

# The Personal is the Political in *Tara* a play by Mahesh Dattani

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## Abstract

Mahesh Dattani, the contemporary writer, represents the current day issues of the society where one finds, self-trapped in the clutches of society and is degraded to be the marginalised. The society treats marginalised with content as if they have committed serious damages on the human species at large. The current research is on the play *Tara*; a play by Mahesh Dattani which explores the issues that sensationalise society. The play is about Siamese twins Tara and Chandan who were conjoined from chest till down. Later a surgery is required to separate them, according to Dr Thakkar it was the only, 'the only chance for their survival'. (CP 331) The theorist, Carol Hanisch, Michel Foucault, Kate Millet and Simone De Beauvoir and discussed in this research where their theory and ideas provide strength to the current work. The format of the research work is MLA, seventh edition. The Personal is the Political and is explored through the play by Mahesh Dattani, *Tara*.

## The Personal is the Political in *Tara* a play by Mahesh Dattani

The plays of Mahesh Dattani are like 'fresh arrivals' in the Indian sphere of writing where the playwright has used realistic images of his society to shape his writing. He focuses on the deep rooted prejudice and social issues which are not only constraining but also may lead towards defensiveness and escapism. The main themes that the author focuses on are gender issues and discrimination, transgender matters, women subjugation, homosexuality, communal violence, among others.

Dattani evokes these issues which are embedded deep inside the society ---issues which are tend to be neglected and are often not looked or worked upon. Dattani becomes the voice of many people, he is a keen and socially committed writer and at the same time one that subverts traditional ways of analysing things. According to Alyque Padamsee, 'At last we have a playwright who gives sixty million English-speaking Indians an Identity. Thank you, Mahesh Dattani!' (CP Back Cover) Padamsee explains what drew him to Dattani's work, 'I had been looking for a Playwright I could work with for a long time, but all of them wrote literary plays. Mahesh was the first modern playwright writing about issues in contemporary India in which the dialogue Sparkled'. (Pillani, 34)

The famous and applauding plays by the writer are *Tara* which portrays gender discrimination in an Indian society, *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, shows the unfair treatment muted out to trans genders in India, *Bravely Fought the Queens*, depicts woman issues and unfavourable treatment they face in society specially by the husbands and in-laws; *On a Muddy Night in Mumbai* presents, the lives of homosexuals and their marginalisation in our society; *Do the Needful* represents sympathy for gays who are considered mentally ill or morally wrong and also it shows the value of marriage on the Indian mind set, where one needs to get married to satisfy the society's needs.

Mahesh Dattani, the contemporary writer, represents the current day issues of the society where one finds, self-trapped in the clutches of society and is degraded to be the marginalised. The society treats marginalised with content as if they have committed serious damages on the human species at large. It should be noted that being a woman is natural, being a transgender is by birth and not a choice, being a girl child is God's gift not a curse on the family.

Prejudices are often the cause of resentment in his plays, for example in *Final Solutions* which won Dattani the Sahitya Akademi award; there is hatred among religions because of past certain pat involving Hindus and Muslims. A society should realize that the solution, as Dattani rightly portrays in the play, is to accept the differences and acknowledge the similarities. Dattani mirrors life in his plays, where there are serious issues to be acknowledged and discussed by humanity at large. People living in society should rise above prejudices and live with mutual harmony.

Dattani transforms the lives of the people, and portrays it on the stage, which depicts the cries of the marginalized. He is able to depict the realities of the society in his plays, which have been so enclosed in the four walls of a house sometimes hidden by self and sometimes by society. The social visionary points out in one of his prefaces, 'I write for my plays to be performed and appreciated by as wide a section of the society that my plays speak to and are about' ( CP xii). Dattani uses the stage as a powerful medium to express his views and educate people by information and knowledge they lack which give way to their growing prejudices and resentment.

The term political, 'was used in the broad sense of the word as having to do with 'power relationships' not the narrow sense of electoral politics' as Carol Hanisch writes in her essay, *The Personal is the Political* . The expression power relationship is applied to the relations where one is dominant and powerful than the other. The dominant one is usually a male who as an individual or the society as a group dominate the female, the object. A woman is bound in this circle of power where she is an object patriarchy.

Millett's title, *Sexual Politics*, announces her view of 'patriarchy', which she sees as pervasive and which demands 'a systematic overview – as a political institution' (Waugh pg. 123). Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as inferior to male, and this power is exerted, directly or indirectly, in civil and domestic life to constrain women.

In the play Tara this notion is important because it coincides with the fact that patriarchy is mediated through a woman, a mother who under the influence of the society and her father chooses the privileged leg for a son, a male who according to a society is a privileged individual according to his sex. According to the studies the leg suited and belonged to the girl child as it had blood supply from the body of the girl.

Chandan, the twin brother of Tara is provided with the leg, which after two days of the surgery is amputated. It is later revealed that because of the influence of Bharathi's father's political influence the doctors agreed to the surgery and give the leg to the male child. Michel Foucault, states that, 'The human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations who are very complex'. (778)

Mrs. Patel becomes the object through which the society works; it makes the mother bias towards the male gender as our Indian society believes that the son is an individual who later would be the pillar of the family, bringing wealth and power.

In feminist terms, the 'personal is political' refers to the theory that personal problems are political problems, which basically means that many of the personal problems women experience in their lives are not their fault, but are the result of systematic oppression.

## Body Image of Women

Body image and Body schema are two terms which focus on the particular body features which striking reflect in a body of self and others. These features are such which are visible and mark distinctions, making one inferior to others and in the consciousness of self. An image of self in relation to the body is formed by the others and close relations, which affect the normal functioning of the body and the mind. In the essay 'Feminist Perspective on the body', 'The touches of others, the interest others take in the different parts of our body, will be of enormous importance in the postural model of the body'.

A jeopardy that lies with the concept of body image is that it can refer to an inside image of self which one has of self, as representation. Weiss, in the essay 'Feminist Perspective on the Body', 'adapts from

the phenomenologists, she discusses, it is, however, more accurate to think of our body images as modes of experiencing our body, enabling or inhibiting our operation in the world’.

In play Tara, Tara appears to be a thin, weak and fragile girl physically; she is devoid of one leg these external bodily features make her different. As an entity, she is distinguished from others on the bases of her feature which also affect her emotional psyche. Mrs Patel the mother of Tara is worried about her physical growth and tries her best to make her health so that her daughter is not separated from the general idea of the society.

Bharati. But she must put on more weight!

Patel. She’s fine.

Bharati. No! She’s too thin! She... she must put on more weight. ... She’s lost half a

Pound in one week. (CP 326)

It is the self-identity associated with the physical body which makes one’s position in the society rather than sex or gender. Moi suggest in the essay, *Feminist Perspective on the Body*, as she believes that:

... body image/corporeal schemas opens the way for a crucial feminist move in relation to such phenomenological account: to suggest that it is such bodily schemas which serve to constitute us subjectively and socially *as* sexed, raced, (dis)abled, culturally and nationally positioned. This is in line with Moi’s suggestion that it is the lived body, rather than sex or gender which is the anchorage of sexed subjectivity. It is the self-identity associated with the physical body which makes one’s position in the society rather than sex or gender.

The play also highlights at a certain point where Tara not alone, but her twin Chandan also face certain situations where the two find identity crises. They sometimes joke about their bodies and call each other ugly, which somewhere reflect their own dilemma to struggle with self and accept their destiny; on the other hand, they struggle to survive in the society where characters like Roopa make a distinction on the bases of appearance.

### **Sexual Politics**

In the play, Tara one can find how personal relationships become political, at the heart; they are the factors sex and gender. In the famous quote of Simone de Beauvoir, ‘One is not born, but rather becomes a woman’ she claims that one is not born but becomes one, she distinguishes between sex and gender.

The distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the long-standing feminist effort to debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny; sex is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas gender is the cultural meaning and form that that body acquires, the variable modes of that body’s acculturation. (35)

With this distinction intact, gender is by definition unnatural; being a female and being a woman are two ways very different sorts of being. The sex of an individual is given by destiny but the gender to be male or female is decided or more like is constructed by the society. This construction determines the identity of a sex in the society, the female sex considered as unwanted one, the one which the other whose only work is to work on the domestic front and bear children.

The male sex is the epitome of humanity, the rational being through whom the female sex is defined. The play also highlights the same point where female child is looked beyond the male one. Tara the female protagonist of the play is made to live a life of a disabled one, though by nature she is privileged to have the third leg. The society works in a way, which sees all the privileges and advantages for the male as in Chandan, the twin of Tara.

### **Men as Feminist**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “we all should be feminist”

In the recent times, it is observed that there is a change, a change from the side of opposite gender, the male who is changing in the personal and social relations based on gender. These changes to some extent support feminism and stand by the sex that is considered the other in the ideological construct of the society.

In the early 1980s, Friedan announced the arrival of a ‘quiet revolution among men’, and Goode cited what he saw as a ‘grudging acceptance’ by men of more egalitarian (725)

It is observed from the studies that the father of today is more indulgent with the children than the earlier times, more than his father would have been with him. These “New Men” are closely associated with the domestic fronts whether one talks of lower or upper -class men. There has been a shift in the ideology and now men too think as feminist.

If one focuses on the play *Tara*, there is a different perspective of feminism which is brought by the male characters Mr Patel and Chandan. These characters support the daughter and the sister respectively whereas the woman of the play Mrs Patel is the one who, being a mother is on the other side of the table supporting patriarchy and the male gender.

Chandan, the twin of Tara is always in support of his sister whenever she faces the crucial question of identity in the play; he urges Tara to go to college for her further studies and supports her wit and intelligence. He tells his father to take her to office as she is better than him in calculations.

Tara the protagonist of the play is a smart and intelligent girl, she may be better than her twin. Chandan also tells Mr Patel to take her to the office instead of him as “She’ll make a great businesswoman”. In the play, it seen is that Mrs Patel is the one who is constantly after her daughter as she wants Tara to have all the special attention.

She cooks for Tara her favourite meal, makes her forceful drink milk, and wants Tara to be financially strong. The mother tries to win friends for her daughter by bribing Roopa with videos and lipsticks. Mrs Patel is often concerned about Tara; she worries about her weight even when she loses a pound. In a way, one can say that Mrs Patel is obsessed with her daughter. This obsession with her daughter leads her to her illness.

It is possible that Mrs Patel does this, as she feels guilty for the conduct of her past. The past haunts her. The reason behind all the concern is, when the question arises to whom the third leg should be given, it is Mrs Patel who along with her father decides to give the privileged leg to the son because of the sex he belongs.

Patel. . . . “Your grandfather and your mother had a private meeting with Dr Thakkar. I wasn’t asked to come .That same evening, your mother told me of her decision. . . I couldn’t believe that she told me- that they would risk giving both legs to the boy. I tried to reason with her that it wasn’t right and that even the doctor would realise it was unethical!” (CP 378).

The father of Tara supports the ethical means of survival, and wants the same for the children as well; Mr Patel does not want any injustice to be done. He does not support the decision of his wife, and wants things to be as they are, as the leg belongs to the girls should be hers and nature wants. The father wants a normal life for the daughter and wants Tara to decide her likes and dislikes, her present and future.

It is the mother who wants a special attention and wants to put her choices on Tara as she is also in the sense of guilt from the past. It is noticed that it is not only the lower class that succumbs to patriarchy and oppress women but the upper class too who with the privilege of having money and wealth show their power too much extent than the lower class.

It happens in the play where the grandfather of the children w money and political influence bribes the doctor to perform a surgery by all unethical means to give the leg to the male child. It is the woman, the mother is shown complicit in patriarchy she is the one who plays the active role in the play and damages the lives and her children and the relationship with her husband.

The guilt inside the mother, from her doings in the past makes her obsessive for Tara and she neglects

Chandan. Tara too adores her mother and enjoys the attention given to her by her mother. Mrs Patel is framed to be an ideal mother in the beginning of the play where she shows love, affection, care and concern for Tara it is revealed in the end that all her doings to be a perfect mother for Tara is her guilt.

The guilt of being complicit and committing a crime to her daughter makes her psychotic, her obsession with her daughter makes her mentally ill. Even Mr Patel is worried about the mother more than he is for his children. She worries about Tara but one can make out that all this is because of the guilt. Bharati believes that giving her one kidney or making favourite dishes of Tara would make her crime and guiltless to some extent. In a conversation with Chandan;

Bharathi. ...I plan for her happiness. I mean to give her all the love and affection which I can give. It's what she...deserves. Love can make up for a lot. (CP 349)

Mrs Patel in the past commits serious crimes which affect the present and future of the characters. She being complicit in patriarchy puts her at the stage and conflict and guilt with the people she is associated. She has two conflicts simultaneously running in her life one is the tangible one, the one with the husband and the society and the other is inside her affects her psyche resulting in a separation from her family and finally neurosis.

Now if a character like Tara exists today or a play like *Tara* is performed what impact it can have on the society, today? A subject like Tara, in the society would be looked as a matter of concern because, at the present, she would find it difficult to exist. The time of present is harsh and would be harsher for a subject like her. Often people with disabilities, especially if it's a girl are looked as a matter of worry and deep concern, sometimes even threatening. In the play, even Mrs Patel is worried about her daughter more than her son, as she also believes it will be difficult for her as a girl to survive in the society because of her disability. In a conversation with Chandan:

Bharathi. It's all right while she is young. It's all very cute and comfortable when she makes witty remarks. But let her grow up. Yes, Chandan. The world will tolerate you. The world will accept you- but not her! Oh, she pain she is going to feel when she sees herself at eighteen or twenty. Thirty is unthinkable. And what about forty and fifty! Oh God! (CP 349)

In the essay, 'Treating Members of the Disabled population as our Equals by Kelly L. Sydow it is observed that 'There is a tendency to patronize people with disabilities; you can either be treated like a child or like an idiot'.

A play like *Tara* can stir the minds of the people to think about the subjects like Tara who is disabled physically but mentally they as intelligent. These people can also live a normal life like normal people. Today a play like Tara can be of significance which can normalize the lives of people who are challenged physically. It is important to realize like people like Tara and Chandan are individuals who too want to live a life without any constraints of physical barrier that they have from birth.

"The personal is political" stressed the interconnection between public and private and suggested that politics could be at play even in the most intimate interpersonal relationships". ( 404-411).The most ' intimate relationships', the relations that exist between individuals in a family, the relations in which we are comfortable, where there is believe and trust in such relationships. These relations become political, sometimes which led to further complications in the relationships. When these relations become political they tend to dominate relationships either by oppression or by the emotional psyche.

In the play, *Tara* Mrs Bharathi is the one who indulges in making relationships political. She with her father, a political person tends to become the one who challenges relationships and become political. There is Discourse of Power at work which create subjects like Mrs Bharathi, where her thought and action work in the position.

Discourse is not just a way of speaking or writing, but the whole 'mental set' and ideology which encloses the thinking of all members of a given society... there is always a multiplicity of discourses - so that the

operation of power structures is as significant a factor in (say) the family as in layers of government. (Barry 118)

Hence the personal space becomes a possible area of political function. When political power works in different spheres the prospect, of a fundamental change and shift may come in a much -hidden ways or remote ways. Foucault believes that through an ideology people are driven into a thinking which further makes them as individuals and who become the vehicle to pass the ideologies constructed within a discourse. These ideologies function in a system through power. Power executes through ways, in which an individual is placed. Power determines the position of an individual which operates within a social circle.

Foucault challenges the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of 'episodic' or 'sovereign' acts of domination or coercion, seeing it instead as dispersed and pervasive. 'Power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere' so in this sense is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault 1998: 63)

In relationship, the reason to become political is that of power at work which 'comes from everywhere'. The power outside the house, outside a family, impacts power dynamics of the house. The political power in the family comes through the most unexpected ways, the personal ways. The power at work then affects the roots and work in such a way, making everyone its object.

The mother, Mrs Bharathi is the one who shows concern for her daughter, Tara. She is flights for her present and future. She indulges in all kinds of acts to make her daughter happy. She makes sure that Tara gets everything she desires. The mother has affection and love for her daughter. There is much more than Mrs Bharathi desires for her daughter but in the past, she chooses the leg for the son. This act of the mother in the past was dominated by the flow of power and discourse at work.

She became a part of the patriarchy. The power outside the family made her function in a way that she became political. The society, its ideology and the influence of a patriarchal figure in the form of her father were the reasons that made her function as a political power inside her family. The decisions she took in the past affects her present, she died of the helplessness and guilt as she was not able to help her daughter in the present.

Frug contends that women's experiences are constituted by the "discourses" in which we think of them. Discourses such as law not only construct gender identity, but also construct women as "terrorized," "sexualized," and "maternalized" (129). For Frug, interpretation and reinterpretation are political tools for criticizing and politicizing gender arrangements.

The political affairs are constructed within the personal affairs, where the politics affect the relationships in a family. The subjects created by the circulation of power on the personal front tend to become political. The subject created, and then become a part of the political system which affects other relations. The play *Tara* is based on such political framework which happens due to the construction of a political subject, the mother.

This construction of the subject is governed by the political power which has constructs subjects like Mrs Bharathi. The theorist, Foucault believes the power is always relational and produced through a discourse, through power relations. 'The Subject and 'Power reverts to a more familiar language of human agency and freedom to describe the conditions under which power is exercised'. (2)

The discourse creates relationships where ideology is expressed. The relationship of power and knowledge develops certain methods and practices which a subject has to deal with. The knowledge plays a major factor in the discourse of power. "Every point in the existence of power is a site where knowledge is formed. Conversely every established piece of knowledge permits and assures the existence of power". (8)

The subject is a plurality of possible positions and of discourse in which the pawn is constituted by the rules of chess, and one has (allegedly) fully described the subject when one has elaborated the rules of discourse just as one has fully described the pawn when one has elaborated the rules of a chess. (116)

A human is placed within the power relations which are complex. It tends to become a pawn at the hands of its ruling class which exists within the relationships. The individual is then played as a game of chess which in is again political. The mother of Tara is a pawn in the hands of her father, the patriarchal figure who used his daughter in the game of chess as a pawn. The father of Mrs Bharathi is the chief player of the game with Dr. Thakkar as a partner in crime. It is observed that the object never got a chance to play her own game as she is a mere pawn.

The essay *Power and identity* by Michael Foucault highlights the point how the relationship between knowledge and power, are used together to form a social control through society. The control and domination of power upon the individuals are always relational and intersubjective. In the play, Mrs Bharathi is initially dominated by her father, the society which is the power controlling her.

‘Power is the ability to control others or one’s entity. Accordingly, it can be defined as a kind of strength’ – Bartleby.com

The power is something, which ‘comes from everywhere’, according to the French theorist Foucault. Power exerts itself on the subjects which are supported by the knowledge. Power is never tangible nor it is in someone’s hands but it is something that works in our imagination and encumbers one in the way she or he acts.

It is visible in the play that power operated through the father, of Mrs Bharathi the patriarchal figure but it should also be kept in mind that the father was also part of this power that circulated in the society. Power is intersubjective; it is not constituted by one. It is always unintentionally bought into action.

[Grief] is not linear... Someone did us all a grave in justice by first implying that mourning has a distinct beginning, middle, and end. That’s the stuff of short fiction.

-Hope Edelman, *Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss*

She deserves something better. She never got a fair deal. Not even from nature. Neither of us did. (CP. 330)

Dan, who is a now grown up to be a writer in the present, is Chandan from the past. He writes about his sister who is now lost among the star long ago. He in present highlights the point that his sister never got a fair deal neither from her family, the society nor from nature. The moment she was born, as a conjoint twin to her brother she lost the leg that naturally belonged to her. Nature also did not play a fair game with Tara.

The clash that took between nature and culture is possible because of the individuals who challenge nature. When Nature is challenged it gives negative impact on the people. As it happened with the Protagonist Tara, who lost the leg that was her. Nature had created the leg for the female child but the culture being male- dominated demanded the male child to have it. This is how the natural order was disturbed.

But even God does not always get what he wants. Conflict is in the crux of life. A dual to the death between God and Nature on one side and on the other – the amazing Dr Thakkar. (C.P 330)

Dr. Thakkar is the one who often is looked upon as a ‘presiding deity’, ‘the one who is a marvel in the World of Medicine’. He has a God-like stance in the play and is responsible to challenge the nature with the culture. Dr. Umakant Thakkar with the father of Mrs Bharathi tries to separate the twins, through unethical ways. This is done through the dual practice of the medical science and other through the power of money. The result in end is a disaster as the leg does not survive with the boy; it had blood supply through the body of the girl child.

Further feminist research about the public/private split revealed that one of the costs of a depoliticized conceptualization of the private sphere was precisely the inability to talk about women’s problems in political terms. That is, since most women exist (or existed then) primarily in the private realm, the conceptualization of this arena as apolitical meant it was impossible to analyze the power relations that existed therein except

as they related to "personal choices" or "psychological problems." Conceptualizing private issues as political facilitated the view that women's subordination to men was not simply the "natural order of things". (405)

In the play, *Tara* the discourse of patriarchy plays an important role. It is through the discourse of patriarchy that the subjects are formed and work through the influence and effect of power. A subject works within a discourse and it cannot come out of it as it is determined by the discourse it lives in. The subjects are discursively constituted. Allen Luke says that, 'Discourse theory examines how narrative codes and conventions used in speech and writing not only transmit ideology but mediate and create social and cultural practice'.

Power, in Weedon's (1987) interpretation of Foucault is:

... a dynamic of control and lack of control between discourses and the subjects, constituted by discourses, who are their agents. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects (113).

Power is exercised within a discourse, in which an individual is constituted. A discourse shapes and creates meanings, which become true when practiced in a social order. Foucault believes that there is no static or fixed way of constructing any social or personal identity or a pattern. There is always a socially determined way in which an individual is completely dissolved in the society. It is the discourse that exerts a pressure of power on the individuals which determines the place and identity of an individual in a social system. A discourse functions by existing closely with a social order fixed by the cable of power.

In the play *Tara*, the characters especially the mother of Tara is shown as, involved within the discourse of patriarchy where she works through the network of power. This power which determines her as an individual, in a social order makes her an object through which power is circulated. It is through the power that Mrs Bharathi chooses the leg for her son in the past. This power with a specific position shapes a social order and influences the people. The play by Dattani, *Tara* is a perfect example of how power regulates in a discourse through various ways and constitutes or constructs individuals as subjects or objects. The power also determines how people as individuals see the world, the society and others around themselves.

Foucault explores how power circulates in a society, how various types of institutions contribute in the development of this structure of power. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, "Foucault discusses how discourse, operating in and through institutions, establish the growing terms upon which subjects understand, texturize, and represent the 'truth' of self". (Waugh 434). The French theorist believes that power does not exert itself by norms in the present times but it is normalized by the society that we live in. The social order in which one lives regulates the power structures.

The mother of Tara is also a subject through whom this power is exercised in a social order where she becomes complicit in the society. The social order in which she lives in exercised through the power of patriarchy. *Tara* deals with the personal becoming the political which is exercised through the circulation of power. This power in the modern times, as Foucault says does not function through the norms but is normalised by the society. The power which regulates Mrs Bharathi in a society is also normalized by the people which are her personal. The father of Mrs Bharathi is the person or rather a personal that becomes political for her as well.

Mahesh Dattani as a playwright will never be a brand. His plays have varied content and varied appeal. His characters seldom mouth lines, which will be quoted by just about everyone, nor does his thematic content rise to extraordinary heights. But what makes Mahesh Dattani one of India's finest playwrights is in the manner that he speaks to the audience straight from the heart. Anita Nair

Mahesh Dattani, the Indian writer has a unique way to deal with his plays. This uniqueness is the change that he brings in the Indian contemporary society with realistic taste. Dattani won acclamation worldwide because of his technique of mixing the reel and the real. The plays of Dattani connect with every other individual, society, gender or character. The prolific writer is an established international playwright as he is a part of BBC and other international ventures. Dattani believes that it is important to have new

techniques and playwrights in a country ... 'who reflect honesty and purely our lives, because ... that is our contribution to the world'. (C.P 329)

Dattani sees *Tara* as a play about the gendered self, about coming to terms with the feminine side of oneself in a world that always favours what is 'male'; but many people in India see it as a play about the girl child. (C.P320). There are many interpretations attached with the play *Tara*. Some look at it as a play of gender discrimination, about unethical ways of medical practice, the emotional break between the twins...but if one looks beneath the surface there is politics attached to the main play.

*Tara* is a play where the twins live without any personal history; they live in a safe, comfortable world. Their world comprises of their parents who love them and care for them, and Tara is given special treatment by her mother. The problem arises when a shocking fact of their history is revealed to the twins. It affects Tara more than her brother as she believes she was her mother's 'star'(C P 379). She tastes the bitter truth about her mother who is the world to her. Her world is shattered in those few moments of truth; her death and doom seem to be a natural course. Her life is to take from then on, in the end, Tara dies.

Tara is a strong girl, who has survived a multitude of surgeries, transplants and emotional upheavals and several bitter battles. The past confronts most unsparingly, that her mother has chosen the leg that belonged to her for her brother. She comes to know how; her mother chooses the leg for her brother which belonged to her. The love and care the mother has for Tara was only because of her past guilt.

Tara has a very close relationship with her mother. They share a bond where Tara feels protected under the care of her mother. She enjoys all the special treatment given to her by her mother. Tara often tells her readers and audience that it is her mother who has made her strong. She is the most beautiful girl for her mother. They share a beautiful mother and daughter relationship, according to Tara. When Tara learns the truth the image of her mother vanishes, she is left with nothing.

The personal relationship of Tara or rather the most personal one becomes political for her. Tara a kind, innocent, gentle girl would have never believed in her mother's bias attitude towards her son. The most personal, intimate relationships tend to become political. One often wants to remain aloof from all the political manoeuvres that happen outside. One wants to remain safe in their own space with the family. The safest place is naturally assumed to be one's home but sometimes the home becomes the source of politics. The family is the one that becomes political as it happens in *Tara*.

*Tara* centres on the emotional separation that grows between two conjoint twins following the discovery that their physical separation is manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favour the boy (Chandan) over the girl (Tara). Tara, a feisty girl who isn't given the opportunities given to her brother (although she may be smarter) eventually wastes away and dies. (CP. 320)

Tara is a strong, intelligent and sensible girl who lives her life with a positive attitude. She remains bold when a person like Roopa makes fun of her and her brother. Tara knows how to fight and live in this society. Had she been given a chance, Tara would have shone just like her name. She has all the qualities of being a successful woman, even her mother says, '... she has her talents. She can be very witty and of course she is intelligent'. (CP 340) .She is an energetic girl who also encourages her brother to be one. She lights up the home of the Patels and shines like a star.

In the Indian tradition and culture, Goddesses are worshipped as Durga, Kali, and Laxmi... On the other hand girls and woman are also considered a burden and liability to family. In the play, the grandfather and Bharathi decide to give the leg to a male child because of his sex. A male is the one considered as superior, and he receives all privileges, as it is in the play. The grandfather leaves all his wealth for only his grandson and nothing for Tara. It shows how a society thinks and places a girl child in a social order. Tara does not receive, the minute she is born, any substantiate from the society. In fact, even what belongs to her, is quite simply taken away.

The position of a girl child is always at a stake. She never receives any good from her surroundings for example, as Tara did not. Tara is only valued by her family, though her mother has had a past that seeks of

the guilt of patriarchal bias too. In the play, during a conversation between Tara and her friend Roopa, she tells Tara how the Patels used to drown her baby girls in milk, as they were unhappy to have a girl child. Dattani here highlights a social problem of female infanticide, which is among masses. Tara luckily is not the one, who faces such an evil, but in the end, her life waste.

The current work opens up other areas of research work in *Tara* for example, the characters of Mr Patel and Chandan whether and how they are/ or not complicit in patriarchy.. Mr Patel in the play does not support his wife and her father in deciding whether to give the leg to the boy. Being a male he does not take part in giving the leg to the boy. On the other hand, Chandan's voice is missing in the play. He has moved to London to be a writer. He is somewhere extremely hurt and traumatized by his guilt hidden- past.

Dan at the beginning of the play says, 'Conflict is in the crux of life'. He highlights the point that 'dual to death between life between God on one side and on the other- the amazing Dr Thakkar' (CP 330). He believes that the two could have died in their mother's womb but it was Dr Thakkar who gave them a life or rather destroyed it. Dr Thakkar is one of the most famous and renowned personality in the field of medicine. He is the one who separates; the Patel twins At Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital in Bombay. He is the surgeon-in chief and has led the surgery.

Dr Thakkar is placed next to the God his connection in the play, '... is asserted by his sheer God-like presence'. He is the one, who with the grandfather in the past decides to give the third leg to the male child. He is also a figure of the society who will prefer a male over a female. In the end, the audience comes to know that the doctor agreed to the terms of '... three acres of prime land-in the heart of the city-from the state'. (pg. no 378) The doctor is also unfair with Tara. He neither did justice with the girl nor his profession. He is also one of those who sell their profession in the market. A doctor is considered to be God on earth but people like Dr Thakkar deny the presence of God.

The personal is the political, in the play *Tara* ; the mother of Tara becomes complicit in patriarchy being a woman. In a male dominated society, the male is always a powerful figure, subduing the other gender where the 'other' or female is often complicit ---covertly overtly in patriarchy. It is seen in the play that it is the mother Mrs Bharathi who being a woman challenges patriarchy to become complicit. She is the one who becomes bias, when taking a decision for her children. A male gender is the one who should get all privileges and attention. Therefore under the influence of her father and society at large, Mrs Bharathi chooses the privileged leg for her son, Chandan.

The personal problems are political problems; it means that the problems woman face in their lives is not their fault but an oppression they suffer in a system in which they live. The society in an Indian context is based on certain notions which lead to preferential towards the male, more and always than a female. In the *Tara*, the mother being a woman, becomes biased towards her son and the daughter is the one to whom injustice is muted out.

The political in the personal is a glaring reality of our society and suggests that politics plays a part in our most intimate relationships. The personal relationship is one of complete comfort where there is enduring trust and belief. The fact of social reality is grounded in patriarchy and its multiple--often insidious--manifests. This cannot happen unless both genders are complicit in patriarchy. In the gutty realism of everyday life, one encounters the personal as political.

In the play, Mrs Bharathi is the one who becomes political. Along with her politically influential father, Bharathi manages to manipulate the politics of gender, her own advantage, to disadvantage of her girl child. The mother of Tara in past indulges to make relationships political. The play illuminates the fact that the mother too stimulated being a part of discourse of patriarchy. Discourse according to Foucault is:

ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon, 1987, 108).

A personal space becomes a possible area for political actions. The personal space is the family where actions are determined through functioning of a discourse. 'Discourse manages and label subjects on the basis of definitions which simultaneously produce the identity...' (Waugh 434) Political power functions in and spreads to various spaces, where there is potentiality of an essential change and transmutation. Therefore there can be basis for 'political optimism'. Discourse creates relationship of power and knowledge which then become framework, within which human thought and action is possible. Foucault believes power is always relational produced through a discourse. It 'comes from everywhere' which is always relational and intersubjective.

The political power comes from anywhere, sometimes from the most unexpected areas. It is sometimes from the most personal ways, where everyone becomes an object to the power. Power is exercised through numerous ways.

... Power is exercised through networks, and individuals do not simply circulate in those networks; they are in a position to both submit to and exercise this power. They are never the inert or consenting targets of power; they are always its relays. In other words, power passes through individuals. It is not applied to them. (Society Must be Defended 29).

*Tara* explores a fact that, power ostensibly comes from the matriarch-Mrs Bharathi. A scratch on the surface shows Bharathi herself is complicit in the discourse of patriarchy. Her choosing the leg for her son is to ultimately affect her children for their entire lives.

Mrs Bharathi engages in power relations which are complex and affects her and the people around her. According to Foucault, power and knowledge function in a society to exert focal areas of social control. This control of power on people is always relational and intersubjective. The society and the father of Mrs Bharathi are responsible factors in making her complicit in patriarchy.

The function of any social system is governed through a system of power which works within a discourse. A discourse or discourses at work function in way which constitutes subjects in a society. A society is based on male gender where his power is absolute and unquestionable. He dominates other individuals in his power. In the play initially the mother of Tara is complicit. Later in the play the mother under the influence of guilt and helplessness, turns neurotic and dies.

The current research has dealt with several areas like the body image, men as feminist and Tara as received by the audience. These themes illuminate facts about the society, individuals, and the flow of power through relation affect and place individuals in a social system.

Mahesh Dattani through the play *Tara* brings the attention of his audience that politics is a part of a social system. It works through power that comes from everywhere. Power is not present within one source but it present everywhere, it is always relational and intersubjective. Michel Foucault rightly says, 'Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society'.

Power sometimes, inheres in institutions, through which it works upon individuals. A society is on such medium or institution through which power works and creates subjects like Mrs Bharathi. Power functions in a way and creates subjects that are a part of a discourse. Mrs Bharathi is a part of one such discourse, the discourse of patriarchy she has internalized as a subject.

Power is associated with control and authority, which is again associated with the male gender. Max Weber defines power as; 'the chance of a man or a number of men to realise their own will even against the resistance of the others who are participating in the action.'(Hindess, 1996:2)

The current research, gives a further step to some other scenarios to be discussed from play. The play highlights how gender roles are constructed in a society. 'Dattani focuses on the family as a microcosm of society in order to dramatize the ways we are socialized to accept certain gender roles and to give preference

what is male'. (CP 320) A further study can be done on the twins, as they are considered as 'two sides of the same self' (CP 320) where the alter ego of Tara and Chandan can be explored.

It is interesting to know that the play expresses the personal meeting into the political as subjects are discursively constituted. They are involved in relations of power that are dynamic. *Tara* opens up the debate about the personal becoming the political in the light of an urban contemporary Indian culture.

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