

The Voiceless Gender in *Tara*

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Abstract

While other discriminations like economic or social discriminations are present outside the home, gender discrimination is present outside and inside households. Patriarchal setup forces women to fuse their 'self' with that of a male member - be it the father, the husband, the brother or the son. Thus, the family becomes the cradle of gender discrimination. In India, the society begins gendering as soon as a child is born. The birth of a daughter is unwelcome but that of a son is celebrated. The boys are brought up bold and outgoing while the girls are expected to be at home and do chores. The father is the decision maker. The mother generally performs the 'home making'. She does not have the freedom to plan or decide anything. She either remains voiceless or is made voiceless throughout her life. This paper aims to analyse this disparity in *Tara*.

Tara depicts the natality inequality that is predominant in our society. Natality inequality can be seen not only India, but also in countries all over the world. Natality inequality refers to the occurrence of parents wanting their new born to be a boy rather than a girl. Prior to technological development, this yearning was only a wish. However, with the advancement of techniques to establish the gender of the foetus, sex-selective abortion has become widespread now (Sen). Though natality inequality refers to parents' 'wish' for a boy, the case of *Tara* too can be considered under this category. Here we see the case of snatching the rights of one child in favour of another simply because the former is a girl.

Tara's life is devastated by the decision made by her mother and grandfather. After birth the twins look like "two babies hugging each other" (CP 377). Though Dr. Thakkar warns the parents of the odds against survival, it has been decided to perform the surgery. Since there were three legs, they decided to take the risk of giving it to the boy. The surgery is done. However, nature itself could not tolerate the injustice. The third leg did not suit Chandan. It lasted on his body only for two days and it had to be amputated. Even though *Tara*'s mother knows what hardships a disabled girl would undergo in a society, she favours her son, Chandan. It shows the inherent yearning of having a baby boy rather than a girl. She says to Chandan about the limp:

Yes, Chandan. The world will tolerate you. The world will accept you – but not her! Oh, the pain she is going to feel when she sees herself at eighteen or twenty. Thirty is unthinkable. And what about forty and fifty! (CP 349)

But still, she was ready to sacrifice the life of Tara in order to give the leg to Chandan. Soon she realized that it was “a grave mistake” (CP 378). They could have simply killed the girl child instead of robbing her off her legs.

The discrimination against Tara is multifaceted. First, Tara’s grandfather, the politician decides to give the leg to Chandan. A politician is the paramount symbol of patriarchy who always wants things to be done in his way. Tara’s grandfather might have thought of bringing up his grandchild into politics as his successor and hence could not imagine him limp. Alternatively, he might have wanted his male descendant to be perfect rather than female. Hence, he went to the extent of using his influence to get Dr. Thakkar three acres of prime land for his clinic.

Tara’s mother has her share in this. She could have saved Tara but, due to patriarchal societal set up, in spite of being a woman, she consents to rob Tara of her leg. After the surgery, she is so affectionate to Tara. She begs Roopa to be her best friend. She goes on to say if Roopa promised to be Tara’s best friend, Bharati would be grateful to Roopa and do whatever she wants in return. She in fact compels Roopa to promise her to be her best friend. However, one cannot resist the tendency to suspect her affection that ‘how would have she treated Tara if the surgery had worked well and the leg fitted Chandan? Would she have behaved the same in that situation?’ Whenever we see her affectionate talking, we are reminded of her share in the discrimination. As Jyothi Sharma reiterates this point, “what is actually a public display of attention on the part of the mother is actually a screen to shield her guilt”.

The third facet is Dr. Thakkar. He could have averted the surgery and saved Tara. But, he did not. After all, he is also part of patriarchy. Here a question arises naturally that whether he would perform the surgery if the situation were reverse. In Dr. Thakkar, we see a corrupt patriarch who deliberates himself to be godlike.

Patel, Tara’s father comes in the next dimension. After the meeting with Dr. Thakkar, Bharati informs him about the decision made by them about the surgery. He was not asked for any opinion and he did not dare to voice his protest strongly. He could not do anything. He neither protests nor comments boldly. Patel was afraid of the wealth of Bharati’s father, which actually means that he was afraid that he would lose inheritance (CP 344).

After his death, Bharati's father leaves his property to Chandan. He does not give anything to Tara, though both of them have equal rights to claim his wealth. As Jyothi sharma observes, "Male is the archetypal successor or prototype of cultural progeny".

The other sex is voiceless throughout this play. Tara often raises some issues but, amidst of the domineering patriarchal voices, she becomes voiceless. Tara *is killed* by social system, which controls the minds and actions of the people (Fareed). *Tara* is the story of every girl child born in our society (Manikrao).

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