



GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN DATTANI'S TARA AND DANCE LIKE A MAN

Sanghita Jash (Reja)

Permanent Part-time Teacher ,

Netaji Mahavidyalaya, Arambagh, Hooghly, West Bengal, India.

ABSTRACT

According to the sociological aspect, the word gender refers to the definition of man and woman by society which distinguishes and assigns them different role in society. Gender perception is significantly influenced by social forces. Similarly, gender roles depend on society, culture, geographical location and politics. Gender behaviour is influenced by the process of socialization and social forces than by natural and innate difference. For many people, it is hard to believe that most of their understanding of gender is a result of outside influence. In society, women are expected to be pleasing in their demeanour. In society, it is thought that a man and a woman are not equal. In society, a woman should be respected, but we still find the practice of killing baby girl. Even at the very moment of birth, we find unequal treatment given to male and female baby. Men are expected to have expressive innate vigour, physical prowess and authority. A man gets devalued by his family and society if he does not conforms to these "hetero normative" expectations of the society. This kind of societal attitude towards men and women is a burning problem in today's world. And India is no exception. Gender discrimination in terms of region, religion and community has existed for generation in India and affects both the genders physically, psychologically and emotionally. As this problem is very apparent in India, Indian literature is a corpus of gender discrimination. I'll be discussing Mahesh Dattani's Tara and Dance like a Man as a critique of gender discrimination.



KEY WORD: gender, hetero normative, discrimination, hegemonic, masculinity, patriarchy.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of gender is originally situated with the feminism and gender studies theories. Feminism is a body of social theory primarily based on and motivated by the experiences of women. While generally providing a critique of social relations, many proponents of feminism also focus on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's rights, interests, and issues. Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. Feminist also includes various issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual violence. Themes explored in feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, sexual objectification and oppression. It examines women's and men's social roles, experiences, interests in a variety of fields.

When pursuing masculinity studies, many scholars began explaining how masculinity is a social construction. In 19th century in America, masculinity began to be defined through proving oneself as a man. As a result, the political arena, workplace, family, and whole world was changed. This change constructed hegemonic masculinity, i.e., the practice that allowed men's dominance over women to continue, or the stereotypical definition of masculinity that many think of initially.

Mahesh Dattani is a theatre personality. Mahesh Dattani is the first and only one Indian English dramatist to win the Sahitya Akademi Award. Contemporary reality and society form the centre of his plays. He deals with the discrimination against people in our society on the basis of religion, class, gender and sexuality with insight and empathy. Here, an attempt has been made to show that the social exclusion in his plays calls for a radical reformation and a change of heart leading to individual as well as social transformation.

Dattani is one of the playwrights who challenge the construction of India and Indian. In Dattani's plays character play the vital role to reach out the audience. The themes are brought home to the audience through the acting of the characters-not through the words on the page. To see Dattani's characters acting on the stage is to be aware of contemporary reality that stares us in our face. Dattani says, "If you look at my plays, you would find that each character, every character has, you know his or her, which an actor can develop" (Katyal 2000, qtd in Chaudhuri 104).

Dattani deals with two plays *Dance Like a Man* and *Tara* in terms of gender discrimination. The first play *Dance Like a Man* breaks the stereotypical image of gender constructed roles in our society and focuses on a man who chooses dance as a profession, in opposition to the socially constructed behaviour of masculinity. In *The Masculinities Reader*, Whitehead and Barrett say: "Masculinity reflects social and cultural expectations of male behavior rather than biology" (Whitehead and Barrett 16). Moreover dance is associated with grace, beauty and womanliness, so a man in the world of dance seems to be an abnormal. And a man involved in this performing art is often suspected of being a homosexual. The play deconstructs many notions created by society, such as a man ought not to choose dance as a profession, that a "Devdasi" is a female artist who must be a prostitute and that a male dancer/guru is a "long haired" man with an effeminate gait. Through this play Mahesh Dattani introduces the debates within the discourse of masculinity and examines what the meaning of the term is and what traits are incorporated in being "masculine."

In *Tara*, Dattani deeply incorporates the issue of disability to make the theme of gender discrimination more complicated and worth interrogating. The play talks about Patriarchy by portraying the lives of Siamese twins Tara and Chandan, who were later separated by a surgery. The partiality and the injustice started in the life of Tara with a surgery when the common leg was given to Chandan even after the medical knowledge that the survival capability was higher in Tara's body.

Two things that account for the greatness of a playwright are variety in themes and technical virtuosity. Dattani has variety on themes and also technical competence. I am concerned with themes in this chapter. Not only does he write about love, violence and crime, he also writes about many things of life, such as: music and dance. *Dance Like a Man* is a play devoted to dance.

In this play, Dattani puts few questions about sexual construction that what a man is on the very constituents of a man's identity in terms of sexuality, as the head of the family and as an artist. The play deals with the self and significance of others, through the frame work of gender and gender roles. The basic question that perturbs the minds of the audience is that can a man take to dance as a profession? *Dance Like a Man* highlights that it is not only always a woman who suffers in society but even men are rendered helpless as a consequence of cultural conditioning. Men's voices sometimes remain unheard because primarily they are considered as oppressors and nobody notices their oppression by society.

The story revolves around three generation, their personal ambition, their sacrifices, their struggle, their compromises, internal conflict and the way they cope up with life and dance being the major topic of discussion in the house as it is a topic of debate between the father and his son and daughter-in-law. *Dance Like a Man* is a play about dance as a profession as well as vocation. As the play goes forward and the action takes place; Dance take the centre stage and pushes the characters outside. Dance is very significant factor in this play that means different things to different characters. For Ratna and Jairaj dance is not their profession rather their life, their soul and a means of getting desired success. The stereotypes of gender roles are set against the idea of the artist in search of creativity within the restrictive structure of the world that he is forced to inhabit. Jairaj with his obsession of dance dismantles this stereotype. This is the twist

that the playwright gives to the stereotypes associated with gender issues that view solely women at the receiving end of the oppressive power structure of patriarchal society. The play removes this notion and explores the nature of the tyranny that often men might be subject to within such structures. Ratna and Jairaj live within such structure, i.e. the domain of the patriarch, Amritlal, Jairaj 'father.

Dance for Amritlal is the profession of a prostitute, improper for his daughter-in-law. He forbids Ratna from visiting the old devdasi who teaches her the intricacies of Bharatnatyam:

AMRITLAL. And practice in her courtyard for all passerby to see.

RATNA. Only those who are curious enough to peep over her wall to see where the sound of dancing bells are coming from.

AMRITLAL. Your bells. The sound of your bells.

RATNA. Yes.

AMRITLAL. The sound of your bells coming from the courtyard of a prostitute.

RATNA. She is seventy-five years old.

AMRITLAL. And people peep over her wall to see my daughter in law dancing in her courtyard.

RATNA. Yes. Dancing the divine dance of Shiva and Parvati.

AMRITLAL. And you feel what you are doing is right? (*Collected Plays* 420).

Here we find that once again Dattani breaks the stereotype of looking at Devdasi tradition. He sets Amritlal as a person having the stereotypical view of looking at devdasi as a prostitute. And he sets Ratna against Amritlal as a person who dismantles this stereotype. For Ratna, Chennai amma is a person having great dancing capability and dancing knowledge. Ratna says:

...She doesn't have a single student who is dedicated enough to absorb her knowledge. She is seventy five and dying. There's nobody who even visits her, not even her relatives or her children... (*Collected Play* 419-20).

From this speech, Ratna's sympathetic attitude towards a devdasi who is a mere victim of so-called thinking of society and Dattani's message that a artist should be adorned for his or her excellency in art irrespective of caste, of religion and most importantly of gender are very clear. Dattani also shows that Ratna's attitude should be the attitude of every person of the society towards those deprived outcast who are merely made by the society or by the lack of the concern of society.

Dattani makes Amritlal Parikh, father of Jairaj, the mouthpiece of society. Amritlal Parikh gets trapped in his own prejudices believes that Bharatnatyam is the craft of prostitutes. He thus feels that no self-respecting person should choose dance as a profession, particularly a man. Through him the playwright presents the generally accepted notion that if a man does not behave in a manner that is expected, he is considered a social misfit and not "man" enough. That is why he does not understand his son's dedication towards the art and instead of appreciating his efforts, he watches out for the latent homosexuality.

AMRITLAL. A woman in a man's world may be considered as being progressive. But man in a woman's world is pathetic... sick (*CP* 427).

The implication of the word "sick" is a clear indication of the sexist fear of homoeroticism. Where extreme sexual discrimination is practiced, such incidents are tolerated without much fuss in some institution:

Dancing is considered to be something meant only for women and according to Amritlal these men who want to dance are not men enough. It is erroneously thought that anything that is feminine cannot be masculine. This notion is rejected by Dattani in this play by presenting a man who chooses to be a professional dancer. The pain of the artist is well portrayed by Jairaj who in the scheming hands of his father wastes away and takes to drinking to escape from the stress. Dattani shows protest on the part of Jairaj. Jairaj wants to leave his father house as a protest against the stereotypical mentality of his father.

JAIRAJ (to RATNA). Come on. I've packed some of your clothes. We are Leaving. (*CP* 423).

What Jairaj actually wants is some space to live his dream. But within the domain of patriarchy of Amritlal, Jairaj finds himself suffocated and bounded by his father's bizarre stereotypical attitude towards dance. Sometime leaving a place should be the gesture of protest. The play is also about the life of an artist.

It discusses about how space is important for an artist. It brings about the issues of survival and also witnesses the contestation between tradition and modernity in the life of an artist.

This theme also brings out a gender based critique of patriarchy, and shows man as the victim. In this form, the critique extends beyond feminism as such. However, the upturning of the conventional structure of gender poetics makes it more important to discuss this invisible layer of social discrimination against the male something that has remained largely unseen and unheard.

Not only Jairaj is victimized, Guruji is also criticized by Amritlal. Amritlal's disgust about Guruji's profession, long hair and body language is clear from these lines. He is already disturbed by the dance of Jairaj and again when Ratna tells him that she feels sorry for him, as "tomorrow, Jairaj starts learning another dance form—Kuchipudi!" (Collected Play 422). Ratna's punch line comes with the fact that in Kuchipudi the men dress up as women. Amritlal becomes horror stricken and says: "Help me and I'll never prevent you from dancing" (Collected Plays 427). Ratna is faced with the alternatives of sacrificing her career on one hand and sacrificing Jairaj's career and thus ensuring financial security on the other. . Ratna's freedom is only at the cost of making Jairaj a man. Ratna as an artist committed to her art chooses the obvious. Ratna advises Jairaj to do something else. Thus, Amritlal plays a crucial role in making Ratna independent with an intension of putting Jairaj in his own place.

RATNA : Do something. Do anything...

JAIRAJ: Do anything but be a dancer. Do something useful like choreographing items for You, or playing the flute.

RATNA: You're not even good at that any more.

JAIRAJ: Whose fault is that? Whose fault is that only you get invitations to dance?

RATNA: Not mine.

JAIRAJ: For one whole year I didn't dance – turning down offers because I didn't want to dance alone.

RATNA: I didn't ask for such a sacrifice. Tell me what you want. I'll do anything...

JAIRAJ. I want you to give me back...give me back my self esteem.

RATNA. When did I ever take it?

JAIRAJ. Bit by bit. Insisting on top billing in all our programmes. Making me dance my weakest items. Focusing the entire show...

RATNA. Face it, Jairaj, it's me they want to see dancing.

JAIRAJ. A young, beautiful woman, yes.

RATNA. And you are jealous? What kind of man are you?

JAIRAJ. Oh, you are clever. No wonder you get along well with him.

RATNA. Get along well with whom?

JAIRAJ. My father. It was him, wasn't it? (CP 443).

It is startling for readers that Ratna herself discards Jairaj's maleness openly and he accepts it without any offence. In the play maleness of Jairaj was not that much a question of body than that of mentality

Jairaj's falls prey to the dichotomy between his own chosen identity as a dancer and this identity as a man imposed by society. Throughout the play he undergoes the painful identity crisis. Thus Jairaj becomes a symbol of gender trouble. The do's and don'ts of gender became the nemesis for Jairaj. In a bourgeois society power is synonymous to earning money and Amritlal knew that dance cannot be a source of earning forJairaj because in a highly gendered society dancing can never be considered to be a man's profession.

Dattani also uses symbols in the play in the form of the old mansion and the yellow shawl standing for the inherited beliefs of Amritlal Parikh. Even Davis Cohen in his book *Being a Man* explains that "In theory, boys are supposed to take their fathers and grandfathers as role models. Father teaches son how to be a man" (Cohen 1). That Jairaj stays at home and wears the shawl shows his dependence on these traditions even as he fights them in the choice of a career in dancing.

The play clearly depicts how an artist is influenced by his family or society. Dattani has very skillfully portrayed three generations in the play to highlight the fact that even in the city space irrespective of timescale the idea of gender influences our identity. Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* also strengthens the fact of inevitable influence of gender on cityscape.



Retrieved from web

While there may be many readings and entry points into *Tara*, one cannot deny that the primary theme that one sees is the way we Indians discriminate between male and female children. However *Tara* is also a play that talks about how Indian society deals with the people who are different meaning differently able. The attitude of society towards the disabled and especially towards the disabled female is vividly illustrated in the play. A disabled female always faces the double disadvantage of both being a woman in a patriarchal society and being disabled in an able normative society. Somewhere both the identities are similar as neither impairment (to some extent) nor gender, in themselves, is problematic unless they are placed in a social context. At one level it is about the objective inhumanity of science and the perverse uses to which it can be put. At another, it is a search for unified self. At the most basic level, it is a play about the twins who are born with three legs and blood supply to the third leg is from the baby girl's body. Only one of the twins could have two legs, and the other had to survive with only one leg. It is decided to fix the third leg on the male's body so as to make male baby complete. This decision was not on the basis of medical ground but due to gender discrimination. Honesty is the hallmark of Dattani's plays.

Dattani's play illuminates many a depth related to gender issues in our society. The twins provided him with the powerful metaphor to bring to the fore many ideas related to gender specific identities in our society.

This play too, like other plays of Dattani has the city-space at the centre. The urban ethos seems to control the action in subtle manner. Mahesh Dattani weaves the play around the family of Patel who is the father and Bharati the mother of the twins, Tara and Chandan. The play opens with Chandan, now known as Dan, who in a nostalgic mood is typing furiously. He informs us that he is attempting to write a play which is like "touching a bare live wire" (CP 323).

In this play, memory constitutes an important resource. Dan plans to write the play about his twin sister Tara, "who never got a fair deal" in her life, not even from her mother and father. Even Tara dies because of the shock of disclosure that her disability is not natural but was thrust on her by the manipulation of her mother and grandfather just to favour Chandan, the boy, over Tara, the girl. Chandan survives this trauma but he migrates to a suburb of London, as he could never lead a peaceful life after this revelation. He changes his name to Dan and attempts to create a new persona for himself and tries to write an autobiographical play. The pain of separation is as strong for him as for Tara. Dan blames God for being unjust to both of them. Dan is reminded of his past and feels extremely pain in admitting the injustice.

DAN. She never got a fair deal. Not even from nature. Neither of us did. May be God never wanted us to be separated. Destiny desires strange things. (CP 330).

Mahesh Dattani, through Dan, philosophizes on some aspects of modern life: "Conflict is the crux of life" (CP 330). Dan reflects on the superiority of science over God because in the modern era science can accommodate things that even the traditional idea of God may not have accepted.

DAN. ... But even god does not always get what he wants....A duel to the death between God and nature on one side and on the other— the amazing Dr. Thakkar. (CP 330).

It is his memories that torment him and running away to London hasn't help matters in anyway. And it is clear from Dan's speech in the beginning:

DAN. ... Seedy suburb of London, thousands of miles from home hasn't put enough distance between us. (Holds up his glass.) battery charger helps on some occasions. But now I want them to comeback. To masticate my memories in my mind and spit out the result to the world in anger. (CP 323-24).

Through a series of flashbacks we get an insight into their early family life. For Dattani the play is about the gendered self, about coming to terms with the feminine side of oneself the very first speech of Tara expresses the pain of separation between herself and Chandan.

TARA. And me. Maybe we still are. Like we've always been. Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb. Till we were forced out... And separated (CP 325).

To expose the corruption prevalent in society and the ethical deterioration of the medical profession, Mr. Patel's conversation with his children, brings out the playwright's purpose:

PATEL. A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl... The chances were slightly better that the leg would survive... On the girl. Your grand-father and your mother had private meeting with Dr. Thakkar. I wasn't asked to come... I couldn't believe what she told me-that they would risk giving both legs to the boy... The doctor had agreed... It was later I came to know of his intention of starting a large nursing home-the largest in Bangalore. He had acquired three acres of prime land-in the heart of the city from the state. Your grand-father's political influence had been used... Chandan had two legs for two days. It didn't take them very long to realize what a great mistake they have made. The leg was amputated. A piece of dead fish which could have-might have-been Tara. Because of the unusual nature of the operation, it was easy to pass it off as a natural rejection. I-I was meaning to tell you both when you were older, but... (CP 378).

This long speech by Mr. Patel gives the essence of the play. The play centers around the theme of physical separation manipulated by the mother and the grand-father to favour the boy over the girl resulting in the emotional separation between the two conjoined twins.

In the play, Dr. Thakkar's role is ambiguous. He became unethical for the sake of material gain. Dr. Thakkar is mainly responsible for Tara's life a tragic one. Society believes the role of Doctor as a life giver and compared with God. But here a role of a doctor is suspicious. Dan writes a story of his sister and asked one question to Dr. Thakker.

DAN: Three months? Was the surgery really necessary?

DR.THAKKAR: Yes, absolutely. Surgery was their only chance of survival. You see, they were twins, conjoined from the chest down (CP-331).

Here Dan collects detailed note for his story. He meets Dr.Thakker and gets information about early life. Since Dr. Thakker is also involved in this operation. Role of three persons is important in this surgery and tragedy. The doctors clearly mentioned that the third leg belongs to the daughter and it involves huge risk if the leg has to be given to Chandan. But they were willing to accept the risk rather than providing the leg to. Dr. Thakkar also willingly accepted to perform the operation because of his own personal benefits. Tara's grandfather was an influential person in Bangalore and it is Chandan's and Tara's grandfather who wants a grandson to inherit his property. And Dr. Thakkar could use his influence to start a large nursing home in the heart of the city and the success of the operation will also bring huge fame and reputation to him. The operation, thus was not considered as the life and future of two children, rather on one hand it was to prefer the son and make him more strong physically and on the other hand it was a business where the doctor

preferred his own benefits and Tara was not a subject of consideration and her future was unnoticed by the parents and the doctor.

The grandfather is absent in the play. Yet his presence is felt through the dialogues of the other characters in the play. He is a strongly gendered person. He was the one who was behind the idea of favouring Chandan. He has left his entire property to Chandan. He has also influenced his daughter in the separation of the twins. It is again the grandfather who wants a grandson to inherit his property uses money to convince the doctor to do the operation. The invisible society is reflected through the invisible grandfather. The grandfather leaves all his property to Chandan and there is no share to Tara in his property. It is clear when Mr. Patel and Chandan are talking:

PATEL. He left you a lot of money.

CHANDAN . And Tara?

PATEL. Nothing

CHANDAN. Why?

PATEL. It was his money. He could do what he wanted with it (CP 360).

This shows that the grandfather marginalizes women and he had strongly believed that women are supposed to be under men and they should not be provided with power or any material benefits. Tara was almost invisible to the grandfather. Not only grandfather, but also Tara's father also shares the same stereotypical patriarchal attitude. When Patel finds Chandan helping his mother in knitting he can't digest it.

PATEL. Let Tara do it.

CHANDAN. It's okay.

PATEL. Give it to her.

CHANDAN. Why?

PATEL. Chandan, leave that damn thing alone.

PATEL (to Bharati). How dare you do this to him? ... you can think of turning him into a sissy teaching him to hit! (*Collected Plays* 351)

The decision taken by Mrs. Patel's leaves Tara crippled for life and it is noticed that Mrs. Patel's guilt gets revealed repeatedly throughout the play. She tries to compensate for this unfortunate decision (about their daughter) through her excessive concern for her. Bharati tries to shed her burden of guilt by showing maternal love and concern for her daughter and to assert her moral superiority over her husband. She also tries to expatiate by the act of donating kidney to her daughter, but Patel does not want her to do so as he is aware of the fact that now she is just trying to compensate for the wrong decision that changed the fate of Tara. . Dattani establishes the fact that the mother and daughter relationship is ultimately subordinated to the directives of the patriarchal directives Bharati is a pathetic victim of patriarchy. She was exceptionally conscious for her safety for Tara. When Chandan enquires her if she has any plans for Tara, Bharati says, "Yes, I plan for her happiness. I mean to give her all love and affection which I can give. It's what she deserves have can make up for lot" (CP 349).

The suppressed emotion of guilt about the past, and fear of the future of Tara make her oversensitive to everything. Because of this she ends up in the asylum after a nervous breakdown.

Patel's attitude has also been negative. He blames his wife and father-in-law for the damage done cannot be denied. But Patel himself feels inferior to his father-in-law because he is not as rich as his father-in-law and he assumes that he has said nothing against his father-in-law. He becomes passive and in spite of knowing the fact that he is risking his own daughter's life, he stayed quite. The fact that male is always given the greater chance is obvious from Patel's planning for Chandan's education and future career. No consideration whatsoever is for her feelings. Tara is the victim of this collective social system. Her father, Mr. Patel, is not much different from his wife , though Bharati is guilty of a more serious crime against Tara. He continuously and doggedly favours Chandan when it comes to giving him higher education abroad, and a career.

PATEL .You are turning them against the whole world.

BHARATI. I am doing that.

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 doesn`t need anyone but you!

BHARATI. What d`you want me to do? Just tell me in plain simple words what you want me to do and i`ll do it!

PATEL. Let go. Just let go. And let me handle them.

BHARATI. All right .You stay at home then! You stay at home and watch what they can do and what they can`t .You remind them of what they can`t be. It`s easy for you to talk about their future and your plans. But tell them what they should do now .This day, this hour, this minute .Tell them! I want to hear!

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

BHARATI. And Tara?

PATEL When have you ever allowed me to make any plans for her? (CP 352).

While Patel wants to send Chandan abroad for further studies, he has made no comparable plans for Tara. Patel's attitude towards Tara typifies society's attitude towards a disabled woman. Women with disabilities in India and elsewhere encounter discrimination on several levels, each of which restricts their options and opportunities for equal participation in the economic, social and political life of society. Dattani also refers to the mother's experience when she finds that her husband is neglecting and ignoring his daughter. Bharti does the same when she tells her son that his father does not pay attention to his sister. Bharti discloses this fact to Chandan.

BHARTI. I wish your father would pay more attention to Tara.

CHANDAN. He does. He does not like to show his affection.

BHARATI. Do not tell me about your father. He is more worried about your career than hers. (CP 348).

All these factors combine to create the social system in which the girl child has to live and die. Tara is killed by social system , which controls the minds and actions of the people. The trauma of coming to know the role her mother had played in her life, and the discrimination become too much for her. And why is she killed? Tara is not wanted. Girls are not wanted.

TARA. Oh! What a waste! A waste of money .What spend all the money to keep me alive? It cannot matter whether I live or die. There are thousands of poor sick people on the roads who could be given care and attention, and I think I know what I will make of myself. I will be a career for those people .I ---- I will spend the rest of my life feeding and clothing those. ----starving naked millions everywhere is talking about. May be I can start an institution that will ---- do all that. Or I could join Mother Teresa and sacrifice myself to a great cause. That may give--- purpose to my ---existence .I can do it .I can do it , can`t I? I will be very happy if I could, because that is really what I want That really --- [with emotion].Oh! , bullshit! I don`t care .I don`t care for anyone except mummy! (CP 370).

The above statement shows that Tara is not deterred by the injustice done to her by her parents but she presents herself as an empowered lady to face all the hurdles. She also shows her sympathy towards the downtrodden. She was bubbly and energetic girl who had all the qualities of a normal girl. If she had been given moral support by her parents. She might have shown like a star as her name signifies. Her life was a burden on this earth .This made her loses interest in life altogether .Further she refuses to go to physiotherapy or fill forms for college.

TARA. How do you expect me to feel anything for anyone if they don`t give me any feeling to begin with? Why is it wrong for me to be without feeling? Why are you asking me to do something that nobody has done for me? (CP 371).

It is not only Tara who suffers because of being a girl child but even Chandan suffers because all the pain that is inflicted on Tara is just because he was given preference. Somewhere these thoughts affect him deep inside resulting in their final, imagined "union" at the end of the play.

Tara walks into the spot without limping. Dan also appears without the limp.

And will hug me. Once again.

They kneel, face to face.

Forgive me, Tara. Forgive me for making it my tragedy.

Tara embraces Dan as the music starts. The explosive opening of Brahms' First Concerto. They hug each other tightly (CP 380).

Tara's potentiality was sacrificed on the altar of gender. Identity crisis becomes a chain with which a female is fettered when the question of choice between male and female arises.

TARA. The hospital staff. At the reception, they asked me who I wanted to see. I told them. They asked me to wait. One of the nurses passing by recognized me. She drew the receptionist aside and spoke to her in a low voice. She thought I couldn't hear what she was saying. But I heard! She told her that she had received strict instructions from our father that I shouldn't on any account be allowed to see mummy on my own. (Pause) Now tell me I'm imagining things. Tell me that he doesn't hate me! (CP 373).

It is noteworthy that discrimination against Tara continues even after her death. Chandan, who was always interested in writing, and who has come to England for higher studies, has transferred into Dan. He turns the story he writes into his own tragedy. Dan apologizes to Tara for doing this. "Forgive me, Tara. Forgive me for making it my tragedy" (CP 380).

Here Tara and Chandan are presented as the two sides of the same self (Mee 320). Their union brings out the cleansing of the pain within Chandan and Tara. Dan writes Tara's story to rediscover the neglected half of him that is the feminine self of one's personality, which is always ignored by society. The play presents the poignant image of a child who suffers all through her life just because she is born a girl in the patriarchal set up, where she was and is always unwelcome. Mahesh Dattani makes us venture in a territory which is not touched by writes very often. The play, therefore, is an attempt to shock the audiences into an awareness of the morbidity of society they live in. Tara's parents are educated even then they made such discrimination.

Both the plays discussed in this chapter voice one major issue that no matter how advanced the city space is, be it in the ideology as portrayed in the progressive thoughts of Amritlal Parikh and Vishwas in *Dance Like a Man* or in technology depicted in the successful operation of the Siamese twins in *Tara*, the fact remains that patriarchal assumptions are too deep seated to be done away with. Even in city space where people have come up with their own choices of profession or medical facilities, the irony is that the power lies in the hands of 'man'.

WORKS CITED

Cohen, David. *Being a Man*. Routledge, 1990. Print.

Chaudhuri, Asha kuthari, *Mahesh Dattani*, New Delhi: Foundation Books Pvt. Ltd., 2005. print

Dattani, Mahesh, *Collected Plays*. New Delhi: Penguin book, 2000. Print.

Whitehead, Stephen M., Frank Barret, *The Masculinities Reader*, Wiley, 2002.

Image of *Dance Like a Man*: <http://cdn-images/@Fictionpulp/dance-like-a-man-mahesh-dattani/ea8a0621932>

Image of *Tara*: <http://www.bing.com/image/search?view=detailV2&ccid=94pZMdpl&id=172A4EOFA88B5F>