

Rejected Bodies: Confronting Normative Narratives in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*

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Abstract:

Indian Playwright Mahesh Dattani has made a name for himself dealing with discriminated and neglected social groups. Born in 1958, Dattani developed a passion for theatre from a young age. He has won the esteemed Sahitya Academy Award making him one of the most prominent names in Indian literature. He has achieved international success being one of the leading figures in Indian English Theatre. Through his 1990 play *Tara*, Dattani treats the issues of the constriction and social discrimination associated with disability. Through this paper, disability will be dissected in light of Michel Foucault's theories of power and normalization. This paper will highlight the resulting identity crisis associated with the disabled failure to fit into a social role and the social system failure towards disabled individuals. Moreover, it will discuss the effects of the media on the dehumanization felt by the disabled. It uncovers the media's contribution to the public's dehumanizing gaze of curiosity; it also influences the disabled twins' feeling of exhibitionism associated with public scrutiny. Such gaze in addition to the Foucauldian medical gaze will be judged in terms of power relations, revealing their role in further limiting the disabled agency. Some related issues like discriminatory attitudes and stigma toward patients with disabilities and mental illness will be touched upon in this study.

Keywords: Biopower, Disability, Identity Crisis, Normalizing Narratives, Social System,

Introduction:

Throughout his plays, Indian playwright Mahesh Dattani exposes social ills within the frame of modern-day families. Modern-day India struggles with a range of social issues, including poverty, gender discrimination, and caste-based inequality. British colonialism played an important role in shaping India's modernity by introducing concepts of governance, law, and education. It introduced modern institutions and influenced Indian thought with its ideology. Analyzing modern-day India through a Foucauldian lens can help uncover power dynamics, knowledge production, and resistance mechanisms that shape the country's sociopolitical landscape. This paper focuses on disability-based discrimination within the normalizing narratives. Michel Foucault's normalization theory has its roots in power/knowledge relations.

The Social Problem of the Abnormal

While the difference between the "norms" and the "deviants" is acknowledged, it is worth noting how the deviants have never had a chance to become normal (Goffman, 2018, p. 28). As a result, the question of a norm is linked to the matter of deviation from that norm. The writings of Foucault can be helpful since his interest in biopolitics and discipline stems from the need to address abnormal and unproductive conduct (Brunon-Ernst, 2018, p. 130). Henri Tajfel (1919-1982), developer of social identity theory, suggests how human beings tend to discriminate against those who differ from their own group of people. As they identify and protect the group of people who share their beliefs and values (Debbiche, 2014, p. 9).

This is what Michel Foucault had tried to prove in *Discipline and Punish*. The book opens up with a description of the public torturing and execution of Robert-François Damiens for his attempted murder of King Louis XV in 1757. Foucault narrates the detailed process of organ dismembering, pulling, and burning. Public execution aimed to inflict fear into the hearts of the horrified public so that they avoid breaking the law. As times changed, and although public execution came to an end, methods of punishment and discipline found their way through modern-day institutions. To serve the needs of the Industrial Age, be it political or economic, disciplinary techniques found their way into modern institutions; like schools for example. These institutions shaped the individual into a docile body to be a loyal and effective servant for the purposes of the age. To ensure constant observation and control with the least amount of effort, individuals were put on a self-surveillance mentality in order to discipline themselves and others. Those who differed were

punished by the more dominating individuals. Unlike eighteenth-century punishment methods, modern punishment would be through social rejection and isolation. Those who differ from the institutionalized individuals face rejection, isolation, and an identity crisis.

Normalization depends on the disciplinary mechanisms by which it creates and manages both norms and abnormalities. (Briscoe, 2008, p. 12-13). Abnormalities only exist if there is a prior standard of normality as its opposite. Normality was the standard by which deviants were detected. This created a sort of “value” to those considered normal and took it away from those who were not. The establishment of the “norm” standards encouraged people to comply by observing and comparing. (Ryan, 1991, p. 114).

The reason for the disabled outcast can be traced back to their failure to be a docile body to the social systems; they fail to fulfill a productive social role. As explained by Michel Foucault, “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved.” These bodies are the result of the modern era's disciplinary mechanism. Foucault continues by saying, “These methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility.” (*Discipline and Punish*, 1977, p. 136-137). When the bodies fail to be a case of subjection and utilization, they are rejected and treated like outcasts. Dattani's 1990 *Tara* treats this issue of the ill-fitted body.

The Search for Identity in *Tara*

Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* tells the story of the fatal separation of the three-legged Siamese twins, Tara and her brother Chandan. Through the separation, traditional beliefs interfered with medical necessity. Tragedy unfolds when the twins discover that it was the mother's decision to give the third leg to the boy, despite medical advice suggesting the leg belongs to the girl. The leg transportation fails, which leaves both twins amputees. Chandan cannot take Tara's tragic death; he moves to London and decides to forget his past life. He even changes his name to Dan but to no avail. The twins' abnormality leads to rejection and bullying throughout their youth. As they grow up Tara dies and Dan remains only to suffer from an identity crisis.

Two main issues are evident in this play, disability and patriarchy. Being Siamese twins and later amputees, the twins' abnormality can be analyzed through Foucault's normalizing power and his studies on biopower. The term "biopower" first emerged in the

context of his last lecture of the spring 1976 semester, delivered on March 17 at the Collège de France; the term emerged again in his 1978 *History of Sexuality* (Cisney and Morar, 2016, p. 7). Foucault attributes the rise of biopolitics to the final half of the eighteenth century saying:

During the classical period, there was a rapid development of various disciplines, universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops; there was also the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing, and migration. Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of "biopower." (*History of Sexuality*, 1978, p. 140)

While discipline was focused on molding individuals into productive forces, biopolitics focused on the biological side of the scale. It regulated anything from birth to death rates to the spread of diseases and medicine. Biopower was concerned with the individuals and their relationship with their environment (Cisney and Morar, 2016, p. 104). Although Foucault did not write on disability per se, the resulting product of his work came to be useful in analyzing inequality regarding the disabled. Through understanding normative favoritism, especially in regard to biopolitical standards, one comes to the understanding of how these ideologies have been reinforced to locate these "deviant" populations and illustrate the "natural" inferiority inherent in their unique differences (Tremain, 2005, p. 60).

As for depriving Tara of her leg, this is part of narrativity and inherited beliefs. As the ownership of the leg was not only given to the male twin, it was stolen from its rightful owner Tara. Giving advantages to the male twin, the decision was made against medical advice and followed traditional beliefs. The decision followed a patriarchal mentality, which was constructed by males to serve males. What makes patriarchy a narrative is how it disguises itself as an unquestionable truth. A phenomenon of knowledge formation¹ fed to society as truths. During the first half of the play, one sees evidence of the normalizing power consequences. The twins are referred to as

¹ Michel Foucault's concept of knowledge formation suggests that knowledge is neither objective or universal, but is influenced by power dynamics, historical context, and social institutions. He believed that those in positions of power create and manage knowledge, and that information plays a critical role in managing and disciplining individuals and society.

freaks several times in the play. Dan himself refers to himself as a freak during his opening speech to the audience when he says:

I am a freak. (*Pause.*) Now, a freak doesn't have to look very far for inspiration. (*Moves to his table.*) But what is hard is to let go. Allow the memories to flood in. (*Winds another sheet on the typewriter and then stops.*) To tell you the truth, I had even forgotten I had a twin sister. (*Music fades in slowly.*) Until I thought of her as subject matter for my next literary attempt. Or maybe I didn't forget her. She was lying deep inside, out of reach . . . (CP, 2000, p. 326)

From the starting point of the play, the audience comes face to face with Dan's pain caused by the past. As the memories of the past keep haunting him. The twins' case brings them much media attention, it celebrates their miraculous surgery whilst further highlighting them as deviants. As the play progresses, it is told from the memory of Dan.

Dr. Thakkar, the doctor noted for achieving the surgical separation, appears multiple times in the play. He reveals facts about the twins' peculiar case. Dan is seen conversing with him when he says: "A freak among freaks. Now I know I'll be a really brilliant writer." (CP, 2000, p. 332). Their identity as "freaks" of nature is implanted in them internally

. In his 1963 *The Birth of the Clinic*, Michel Foucault presents the concept of the "medical gaze". Foucault argues how the medical institution seized to see patients as individuals, but rather as a set of malfunctioning organs or defects. The medical gaze also influenced how a patient saw themselves, it decided their limit; confining their power and influence. Affirming the power of the medical gaze, the twins are limited internally with this image implanted within themselves. An image influenced by the medical gaze as well as the social and media-influenced perception of themselves. It is the narrative's method of limitation. Foucault demonstrates the gaze:

the medical gaze was also organized in a new way. First, it was no longer the gaze of any observer, but that of a doctor supported and justified by an institution, that of a doctor endowed with the power of decision and intervention. Moreover, it was a gaze that was not bound by the narrow grid of structure (form, arrangement, number, size), but that could and should grasp colours, variations, tiny anomalies, always receptive to the deviant. Finally, it was a gaze that was not content to observe what was self-evident; it must make it possible to outline chances and risks; it was calculating. (*The Birth of the Clinic*, 1975, p. 89-90).

Back into the past, Tara is telling her brother of her encounter with the next-door girls.

TARA. ... I showed it to them. The duckling couldn't believe her eyes. She stared at my leg. She felt it and knocked on it. Silly as well as ugly, I thought. 'The very best from Jaipur,' I said. 'We get them in pairs. My twin brother wears the other one.' (CP, 2000, p. 338)

A recurring theme throughout the play is the siblings' use of humor to cope with disability. This is simply a method of defense mechanism; the twins hide behind humor to avoid painful and uncomfortable situations. Humor may also make them more likable, less different, and more accepted

in the eyes of their peers. The tone of Tara is a bit aggressive and mean. Although it can be a sign of projection, it is only the tip of the iceberg.

The twins invite Roopa, the neighboring girl's friend, to their house. She is a two-faced little girl, as she visits the twins disguised as a friend only to make offensive remarks about what she sees at the Patels with her other friends later. She tells Tara:

ROOPA. Oh. Didn't I tell you? Nalini and Prema didn't give me half a chance. You know, those two love to gas about. If I were you, I would stay away from them. They'll talk behind your back and all that. They'll think of all kinds of names to call you. That Bugs Bunny and that drumstick. Some people are like that. You know (CP, 2000, p. 348)

Bharati, the twins' mother, bribes Roopa to be Tara's friend. She bribes her with watching movies. Roopa agrees but she also says this after leaving:

ROOPA (*calling to her friends urgently*). Prema! Premaa! Come quick! Where's Nalini? Never mind, you come here! My God! Oh, my God! Guess what? I went to her house! Yes. Right inside! I met everyone there. She is a real freak of nature all right, but wait till you see her mother! Oh God! I can't tell you—she is really . . . wandh tarah. Oh God! I'll never go there again. (CP, 2000, p. 344)

Tara is seen as a freak, and her mother's deteriorating mental health begins to show signs. When talking about milk, Roopa makes a connection to Patels (a surname given to people from Gujarat) and milk. Bharati is quick to change the subject.

ROOPA. ... I'm glad I can have coffee here. My mother only gives me milk. (*To Tara.*) You would have had plenty of milk being a Patel and all that. (*Laughs as if she has made a joke.*)

TARA (*to Chandan*). Did you get that?

CHANDAN. No. Did she?

ROOPA. You mean you don't know about Patels?

TARA. Don't know what?

ROOPA. Oh, so you don't know!

CHANDAN. Unless you tell us what it is, how will we know whether we know?

ROOPA. It's probably not true. It's just an old saying. Prema told me when she came to know you were Patels. It's about milk.

Bharati enters.

TARA. What is?

ROOPA. They drown them in milk.

BHARATI (*tense*). Are you sure you wouldn't like another cup of coffee?

ROOPA (*in Kannada*). Beda, aunty, thanks.

TARA. They drown what in milk?

BHARATI. Well then, don't you think it's time you went home? Your mother might be worried. (CP, 2000, p. 349)

Later, when Tara walks Roopa out, Roopa says the following:

ROOPA. Since you insist, I will tell you. It may not be true. But this is what I have heard. The Patels in the old days were unhappy with getting girl babies—you know dowry and things like that—so they used to drown them in milk. (CP, 2000, p. 351)

Tara's family are Patels, and where they come from an ancient infamous practice was commonly performed. This ancient practice is called Doodh peeti. Doodh peeti is the infamous Indian practice of drowning newborn girls in milk. This practice was mainly found in Saurashtra and kutch district in Gujarat (Rathi, 2010, p. 4). Tracing the origins of this practice, Jharejas who had settled in Kutch and practiced Hinduism and Muhammadanism as their religion were looked down upon by the Rajput community.

Jharejas can marry off their sons to Rajputs but cannot marry off their daughters. This made it a burden to have a daughter, aside from that, they could not afford the high prices that were demanded as dowry for marriage. Thus, Jharejas took the practice of female infanticide to avoid the burden that came from the birth of a daughter. Even though it was considered a sin in both Hinduism and Islam, it was the British who had a major role in banning the evil practice; although the practice continued until the late nineteenth century. (Yadav, 2007, p. 1023-1024). This practice was once a valid narrative, it was being practiced for good reason and was logical from their perspective, and its long-lasting continuation indicates its narrativity. The significance this holds with the Patels is that they, like the

Jharejas, had been responsible for the death of their daughter by following traditional narratives.

TARA. In milk?

ROOPA. So when people asked about how the baby died, they could say that she choked while drinking her milk.

Pause

TARA (*laughs suddenly*). How absurd!

ROOPA (*laughing*). Silly, isn't it?

TARA (*laughing*). Absolutely hilarious.

ROOPA. What a waste of milk!

TARA. Is that what mummy was trying to stop you from telling me?

...

TARA. Mummy is so cute—sometimes.

ROOPA (*disagreeing*). Yes. (CP, 2000, p. 351)

This unnerving conversation is but a foreshadowing of Tara's death. Later in the play, it is discovered that it was the mother's decision to give Tara's second leg to Dan. Knowing this breaks Tara's heart and explains the mother's guilt feed affection. Tara is force-fed milk by Bharati because she

fears Tara's sudden weight loss. Tara, just like Doodh peeti infants, is choked but not only with milk, she is being choked with her mother's guilt-trapped affection as well. Back to the present time, Dan was reading a scrapbook given to him by his father. It contains newspaper cutouts of all articles written about the twins, with pictures as well. Immersed in them, Dan says: "I don't think the Elephant Man got so much publicity" (CP, 2000, p. 358). While his comment is quite ironic on the surface, it speaks of years of suffering. Dan comparing himself to a deformed man, who was once displayed on a freak show, reveals how media attention had made him feel exhibited. He was also exhibited but instead of a freak show, it was the newspapers with many spectators to enjoy his abnormality.

Bharati has a nervous breakdown, she gets admitted to the hospital. The family tries to keep it away from Tara, as she just had one of her many regular surgeries. After leaving the Patels' house, Roopa makes a call. Roopa's demeanor toward ill people is a raw social representation since most people ridicule disabled or mentally ill people. It is important to understand how those behaviors are influenced by normalizing narratives, as people are encouraged to further isolate and push aside social deviants. This behavior is characterized by normalizing narrativity, as it is a hereditary behavior

like stories. Mental illness and disability were once seen as cursed or possessed

by demonic forces or punished by the gods for their sins, hence the origins of stigmatization. People at the time thought they were following good reason in isolating or even abusing those individuals. They followed stories and tales that made their thoughts and decisions appear rational. This attitude is carried out to modernity with the stigma related to mental illness and the attitudes towards the disabled.

ROOPA (*as if to Prema*). Yes. She is back. Can you believe it? They haven't told her about her mother yet. Well, they are telling her now. I tell you that whole family is crazy. And I always knew that mother of hers was bonkers. They say she had a nervous breakdown. I think she has finally gone completely loony. Stark naked mad. (CP, 2000, p. 360).

The normalizing system turns any deviant act into a person's identity (Vaz and Bruno, 2002, p. 279). This is clearly seen in psychotic patients, homosexuality, disabled, and any other deviation from the so-called "norm". Bharati's identity is now linked to her mental deterioration, just like the twins' identity is linked to their disability. In their desperate need for an identity, social deviants make an identity out of their deviation. This does not necessarily imply their content with their deviation, as their perception of themselves is highly influenced by their surroundings and people's attitudes towards them.

After an argument with his father, Chandan decides he is not going to college without Tara. Since she cannot go due to her deteriorating health and numerous surgeries. She provokes him to make him change his mind.

TARA. You are afraid. Afraid of meeting new people. People who don't

know you. Who won't know how clever you are. You are afraid they won't see beyond your . . .

CHANDAN. That's not true . . .

TARA. Who do you know in this city? Except that silly Roopa?

CHANDAN. Who do you know?

TARA. I don't. It's all the same. You. Me. There's no difference.

CHANDAN. No difference between you and me?

TARA. No! Why should there be?

CHANDAN. That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me. (CP, 2000, p. 364)

Chandan's identity is linked to Tara's, and both identities are linked to their disability. Social narratives deviants suffer an identity

crisis, since there is no social role for them and are left stranded on the margins of the social body. Overlooked with no roles written for them, they are left with the sense of a useless existence. Mr. Patel feels the normalizing narratives powers over his children. As he constantly worries about Chandan future, he sees him going nowhere. As for Tara, it is her mother who is constantly worrying about her future.

BHARATI. 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, the 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, 2000, p. 351)

During the course of the play, there is a recurring mention of Oglers, which is mentioned first when Roopa mistakes the word for ogres; the fairytale monstrous creatures. This word comes to be used to refer to those who make them feel hurt with their staring and hurtful remarks. The confusion with the gruesome ogre creature can also be a comment on the nature of the oglers in the twins' lives.

ROOPA (*to Chandan*). Or tell us one of your stories. A monster story. You know, like oglers.

TARA. Oglers?

ROOPA. You know, those monsters with one big eye in the middle of their foreheads.

CHANDAN. Ogres.

ROOPA (*defensively*). Well, they look like they are ogling. (CP, 2000, p. 331)

The word serves as a metaphor for people staring at disabled people. This is confirmed by the many uses of the word later when Chandan uses it to hint at Roopa.

ROOPA. ... He is writing a story about me. Aren't you, Chandan?

CHANDAN (*seriously*). Yes. You will be in the story too. As the ogler. (CP, 2000, p. 331)

BHARATI. Chandan, what's your story about?

CHANDAN. It's called 'The Ogler Next Door'. (CP, 2000, p. 350)

CHANDAN. The oglers are all asleep. Nalini, Roopa, Prema. (CP, 2000, p. 365)

ROOPA. Boo!

CHANDAN (*looks up at her in mock-horror*). Aaagh! The ogler has come to get me! Help!

ROOPA (*annoyed*). Very funny! (CP, 2000, p. 366)

In a later scene, the audience encounters a dark side of Tara. The hurtful side of Tara might be attributed to many factors. From enduring years of bullying with her lack of empathy and unresolved anger, she developed a hideous side within her and a deep need for power. Her deviation might have been successful in pushing her to the margins of the social body, but she discovered sinister methods to exercise power, such as prying on the flaws of others and becoming a bully herself.

TARA (*looks at-her*). It's good to know what hurts other people.

ROOPA (*laughs nervously*). I suppose so.

TARA. Comes in handy.

ROOPA. Well—yes.

TARA. Knowing their secrets is useful.

ROOPA. I suppose so.

Pause

TARA. So how does it feel having one tit smaller than the other?

Roopa is stunned. She rises, her mouth open.

Don't worry—it's not very noticeable, except from a certain angle. Then it's very noticeable. (CP, 2000, p. 372)

Tara once accidentally discovered how a girl in her class sleeps on rubber fabric because she wet the bed at thirteen, she threatens her to do her homework or else she tells the class. Then she does the same with Roopa. She talks about how she takes advantage of secrets. Roopa is self-conscious about having one breast bigger than the other, Tara makes use of her insecurity. This goes well with the saying "Hurt people hurt people" as victims of the normalizing narratives are not always passive and innocent; they can also be hurtful and even immoral. "ROOPA. How dare you! You one-legged thing!" (CP, 2000, p. 372) Roopa wastes no second in spelling everything out;

ROOPA. And to think I pitied you! Oh! I think you are disgusting! I only come here because your mother asked me to. No, she didn't ask me, she bribed me to be your best friend. Yes, your loony mother used to give me things. Charlie bottles, lipsticks, magazines. Now that she's finally gone crazy, I guess she won't be giving me much. So goodbye. (*Exits.*)

TARA (*shouts after her*). Get lost! And please ask Nalini and Prema to come hear this! They will love it. They are going to look at your tits the same way they looked at my leg! Let me see how you can face them ogling at you! You won't be able to come out of your house, you horrible creature! You are ugly and I don't want ugly people in my house! So get lost! (*Moves to the sofa, gasping.*) (CP, 2000, p. 372)

Tara's words reveal her psychological projection, she hurts them with the type of pain she's most likely familiar with; that is shaming others for their physical flaws and imperfections or anything unnatural. Disabled bodies are rejected through the system of bio-power. The medical institution is

involved in confining and restricting them. In his later works, Foucault suggests how resistance is possible (Thomas, 2006, p. 180). From a Foucauldian perspective, Tara's behavior might be her way of gaining agency; since disabled people are stripped away from power. Her harmful behaviors, from blackmail to foul language, can be attributed to a deep need for power since she has lived a life of deprived agency. It came out in a negative way since this sort of power had its roots in pain and revenge.

CHANDAN. They are not the ugly ones. We are. Horrible one-legged creatures. (CP, 2000, p. 373)

...

TARA (*angrily*). Yes, but you don't have to say it!

CHANDAN (*moves to her*). I'm sorry. You mustn't mind very much.

TARA. What?

CHANDAN. Being one-legged.

TARA. What makes you think I mind?

CHANDAN (*softly*). I feel your pain.

TARA. Yes, I do mind. I mind very much. (CP, 2000, p. 373)

Their true feelings hide behind the humor. After telling her brother how she thinks it is wasteful to spend so much money on her kidney surgery, Tara begins to drown in her ideas. Her ideas reveal a longing for a purpose to exist. As she grows older, Tara comes face to face with the social deviant struggle to find a role in society and to fulfill a purpose. She goes through a crisis and eventually breaks down over her hospitalized mother.

TARA. ... I think I know what I will make of myself. I will be a carer for those people. I . . . I will spend the rest of my life feeding and clothing those . . . starving naked millions everyone is talking about. Maybe 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 is really . . . (*With emotion.*) Oh, bullshit! I don't care! I don't care for anyone except mummy! (CP, 2000, p. 373)

They struggle to find a purpose, as mentioned earlier there are no roles for them. They are unproductive and so their bodies do not matter. Their bodies cannot be utilized and so they are disregarded. The medical gaze also serves as a knowledge-formation tool, it decides truths (Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 1975, p. 48). Their limited influence in society was decided by the medical institution.

CHANDAN. It's somehow wrong.

TARA. I don't care!

CHANDAN. You should. You should care . . . for people around you.

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, 2000, p. 374)

She fails to be compassionate and empathetic due to exclusion and lack of acceptance from the outside world. Since the moment of their separation, the twins were perceived as a medical miracle, this did not protect them from being looked at as freaks of nature and experiencing hardships from their peers. Showing compassion, especially when one hasn't received it, might be challenging due to emotional barriers that were built upon years of ill-treatment.

Back to adult Dan, he receives a phone call from his father. His father informs him of his mother's passing, but Dan tells him he cannot come back home. He informs his father that he has nothing there to return to (CP, 2000, p. 371-372). Dan's unbothered demeanor is unnerving and ill-fitted considering the subject matter of the call. It further showcases his escape.

The theme of separation is a recurring theme. Dan is separated from Tara in infancy, he separates himself from his past in adulthood. This might have been all avoided had the twins been born "normal".

DAN. How is mummy, now? (*Pause.*) How? . . .

(*Pause.*) When was this? . . . Oh, was it . . . sudden? . . .

I'm sorry, dad. But I can't help but feel . . . relieved that it's all over . . . (CP, 2000, p. 376)

Truth unravels when the twins question the reason behind their father's refusal of sole visitations to their mother in the psychiatric hospital. When the twins question him, he decides to reveal the secret himself. He reveals how their "grandfather got involved personally in [the] discussions with the doctor... there was one complication which hadn't been discussed. There were three legs." (CP, 2000, p. 380). As shown by a scan, the third leg belonged to the girl. It was the mother's decision without consulting her husband. The mother's decision was

made under narrativity pressure. The decision followed narrative-based male favoritism; as male-born children have always enjoyed a sense of primacy over female-born children supported by economic, religious, and social influences. “—I couldn’t believe what she told me—that they would risk giving both legs to the boy” Patel says (CP, 2000, p. 381). It was a risk indeed, as the leg died out and the transplant failed. Patel reveals how at first “Chandan had two legs—for two days” (CP, 2000, p. 381) before it was amputated. The news shocks Tara’s world, given the strong intimate bond she shares with her mother.

PATEL. ... I tried to reason with her that it wasn’t right and that even the doctor would realize it was unethical! The doctor had agreed, I was told. It was only 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 grandfather’s political influence had been used. ... (CP, 2000, p. 381).

This leaves Tara in shock as she says: “And she called me her star!” (CP, 2000, p. 381). Bharati acquired a great sense of guilt over time, which made her smother Tara with guilt-ridden affection. Tara’s world crashes to pieces as she learns the truth. She is even more saddened by the realization that the single person who truly loved her is also the cause of her suffering.

Due to her failing health, Tara passes away over the following years. The audience is back with present-day Dan who delivers his final monologue.

DAN. ... Like the amazing Dr Thakkar, I must take something from Tara—and give it to myself. Make capital of my trauma, my anguish, and make it my tragedy. To masticate them in my mind and spit out the result to the world, in anger... (CP, 2000, p. 382)

The play ends with Dan asking for Tara’s forgiveness and the twins embracing on the stage. “DAN. Forgive me, Tara. Forgive me for making it my tragedy.” (CP, 2000, p. 383). The final embrace symbolizes conflict resolution. Dan’s identity has always been attached to Tara’s and the embrace is a symbol of feeling whole and complete. It can be seen as Dan’s way of freeing himself from the guilt of the past and an apology to Tara, even though it was not his decision to take her leg. It can also be a sign of sympathy and closure to all the pain faced by both twins, pain that came from rejection and dehumanization gazes influenced by normalizing narratives.

The disabled sense of rejection and the stigma associated with psychiatric patients limit them and push them to the margins for not bringing much financial use to the social system. The plays present a

small share of the suffering and isolation associated with those who defer from the norm. Michel Foucault's theories can be applied to all abnormal beings in society, from the disabled to the homosexuals. By taking a Foucauldian approach, a similar study can be made tracing gender norms in light of power/knowledge relations.

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أجساد مرفوضة: مواجهة سرديات التطبيع في مسرحية تارا لماهيش داتاني

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الملخص:

صنع الكاتب المسرحي الهندي ماهيش داتاني اسماً لنفسه من خلال تناوله لمواضيع تخص الفئات الاجتماعية المضطهدة. ولد داتاني عام ١٩٥٨، وطور شغفه بالمسرح منذ صغره. وقد فاز بجائزة أكاديمية ساهيتيا الموقرة مما جعله أحد أبرز الأسماء في الأدب الهندي. لقد حقق نجاح عالمي كونه من رواد المسرح الإنجليزي الهندي. من خلال مسرحيته تارا عام ١٩٩٠، يعالج داتاني قضايا التقييد والتمييز الاجتماعي المرتبط بالإعاقة. من خلال هذا البحث، سيتم تحليل هذا التمييز في ضوء نظريات ميشيل فوكو للسلطة والتطبيع. ستسلط الدراسة الضوء على أزمة الهوية المرتبطة بفشل المعاقين في الانخراط في دور اجتماعي، فضلاً عن فشل النظام الاجتماعي تجاه الأفراد ذوي الإعاقة. كما ستناقش الدراسة دور وسائل الإعلام في تجريد المعوقين من إنسانيتهم ومساهماتها في نظرة المجتمع المعدومة الإنسانية والناعبة من الفضول؛ كما تعرض شعور التوأم المعوق بالاستعراضية المرتبطة بتقحصهم من قبل المجتمع من خلال الاعلام. سيتم تحليل هذه النظرة بالإضافة إلى النظرة الفوكولدية الطبية على ضوء علاقات القوة، مما يكشف عن دورهما في الحد من فاعلية وتأثير المعاقين بالمجتمع. ستتطرق الدراسة إلى قضايا ذات صلة مثل التمييزية ووصمة العار المرتبطة بذوي الإعاقة والمصابين بالأمراض النفسية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: (الإعاقة، سرديات التطبيع، السلطة على الحياة، أزمة الهوية، النظام الاجتماعي)