

A Study of Women Oppression and Injustice in Indian Theatre

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Abstract

Women in traditional culture and patriarchal society are often perceived as repositories of societal ills. The condition of women in contemporary India has been adversely affected by many forms of injustice and oppression that arise in Indian society. They are outcasts deprived of societal privileges because of them being perceived as the inferior sex. Over the years, many Indian writers have contributed to the field of women's literature. Even though their position has been uplifted, the exploitation of women and gender discrimination has not been eradicated. This paper seeks to explain how patriarchy, inequality, intersectional oppression, and gender discrimination result in women's subjugation and marginalisation through a feminist understanding of the plays *Tara (1995)* by Mahesh Dattani and *Brides are Not for Burning (1993)* by Dina Mehta. The selected plays are groundbreaking in the literary canon that condemns gender discrimination, violence, exploitation, and ostracization of women. The study aims to examine and analyse male and female writers' perspectives in literature that creatively highlight the grief, scorn, degradation, and humiliation of women in male-dominated society. Finally, it explores the core reasons for the necessity for the quest for identity within society and posits how gender issues and patriarchal structures shape women's identities, eventually leading to the oppression and consequent injustice faced by female characters in the play.

Keywords: Gender Discrimination, Inequality, Patriarchy, Theatre, Women Issues.

Introduction

Feminism, as a theory, endeavours to understand the discrimination or burden those women endure in patriarchal societies, employing a range of ideas to protect them. Gender is not a factor in feminism. Feminism has gained significant popularity among women due to their objectification and perception as a lower sex. Men have always dominated women. Women were forced to step outside of their comfort zone and fight for their rights because they were being forced to act, eat, talk, and walk in a certain way while denying them agency. Initially, feminism was a movement. For a variety of reasons, women continue to focus on the sustainability of feminism or fight for their rights. Feminism, for instance, is crucial in India to end the persistent male dominance over women. The oppression that women have endured over time has led to the rights that they currently enjoy, which, at first, seemed like an impossible dream to ever realise. Even though women have managed to hold a prominent place in society, it is still disappointing to compare them to men. Women still do not have enough freedom, even in the twenty-first century. Customs such as "Rakshabandhan," "Kanyadaan,"

and others emphasise how women are weak and require men's care. The spread of equal respect for women is another factor. The majority of women experience threats of rape, harassment, and molestation. Therefore, in a society where men dominate, feminism plays a crucial role in improving women's status. The *Second Sex (1949)*, authored by the prominent feminist theorist Simone de Beauvoir, provides a detailed analysis of women's subjugation and serves as an influential text of contemporary feminist criticism, advocating against the definition of women within the patriarchal structure. Beauvoir argues that "women throughout history have been defined as the other sex, an aberration from the normal male sex" (1). She goes on to argue that women have historically been viewed as deviant and abnormal. She famously quoted in *The Second Sex* that "one is not born but rather becomes a woman" (1), which highlights the fact that women have been considered the 'other' to men. Women are generally perceived as weak and submissive, with their duties dictated by societal norms. They are expected to manage domestic responsibilities and nurture the family. The hegemony of

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(Received 29th September 2024; Accepted 16th January 2025; Published 31st January 2025)

masculinity consistently dictates the role and position of women in society. The established gender role of sex demonstrates how oppression and injustice exist in society. Even after the attainment of independence, women's freedom remains a myth. Women in India are constantly viewed as objects that must fulfil specific responsibilities and obligations in order to become 'perfect' women. Although the status of women has changed, the struggle for recognition as individuals rather than only as women remains unchanged on both social and economic fronts, as well as psychologically. Simone de Beauvoir asserts that when women strive to assert their humanity, they are often perceived as imitating males (1). In her essay *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir explores the concept of 'women' and the oppression they face due to their sex and sexual orientation, highlighting how societal characteristics portray gender and sex as two distinct elements. The stereotypical view of women in a man-controlled society remains unchanged (1). The role of women is chosen from their introduction to the world itself, as Shirley Chisholm states, "The emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females starts when the doctor says, It's a girl!" (2). This stereotype framework drives other challenges that women face, such as sexual orientation discrimination, inequity, character emergencies, oppression, and injustice. In India, we view each of these concerns as a part of tradition and culture, not as a problem. The worst aspect of women's struggles is that they are entirely sacrificed for the sake of tradition, becoming a part of the vicious cycle of male-centric society. Women in Indian society are oppressed not just based on caste or class but also due to their gender. Women endure sexual harassment, isolation, abuse at home, bride-burning, female infanticide, and husband desertion. They were politically and economically isolated and hence had to rely on patriarchal rulers. All decisions would be made by the male members of the household. Women in such communities lack self-identity or self-exploration. Many women stepped out of their comfort zones to express their experiences as women and members of the depressed class. Jean Chapman writes, "Domestic violence occurs: a 1999 study on incest involved 348 Indian metropolitan women from the high and middle classes. Almost

half of the participants acknowledged having been molested, and a third had been sexually abused, including raped, by family members or friends when they were 10 years old or younger. Women are kept as slaves, sold, trafficked as brides, raped by their husbands, and shared among brothers" (3). Women's positions in India have not changed significantly since the late twentieth century, as can be seen in the writings of Indian authors. Oppression and discrimination deprive women of basic essentials for survival, which drives them into a vicious cycle of patriarchy. India, during the 1980s, went through the infamous episode known as Sati Roop Kanwar, the immolation case. This occurrence, or the unspeakable horror episode, activated three sorts of writing in India: a) an examination of women's activists and women's issues in contemporary India; b) plays and other fictional works dependent on women's issues; and c) the last that surfaced out of this is the reinterpretation of the Ramayana and Mahabharata from a women's activist point of view (4). In contemporary society, there are various playwrights whose works highlight the challenges faced by women and denounce these acts that occur in the name of customs and culture, such as Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, Polie Sengupta, Mahasweta, Dina Mehta, and others. These scholars are known as 'activist' authors and contribute to the rise of "activist theatre" in India. They not only depict women's struggles for identity but also the oppression and injustice inflicted on them, challenging society's erroneous pre-existing whimsical orders. They are the 'voice' for invisible rehearsals in India (5). Men have idealised women, while the performative role-playing pattern has consolidated women. People immediately stigmatise stubborn women when they exhibit abnormality. These contemporary dramatists portray a variety of aspects of women in India, including their personal struggles, their resistance against injustice and unfairness, instances of sexual abuse, the exploitation of Dalit women, and the victimisation of women. They express concern about current social and political issues and how they affect the lives of ordinary people. Mahesh Dattani and Dina Mehta belong to the activist theatre (a form of theatre that generates awareness on various social, political, and cultural evils) and endeavour to speak on socio-political

issues, for example, violence, youth misuse, and social and economic exploitation that influence the ordinary way of life (5). They delineate genuine occurrences to show the social practices that are performed in the names of traditions and culture, like dowry, hegemonic manliness, sex-based discrimination, the subjugation of women's character, etc. Dina Mehta states that female dramatists can see more unmistakably into women's minds than male writers, yet there is another critic, Evangeline L. Marbaniang, who expresses that female dramatists become more emotionally one-sided towards the representation of women in the male world as compared to male writers (6). So, this study focuses on drawing out the women's oppression and injustice through the composition of both male and female writers: Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* and Dina Mehta's *Brides are Not for Burning*. They are always two sides of a similar coin. Similarly, Mahesh Dattani and Dina Mehta are individual activists whose auditoriums offer spots to these issues in their particular works. The oppression of women occurred on various levels based on violence, marginalisation, exploitation, powerlessness, and gender stereotypes. The social, economic, and political environment of any society gives rise to oppression and injustice in the society. Activist theatre has made a notable contribution to gender studies by providing a medium for writers to question societal norms, uncover gender inequalities, and exponent for women's rights. In India, playwrights like Mahesh Dattani and Dina Mehta have utilized theatre as an agent for social change, offering critical insights into the gender functions of Indian society. Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* and Dina Mehta's *Brides Are Not for Burning* are key works in Indian theatre, contributing significantly to gender studies by discoursing the oppression and injustice faced by women. Dattani's *Tara* stands out in Indian theatre for its inquisition of psychological and emotional violence, criticizing the societal preference for male children. Dattani's work is notable for using the familial setting to expose the deep psychological impact of patriarchal norms, thus expanding the scope of Indian theatre to include nuanced, domestic forms of violence. On the other hand, Mehta's *Brides Are Not for Burning* is groundbreaking in Indian theatre for its explicit portrayal of dowry-related violence and the

resulting physical abuse. By addressing the dowry system, a critical social issue in India, Mehta talks about the fatal consequences of this practice and the delinquency of Indian jurisdiction. Mehta's play is one of the first in Indian theatre to directly tackle the issue of dowry deaths, making it a crucial work in raising awareness about women's rights and legal injustice. Both plays bring newness to Indian theatre by illustrating real social issues, offering not only a critique of patriarchal structures but also a scaffold for feminist voices within Indian society, further contributing to the larger field of gender studies.

The Research Question

- How does Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* and Dina Mehta's *Brides are not Burning* depict the systematic oppression of women in a patriarchal society, and what role does gender based violence play in shaping the lives of the female protagonists?
- How does the character dynamics and familial structure in *Tara* and *Brides are not for Burning* reveal the powerlessness and lack of agency experienced by women, and in what ways do these plays offer a feminist perspective on resistance and the struggle for gender equality in contemporary feminist discourse?
- How does a male and female writer in Indian theatre approach the theme of gender discrimination and its impact on women's lives in the selected play?

Methodology

The current study employs a qualitative methodology to examine Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara* and Dina Mehta's play *Brides Are Not for Burning*, both through the lens of feminist theory. The paper uses the primary and secondary sources to accomplish the study. As a primary source, the play *Tara* and *Brides Are Not for Burning* is analysed for its thematic exploration of women's oppression, violence, gender stereotypes, intersectionality, and marginalization. In addition to the primary source, a range of secondary sources were used to support the research, which include scholarly writing, academic articles, interviews, and various research papers that delve into women's oppression and injustice. Both dramatists highlight the suffering of women and give voice to those who are marginalised in patriarchal society.

It explores the multilayered form of oppression and injustice that Tara and Lakshmi, the primary protagonists of the plays, endured. The analysis of both plays highlights the objectification of women and the societal control over their lives. Through analysing Tara and Lakshmi's stories, the researcher reveals the hurdles and complex ways of their journey in society.

Results and Discussion

Bodies as Currency: The Violence and Exploitation Waged Against Women

Violence can be identified as abuse, which can be physical, emotional, mental, or psychological. *Tara* addresses psychological and emotional issues, whereas *Brides Are Not for Burning* addresses physical ones. *Tara*, by Mahesh Dattani, is his third drama, released in 1995. It is a two-act play based on the Siamese twins, Tara and Chandan. Mahesh Dattani discusses how gender inequality based on sex leads to Tara's abuse. The drama depicts the cruelty in an unassuming way by showing how giving Chandan an extra leg renders Tara permanently crippled. The preference of male youngsters over females escalates into violence, manifesting as enthusiastic upheavals and outgrowing apprehensions in the play. Babu G asserts, "Every girl child born in an Indian family does suffer some kind of exploitation and is very much aware of it as the privileges that are denied to them are consciously or unconsciously provided to the son" (7). Tara faces viciousness latently, while Lakshmi experiences it mercilessly. Dattani's play, unlike Dina Mehta's *Brides are Not for Burning*, does not reveal the underlying foundations of violence in a particularly forthright manner. Dina Mehta unmistakably talks about bride burning and injustice based on violence. *Brides Are Not for Burning* is the first Indian play to address the topic of 'bride burning' for dowry in patriarchal society, written in English by a female dramatist. It is an account of Lakshmi's death in the play and the battle for equality fought by Malini and Anil. It is a drama that deals with the prevalence of dowry in India and its negative impact on women. Dina Mehta's significant commitment to women's theatre in India is well-known. It specifies that in spite of the fact that the possibility of a bride is not for burning, it is, in its face, extremely clichéd right now, yet it must be recalled that despite the

fact that the thought or such news is constantly harped upon and has become the purpose of activism for some, numerous years don't remove any shamefulness from its world, and subsequently it is significant that a dramatist like Dina Mehta decides to utilise dowry as one of her topics for the plays. She raises the issue of 'bride burning' as a kind of tyranny represented by Lakshmi's death in the play. She talks about Vinod's family physical violence on Lakshmi. She offers to ascend to one of the play's oppression and injustice scenarios. Malini asks: "Isn't it funny...that with a fat dowry Laxmi would have been a flaming success overnight—instead of a heap of ashes today?" (8). Getting married and living a prosperous life in her husband's house is every woman's dream, and Lakshmi deserves to live a happy existence there instead of experiencing abuse. Is it excessive what they are requesting? Malini rightly tells Anil: "... Freedom is money in the bank, Anil. You think if Laxmi had a fat bank account they could have trampled over her? Never" (8). Mehta highlights, through her play, how men are always seen to be greater and more powerful than women, and women would simply follow the men's lead. The beliefs and rituals were organised to benefit the world of men. The play devalues their identities, reducing them to mere objects of excitement, child bearers, and mothers. The women were denied autonomy and the ability to make their own decisions. As Simone de Beauvoir questions why women are the 'other' and explores how women are considered the 'second sex' and 'other' in society. She states that patriarchal culture made the women as 'other' and men as 'self' (1). Tara and Lakshmi are both extremely exploited in the play based on their sexual orientation and prejudice. Males' needs are assigned based on their gender and professions, which are influenced by their prior heritage, cultural values, and customs. Tara, meaning "star," symbolises something that radiates brightness and brilliance. However, in the play, just as the star shoots before it shines the brightest, the character dies before she shines and ascends due to the patriarchal psyche's preference for the male child over the female child, which speaks to the roots of exploitation in Indian society. According to Vikas Lathar, "The play shows how Patriarchy is pervasive, multi-layered and deeply rooted in social structure. It

has become part of our collective consciousness. Preference of boy child is not only due to economic factors as many believe. Other factors such as religious, social etc also contribute in this preference" (9). Tara's own mother decides to give the additional leg of Siamese twins to a male youngster, which straightforwardly investigates the digression of exploitation on a physical level as well as on a psychological, emotional, and mental level as well. Similar to Dattani's play, Dina Mehta uses Malini's character to draw attention to the exploitation of women. The mistreatment of women can also be observed in Lakshmi's family, where after her mother's death, she was approached to leave her studies and deal with the family, and later she was married to a wealthy family because her father wanted to save his family fortune, which additionally revealed that her father abandoned his first wife because she was unable to bear him a child and that he maritally assaulted his second wife on a regular basis. Shabnam Niher writes, Malini is the portrayal of Dina Mehta's voice in the play and speaks to 'angry young women.' "She is an angry young woman who wants quick solutions for the various maladies of the world" (10). Who battles against the idea and represents different sides of the coin: women who are aloof, accommodating, and feeble, and women who are solid and independent individuals. Malini is also sexually assaulted by Sanjay and Roy in the play, and her sibling, who was her staunchest partner, attempts to curb her political yearnings. The manners by which Sanjay, Roy, and Anil carry on toward her again show the profoundly rooted oppression, which one can't find on the main level; however, one can get into the record of how male entities subordinate female voices in the play. It shows a critique of the Indian malice social practices that enslaved women's identity and mistreated them so much that it occasionally causes passing. The episode depicting Malini's sexual abuse and repression aims to challenge the dominant masculinity that enslaves women's identity, voice, and oppresses them. Mehta represents the various offensive issues that negatively impact the lives of women in Indian society, as well as crimes against women committed in patriarchal societies, like dowry killings. This research article, entitled in "Chattels of Society: Domestic Violence in India" explore "Dowry plays a major role in

triggering marital violence in different parts of India mainly due to the negotiations and bargaining to obtain a substantial amount of wealth by the groom and his family" (11). In situations where the dowry demands are not met, young brides often face major physical and psychological harassment and torture by their husbands and in-laws (12). Mehta uses Laxmi's narrative, along with hundreds of others like her who were ruined by the in-laws ravenous avarice and the dowry system, to voice her concerns about a variety of topics. Feminist writers like Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert talked about the significant 'other self' of the woman, the revolutionary side, which is repressed by the expectations of society (13). This is prevalent in patriarchal societies, as discussed by Mehta, who provides psychological explanations for the mistreatment of women themselves. For instance, Mehta highlights the mother-in-law's and two sister-in-law's exploitation of the daughter-in-law, which includes frustration as a result of ongoing oppression and negligence that has been hidden within them for years. The daughter-in-law suffered in the hands of the mother-in-law because they would find peace by projecting their frustrations against society and the patriarchy towards the less inferior to them. Devika writes in her article, "Laxmi, the daughter of a father who fails to honour his promises in the business of marriage, is unwelcome in her in-laws' house. She is treated no better than a servant; her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law capitalise on every opportunity to belittle her with snide remarks and barbed words" (14).

Redefining Women Marginalization and Gender Stereotype

Marginalization is one strategy for treating and promoting injustice towards women. The marginalisation of Tara, Lakshmi, and Malini in the prior male-centric culture is depicted in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* and Dina Mehta's *Brides are Not for Burning*. This marginalization is a result of longstanding beliefs and gender biases. Our identity establishes our true selves, our goals, our duties, and our place in the world. We are able to live with validation because of it. However, women were denied this identity in ancient societies and mythologies. They have been marginalised and viewed as objects. Even goddesses have been given inferior status

compared to male gods. For instance, Eve has been portrayed as meek, vulnerable, and inferior to Adam in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. On the other hand, in Hindu mythologies, Apsaras were viewed as sexual objects and were widely recognized for their sexuality. Women's identity is somehow lessened by their sexuality. Tara's marginalization is demonstrated by the fact that Chandan was asked to take care of the workplace while she was asked to handle household chores. Mahesh Dattani discusses the concept of sex-based segregation, which leads to the play's protagonist, Tara, being oppressed and the female child being treated unfairly in the family. Durgesh R Kshirsagar mentions in his article, "There is partiality in treating the male and the female child in the country like India which has patriarchal system. Importance is given to boys, their education, health and career, etc; but what about the girls?" (15). A harsh criticism of the marginalization of women's character leads to the total abandonment of oneself. In fact, Chandan makes a comment about this in the play when he claims that his sister died because of her mother's desire (16). This further suggests that many women in society have a tendency to favour male children because they also share the same male-centric arrangement and psychological beliefs that lead Tara's character to be marginalised in the play. Although to repent her guilt, Tara's mother gives her extra love and care. For instance, she says "Yes. 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" (16). In a similar vein, Dina Mehta illustrates Lakshmi's marginalization in her play by depicting her murder. The play's narrative establishes the boundaries and marginalization of women in our society. The narrative centres on the death of a young woman named Lakshmi and how her brother and sister fail to seek justice and are denied it every quarter. Dina Mehta highlights the persistent social exclusion of women. In her in-law's house, Lakshmi was also treated more like an object than a subject. Malini stated that she was tormented by Vinod's family for sharing. She is the victim of an imperceptible social issue known as endowment, as her in-law believes her existence to be protected by 80000 rupees (8). Gender stereotypes are based on previous social and everyday situations. Stereotypes in India are

classified according to gender and sex. In her essay *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir asserts that gender and sex are two distinct concepts and that an individual's sexuality is determined by their cultural viewpoints and not defined by their gender (1). Humans adopt many identities throughout their lifetimes. The two most important ones are "individual identity" and "gender-based identity." Women's perspectives on the world differ from men's due to their experiences and increased knowledge of it. Likewise, no two different individuals can have the same experiences or results. It is these experiences and outcomes that manipulate our conscience and our perspectives on every discourse. Therefore, the exploration of identity is more subjective than objective in most scenarios. One of the gender stereotypes in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* is the preference for a male child over a female child. The gender stereotype that plagues the play is through Patel's father, as he needs Tara to accomplish local work and Chandan to accomplish office work. Patel is totally against his son doing any feminine work; he even scolds Bharati for that, which we can see through following lines:

"Patel: Chandan, leave that damn thing alone!

Bharati: (Frantic) Go! Chandan, just go!

Patel: (To Bharati) How dare you do this to him" (16).

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet book *language and gender (2003)* explore that "Sex is based in a combination of anatomical, endocrinal and chromosomal features, and the selection among these criteria for sex assignment is very much on cultural beliefs about what actually makes someone male or female" (17). The inclination of males to deal with the fund and females to deal with family unit things is very much depicted through the attitude of Bharati's father, who even bribed Dr. Thakkar. The injustice of females can be comprehended through Tara's discourse, as stating that a man decides to go pursuing while a woman takes care of the children undoubtedly brings up the dynamic and aloof jobs that depend on sexual orientation, which makes it easy to understand how women are unfortunate. Dina Mehta addresses gender stereotypes as a subjection of women's identity and voice, as well as an issue of injustice for women. It reveals how society functions in terms of justice for women.

The issue of injustice is brought to the forefront by Malini's struggle to obtain justice for her sister Lakshmi's death as a result of corruption in the judiciary. Through the topic of corruption, Dina Mehta brings up that it is almost impossible to get justice where everybody is corrupted, and this could be seen when Vinod attempts to bribe the system. Anil also provides employment opportunities to Tarla's husband as a means of controlling her behaviour. Vinod and Arjun also successfully intimidated Kallu into silence. The demarcation of women signifies their oppression and the resulting injustice, which is further highlighted by the issue of corruption in the legal executive framework. Mahesh Dattani and Dina Mehta critically examine intersectional oppression through their protagonists' experiences. The term 'intersectionality' was introduced by feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, which helped the researcher to see beyond just gender and understand how various social labels can shape individual experience in society. Tara and Laxmi's journey demonstrates how various aspects of their lives and identities—being women, daughters, wives, and people with disabilities; family honour; power dynamics; and so on—combine to create a unique struggle for them. This demonstrates how different aspects of intersectionality influence individual experiences. Dattani presents an intersection of oppression that affects Tara's life. Both Tara and Chandan, the conjoined twins, suffer from disabilities, yet Tara falls prey to them: her family favours Chandan over her, and she relinquishes her life in response to patriarchal expectations. Tara experienced double marginalisation due to her gender and disability. This demonstrates the Tara family's double standard and hypocrisy in discriminating against two physically challenged people based on gender. On the other hand, Mehta uses her protagonist Laxmi to illustrate how intersections of oppression exist in a patriarchal society; Laxmi suffers not only because of her gender but also because of social expectations. Laxmi desires to pursue her education, yet her marriage compels her to abandon her studies. After marriage, her life underwent a dramatic transformation, and her in-laws tortured her for not receiving the dowry. In India, it is customary and culturally expected for women to bring a dowry to their marriage. Mehta emphasises how society expects women to

prioritise their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters, demonstrating that women lack a sense of self in society.

The Unseen Burden of Women's Powerlessness

Women have lacked power and agency their entire lives. This occasionally leads to abuse as well as a complete lack of ability for them to make decisions. The power is harmonious to sex and gender. The predominance of men over women gives authority and power to men over women, which prompts an imbalance. By nature, people regard men as superior and authoritative in society, establishing all rules and regulations for their own benefit. They treat women as objects who have no identity and simply follow the men's leadership without question. Male power denies women the freedom to exercise their own agency and make their own choices. Most of the time, these restrictions prevented women from pursuing education or acquiring literacy skills. They were restricted to the confines of the house and tasked with preparing meals for their family. Mahesh Dattani and Dina Mehta both depict in their works the powerlessness of a female protagonist in the patriarchal society. In the play *Tara*, it is revealed how Chandan was given every opportunity in life while Tara was denied all privileges and opportunities. Mr. Patel wants his son to assist in the business and expects Tara to take care of the house. This incident highlights Tara's powerlessness, as she has the potential to do good in her life but has lost everything due to patriarchal society. Dattani demonstrates the preference for male children over female ones, a trait also evident in her mother, a servant of patriarchy herself. Regardless of the fact that most men are considered as one who abuses women, Dattani's play depicts a scene in which the injustice of preferring a male child over a female child is completed by their mother, Bharati Patel, in the play, implying that it is women who carry out the pattern of oppression against women, not men. Jeevan Kumar, in his article, talked about "when Tara comes to know that it was her mother, whom she trusted most, who made the decision to give the leg to the boy; she cannot bear this truth, and the shock takes away her life. She is not dead, but she is killed by the society (18). The play describes how to cope with the stress of an Indian household where one had to be disabled

because a male child was given advantages. The drama depicts Bharati Patel's helplessness and powerlessness as she herself became a puppet in the hands of previous norms and became caught in an unending cycle of patriarchy. Whereas Mehta shows powerlessness as physical maltreatment that Lakshmi experiences. KV Rosha, in her essay on "Exhibiting Resistance: In Dina Mehta's Plays, *Brides are Not for Burning* and *Getting Away with Murder*," notices that Laxmi is oppressed by both her family and her parents-in-law and that the issue of injustice is investigated through the failure of law and corruption (19). Laxmi faced oppression not only from her in-laws but also from her own family. As a girl, her family forced her to abandon her education and assume responsibility for household chores and the upbringing of her younger siblings. Laxmi's marriage was not a true marriage, but rather a ruse to obtain a dowry from her family. Her in-laws occasionally tortured her. They even blame her for infertility and hide their son's infertility truth. They treated her as an object and humiliated her. The play offers voice to a feminist agenda on the social issues in the present society concerned about the life of women. In the play, Malini protests remaining silent for her sister because she has only her brother Anil to support her in the search for justice. Dr. Nitu Minz in her article mention, "Malini recognizes that her lover Sanjay is a hypocrite and also turns down the offer of the revolutionary leader, Roy. She is annoyed with the media too. She succeeds in bringing out the naked truth of her sister's murder, but fails to bring justice to her as she is not supported by anyone in her work" (20). She herself became victim to power and agency. Malini was oppressed by a hypocritical society. This previous social colonialism, male-centric arrangement, sexual orientation inclinations, and lopsidedness are the explanations behind the powerlessness of women in the play. Both dramatists illustrate the powerlessness of the female protagonists, which ultimately results in the oppression and injustice they endure throughout their lives; thus, powerlessness is directly proportional to the overarching themes of oppression and injustice.

Conclusion

Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* and Dina Mehta *Brides are Not for Burning* is not just about the position of

women in Indian society; however, 'women' as an archetype of oppressed and interchangeable according to the needs of society. The characters of Tara and Laxmi are not just characters from any fictional work; they, in addition, speak to each and every woman who is oppressed and faces injustice in patriarchal society, which favours males over females; this in itself can be viewed as a method of protest and resistance that is portrayed in these plays and subtly attacks the previous standards of traditions and culture. The play *Tara and Brides Are Not for Burning* exposed the hypocrisy of patriarchy and questioned the conventional thought of living. Both plays were written in the late twentieth century yet, at the same time, have pertinence in light of the fact that the situation of women has not changed such a great deal until now. In addition, both plays structure a woman's identity because of herself as well as other people, where women never come to a 'focal point' of life. The play represents the struggle of women from birth to death, from preferring a male youngster to the passing of women by those males in the light of patriarchy. Through Tara and Laxmi, Mahesh Dattani and Dina Mehta offer a voice to all the oppression and injustice faced by women in the male-centric arrangement. The paper exhibits how all the viewpoints, like patriarchy and gender discrimination based on sex and gender, result in the oppression and injustice faced by women. It additionally shows all the difficulties women came across and their struggle even in contemporary times through the idea of sex and gender in India and the manners by which authoritative manliness curbed the women's identity. This research examines how Indian dramatists portray various issues of women's oppression, emphasising women's rights, media representation, and activism. The objective of this study is to illuminate the evolving circumstances for women and to raise awareness in Indian society regarding the victimisation of women. Indian society can alter its perspective on women and assist them in empowering themselves to live their lives on their own terms, rather than becoming victims of a patriarchal society. Although this study focuses on only two plays of these writers and gives further scope for a comprehensive examination of how both plays can simultaneously critique patriarchy and the

marginalisation of women from multiple perspectives, including psychological, physical, emotional, and societal. Furthermore, Indian theatre extensively discusses gender stereotypes and patriarchy; this study will add how these plays depict the emotional and psychological consequences of such systematic violence, especially in the context of the dowry system and the preference for male children. Both the dramatist shows the powerlessness of the female protagonist, which ultimately leads to the oppression and injustice they faced during the course of their life; therefore, powerlessness is directly proportional to the broader theme of oppression and injustice.

Abbreviation

Nil.

Acknowledgement

Nil.

Author Contributions

Bharti Sharma developed the idea of the research and wrote the manuscript. Dr. Sarika Tyagi provided guidance, feedback in the research writing process and proofread the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethics Approval

Not applicable.

Funding

The current Study did not receive any funding.

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