

## THE REVOLUTION OF EQUALIZATION REFLECTED IN INDIAN LITERATURE With REFERENCE TO MAHESH DATTANI'S DRAMAS: *Tara Dance like a man*

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to highlight the role of identity in Mahesh Dattani's plays. It explores the social impact of gender Equalization. He was an accomplished writer who addressed marginalized issues. He projects the reality on the stage before the spectators. In Indian literature, these issues are deeply settled in the minds of human society. They treat humans based on gender. Sometimes they consider their own girl child a burden, reflected in Dattani's *Tara*. In "*Tara*," the lead character becomes the chief sufferer of this prejudice from the very beginning of the drama. He approaches the outstanding aspects of human life. On the other side, as a male character, Jairaj has to face inequality in the name of gender, which expresses the realistic condition of Indian. He bravely portrays the gender discrimination in his dramas. Both stories lead the plays through the use of family structure. He makes use of it as the backdrop for the enactment of the dramas.

**KEYWORDS:** Discrimination, Identity, Equality, Society, Injustice.

### **Introduction**

Literature rejuvenates the ideas of people. In this paper, it expresses a social construct, which means that the inequality between men and women on gender issue. Identity formation is a hypothetical process; sometimes it determines inclusion and Exclusion of symbols and values. The title suggests by writer themselves say that "*Dance like a man*" is it man needs different form of dance compared to women. Dattani brings Indian English Drama so real that sometimes they generate a lot of discussion and controversy. He mostly analyzes the drama's technique and theme. He uses realistic flashback techniques sometimes with the split - scene device. It is a convenient

device to move the action between the past and the present. “*Tara*” is a widely staged and widely read play by Mahesh Dattani. It stands as a classic example of his exploration of diverse themes such as man–woman dynamics, the plight of a disabled girl child, and gender bias even within supposedly progressive Indian households. While men usually hold formal power and define social and moral rules, they too remain trapped within those very norms, a contradiction that Dattani illustrates powerfully in *Dance Like a Man*. Dattani’s background as a Bharatanatyam performer deeply informs this play, as he portrays the suffering of professional dancers through the figure of Jairaj, the male lead. Because dance is conventionally linked with femininity, women dancers may be accepted, at least to some extent, within social limits. “Man” and “dance,” however, are treated as mutually opposed categories, so one is not expected to merge with the other. The drama interrogates conventional masculinity, exposing its tragic effects on both men and women when individuals violate social expectations by entering what society regards as primarily a feminine sphere.

### **Recognition of Manhood**

A central issue raised in the play is this: why should men be deprived of the chance to attain a state of transcendence through dance, and why must they surrender their “manhood” to a patriarchal order that treats male dancers as somehow not fully men? The pathos of Jairaj’s character lies in the fact that he is rejected for the “offence” of dancing not only by his tyrannical father but also by his wife, who is herself a dancer and who mocks him cruelly for not being sufficiently masculine. Her unjust repudiation wounds him more deeply than his father’s scorn.

Ratna conveniently erases from memory the fact that Jairaj once proved his courage by leaving his father’s house to defend their right to be dancers. For her, as for Amritlal, Jairaj does not qualify for the status of a “real” man. Four decades later, she continues to belittle him as a spineless boy

who could not stay away from his father's home for more than two days, and tells him that he ceased to be a man the moment he returned, casually voicing these insults even in front of Viswas. The crucial question, then, is why Jairaj is denied the recognition of manhood in Ratna's estimation. Amritlal believes that dancers are not good in character. An old man was teaching the form of ancient dance to Ratna but it was not accepted by Amritlal. Thus, the social bias against the art of dance among the human is highlighted in the play.

*Jairaj: His mother was not a devadasi, if that's what you want to know.*

*Amritlal: Why does he wear his hair so long? I have never seen a man with long hair.*

*Jairaj: All sadhus have long hair.*

*Amritlal: I don't mean them. I meant normal men. [DLM120]*

Jairaj's failing lies less in his decision to become a professional dancer than in the fact that this decision never translated into financial self-sufficiency. Because his art does not generate adequate income, he remains dependent on his disapproving father and is forced to live under Amritlal's roof. His inability to convert his artistic passion into economic independence becomes the real ground on which both his father and his wife question and undermine his masculinity. Jairaj's inability to convert his artistic calling into financial success deprives him of the status of "man" within a patriarchal order. Realizing that her marriage was motivated more by her attraction to dance than by affection for Jairaj, he strikes a bargain: she may continue her career only if she thwarts Jairaj's. By siding with patriarchal norms, Ratna becomes the instrument of Jairaj's downfall, leaving him doubly wronged. Although the father appears to be the chief oppressor, the play questions a major claim of feminist criticism that structures of domination invariably weigh more heavily on women than on men, since Jairaj emerges as the greater casualty of paternal authority.

A woman in the man's world may be considered as being progressive, but a man in a woman's world is pathetic [ DLM 140]

The play suggests that true harmony between Ratna and Jairaj becomes possible only after death, when they imagine themselves dancing flawlessly together, never missing a step or beat, laughing over all the errors of their earlier performances. Having failed in the "dance" of lived experience, they can find unity only in the symbolic dance beyond life.

### **Unequal treatment**

In traditional belief, a woman is viewed as lower than a man, and a male child is valued more than a female. A boy's birth is usually greeted as a blessing and celebrated, while the birth of a girl receives little joy and is often considered a burden. The bias is symbolized through the custom of feeding the metal vessel used for a boy's birth ceremony with milk, but striking it with an iron rod when a girl is born.

*Chandan asks Roopa, "What would you do if you had to choose between a boy and a girl? Whom would you choose?"*

*Roopa replies, "I think it's more civilized to drown her (girl) in milk." [ 349]*

This injustice does not escape the sharp vision and sensitive mind of a writer. Dattani perceives it, feels it deeply, and soon chooses to portray it in his creative work. Exceptionally gifted, he illustrates this unequal treatment through the Siamese twins in his play Tara. He presents the problem realistically but through dramatic form. Tara is one of the most frequently performed and widely read plays of Mahesh Dattani. It serves as a fine example of his treatment of multiple concerns such as male–female relations, the plight of a disabled girl child, and gender injustice. Yet, among these strands, the dominant concern is gender bias within an apparently progressive Indian household. Gender discrimination may be regarded as the play's central issue. In Tara, the

title character becomes the prime sufferer of this bias from the very beginning of the narrative. The plot centers on conjoined twins born with three legs, one belonging to the girl.

During surgery, the blood circulation to the third leg is diverted to the boy's body so that he may be physically "complete." After delivery, an operation is planned, and when Dr. Thakkar consults the parents about who should receive both legs, the responses from the family favor Chandan rather than Tara.

She carries and gives birth to Tara, yet she also agrees that Chandan should be favored and calls him "the lamp of her family." Another mother, representing the wider community, shows similar insensitivity by forcing her own daughter to live with an artificial leg. Gender inequality appears again in matters of inheritance. Chandan's maternal grandfather, a prosperous politician, plans to bequeath a large sum to Chandan and not to Tara. In such a situation, Tara's pain is easily imaginable, yet nobody considers her feelings; this is the hypocrisy of a double-faced society.

Discrimination does not end with property. It also governs education and career prospects, as seen when Chandan is allowed to go abroad for higher studies while Tara is denied the same chance.

As Ewin Mee notes, "Tara, a feisty girl who is bright, gets her chances given to her brother instead, and she may be smarter yet uselessly wastes away and dies." Tara is full of vitality, hope, and wit, but society ignores her abilities because she is a girl and disabled. Mahesh introduces yet another burning problem: society's harsh attitude towards people with physical disabilities. In almost every social circle, disabled children become the constant targets of mockery, and Tara is no exception. Her own friends tease her for her limp and joke that she is "a real freak of nature all right," a remark that reflects the cruelty of the community. Roopa's ridicule stands for the ridicule of society, which finds a disabled girl pitiable and refuses to accept her as anything but a burden.

Bharti worries deeply about Tara's future and openly states that Tara is tolerated only while she is small and amusing.

### **Conclusion**

The play Tara challenges the community's outlook towards a deformed girl child, especially when she is intellectually bright and capable of contributing meaningfully to society. Such a child is not given a fair opportunity but is instead condemned by conservative thinking. Tara experiences constant rejection and isolation, yet she remains cheerful and witty until the harsh realities of life overwhelm her. Gender bias against the girl child is common in all layers of society and appears in many forms. Because of these unequal behaviors by parents and others, she struggles to understand her rights and entitlements. This continuing gender prejudice is more obvious in Indian villages than in towns or cities.

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