suggestion of her father. She manages the surgery with the hidden motive of her preference to male child, Chandan. She ignores the identity of Tara and does not care for the consequences involving the risk of life of Tara.

In Tara, Dattani concentrates on the emotional crisis of Chandan hence the action is almost internalized. It begins at a multi-level set. The lowest level represents the house of Patels, the next level represents the bed sitter of old Chandan in suburb of London, on higher level Dr.Thakkar is seated in a chair and remains present until the end of the play. It begins in the mode of self confession of Dan who is anxious to poetry where ‘turbulent emotions’ can be recollected but is difficult to present them in drama. Dattani makes use of cinematographic technique in which he allows the memories to flood in, regarding his relationship with his sister, “to tell you the truth, I had even forgotten I had a twin sister” but simultaneously admits, “maybe I didn’t forget her. She was lying deep inside, out of reach. . .” (CP 324). His anguish affirms that forced physical separation could not make him free from the emotional ties, “two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb”. In these recollections, he reconstructs his union with his sister, their forced separation and the relationship of parents.

In the play Tara, all the major characters, 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. Mr. Patel for his sense of guilt born out of the injustice done to his parents fails to do justice with his wife. Bharati, in order to resist the anger of Mr. Patel’s past reflects in the discontent of his marital life. Baharati under the authority of rigid parents, unknowingly do injustice to her own daughter. The collective impressions of the

pattern of behavior including their inner psyche and external action, extends the impression that man has ultimately to bear the pain of guilt for his own wrong doings.

Dattani with the self-reflective method in *Tara* has created the possibility of objective assessment of each character along with a reflection on their interpersonal relationship. Chandan recalls the moments when separation took place. He used to feel himself stronger, “I am strong, my mother made me strong” (CP 330). On this flash he reveals the nature of the relationship of his parents and its impact on the ranging of Chandan and Tara.

This observation transgresses the limits of social spectrum and passes into the sublime domain of philosophical justification to the suffering of Dan. In order to satisfy his curiosity about the operation, Dan decides to arrange an interview with Dr. Thakkar, a doctor from Queen Victoria Hospital. Dattani after getting the involvement of audience provide detailed information about the process of separation of Siamese twins. Doctor reveals that the twins with conjunction of such complexity, are in most cases ‘still’ born developing from one fertilized ovum are invariably of the same sex with this information of doctor, there is a flash in which Tara appears, lifts the leg of her trouser to reveal her artificial limb. At this stage there is no conventional use of soliloquy but living conversation takes place between Tara and Chandan.

Roopa’s positive consent brings a great consolation for Bharati. In Dattani’s dramatic world, inner world of human consciousness is a focal point of tragic action. Bharati is not only guilty but also nervous. She is apprehensive about Tara’s future. In her passion, she decides to donate one of her kidney to Tara to restore happiness in her life. The emotional suffering of Bharati was a consolation for Mr. Patel. In Bharati’s suffering, he finds the reflections of his own thwarted parents. In one flash, Bharati expresses her anxiety to donate her kidney and Mr. Patel’s anxiety is to stop her from doing it. He imposes his authority, “you are in no condition to be taking major decisions” (344). When she pleads for his sympathy, he firmly asserts that Bharati’s suffering brings satisfaction to him, “Because . . . need I tell you? Because I don’t want you to have the satisfaction of doing it” (344) If in Bharati’s case, guilt leads to compensation, in Patel’s life, it transforms in to rebellion “you have to obey me it’s my turn now” (344). Bharati requests, “To let me do what I want to do” but her request makes no impression on the stoicism of Patel. He declares, “If all they must know, it will be from me. Not from you” (345). Bharati is also anxious for the career planning of Tara for her economic security her concern for the future of Tara reflects her own latent insecurity. This anxiety emerges out of three reasons-(a) The traditions of patriarchal society, (b) her handicapped condition after separation and (c) misery born out of the apathy of society. She has a realization that life is different for a girl and it is particularly intolerable for an unmarried girl. We many not know exactly what sex is but we do know that it is mutable, with the possibility of one

sex being changed into the other sex, that its frontiers are often uncertain, and that there are many stages between a complete male and complete female (4).

The play Tara without debate is a tragedy of the confrontation individual choices against social conventions. However, the suffering of Dan, Bharati and Mr. Patel is an argument in defense of the fact 'social self' of an individual is insignificant without its harmony with the psycho philosophical self. This elevated state of 'human self' is the ultimate reality and it is beyond above the concept of gender discrimination. The perception of the duality of male and female is an illusion of human consciousness. Dan's 'incompleteness' after his separation from Tara, Justifies that both of them are interdependent and not independent. Havelock Ellis has accepted ultimately.

References

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