

Resilience and Hope:
An Inquiry into Indian Narratives of Disability in Select Novels

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Chapter VI

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Summation

The select fictional works *Simply Nanju* (2016) by Zainab Sulaiman, *A Time to Dance* (2014) by Padma Venkatraman, *Family Life* (2001) by Akhil Sharma, and *Trying to Grow* (1990) by Firdaus Kanga were analysed to decode the inextricable social, cultural, political, and economical issues that are intertwined to disability. The thesis has analysed the stigmatic notions and derogatory opinions connected to disability, along with the architectural defects, psychological imbalances, and disability experience in India. As elucidated in the foregoing chapters, the novels can be regarded as a factual representation of disability within the Indian context. The stories revolve around families that belong to the diverse corners of the country. These fictional constructions of disability have focused on three main aspects, the role and function of family, society and their perceptions on disability, the point of view on disability by the individual who has a physical impairment, the cultural, social, and political understanding of disability within the Indian context.

The research is done under the framework of disability through various theoretical approaches and concepts. The findings of Tobin Siebers, Erik H. Erikson, and Anita Ghai were incorporated to the research for understanding in detail the unique nature of disability experiences and narratives. Scholars like Siebers and Ghai while focusing on disability have unravelled the brutal realities and the everyday struggles that the individuals with impairments experience. Their approach exposes the existing traditional perceptions, modern attitudes, and radical views on understanding disability. Disability studies as an academic inquiry is in a relatively burgeoning state, but it should gain widespread attention so that everyone across the

globe will be more cautious and responsive when dealing with disability.

Psychosocial theory as propounded by Erikson defines the struggles and hardships that each individual experience at different stages of their life. He proves that an individual can lead a contented life by successfully passing each stages of their developmental crisis.

All across India, there are individuals who experience different kinds of impairments. It is also very common to see them inhabiting the precincts of religious institutions, during traffic jams, at railway or bus stations collecting alms for their livelihood. There are many families who abandon their children if they notice any impairment in them. These children are forced to collect alms as they had to fend for themselves. Few among them are incarcerated in institutions that are run by government and private sectors. Children with impairments who live with their families are also not leading a fully privileged life as some are denied education and some are forced into isolation. Such behavioural attitudes compel them to think that they are wretched, worthless, and are burden to the members of their family. Being dependent on family often scares them due to the humiliation that they experience each day because of their inability while doing their daily activities.

Reports of violence against individuals with impairments irrespective of their age and gender project the alarming realities of their existence. Physical abuse, sexual assault against women with impairments, and verbal or emotional mistreatment are commonly reported by the disability rights organisations. Physically or mentally impaired individuals who are institutionalised are also made to suffer in multiple ways. Women with impairments are likely to experience emotional, physical, and sexual abuse from caregivers, healthcare providers, family members, or even strangers. They are victims of such abuse right from their childhood and this follows

them till adulthood. They find it extremely difficult to escape from their abusers and gain access to a support system as they have limited connections and accessibility. They are often confined within the walls and boundaries of their abusers with no access to the outer world. In such cases, individuals who try to gain justice have to travel through several paths of humiliation. Society often sympathises more with a girl who has impairments as the parents might find difficulties in getting her married and families who belongs to an economically weak background experience complications to accommodate and fulfil every need of their children. Proper channel of expression including debates and discussions can be a source to empower this marginalised group that is deprived of attention. Systematic studies that attempt to reflect the horrifying past and present living condition of physically impaired individuals will automatically enable a wide group of its readers to provide them a promising future.

The previous chapters hold a record of events that is commonly seen in Indian families who have members with impairments. The social constructions that marginalise the existence of the physically impaired individuals are the present day realities that need rectification. Reluctance to accept and acknowledge the physical body that is impaired is equal to the violation of basic human rights. Society needs to erase the negative connotations and practices that degrade an individual for his/her impairments. The system of inequality leads to prejudices and stigma. Social constructions that set aside a particular group of people as the 'other' or less than fully human showcase their own quality as an individual. The concept of 'othering' can be equalled to the images of coloniser and the colonised. Such patterned exclusions that are visible in educational institutions, workplaces, local transportation, restaurants, movie theatres, shopping malls, tourist locations, comfort stations, recreation areas,

etcetera, highlights the lack of accommodation experienced by the physically impaired individuals as well as the supremacy laid by the ablest society.

Disability as a topic for research or fictional representations is sparse within Indian writings. The thesis studies the relevance and importance to examine disability with respect to characters by questioning the ideas of normalcy, rights, and identity. It has also tried to identify the politically correct usage of terms while referring the individuals who have impairments. Literature helps readers recognise and imbibe the moral tones that will refine the characteristics and understanding on certain subjects. Narratives about disability serve as a catalyst that aims to mould the perceptions of the present generation. Such progressive thoughts instilled in people can help them step out from their periphery of misconceptions. To inculcate normalcy in the veins of public by eradicating the negative social meanings and discrimination practiced till date was the main objective of this research.

The long episodes of disability related issues and perceptions are to be analysed under the broad realm of disability studies. In India, disability studies as a legitimate area of inquiry has not gained the deserved focus. The inability to immediately find problems faced by the individuals with impairments through a critical lens is a failure from the society's part. The thesis has attempted to reverse the prevailing acuity of social injustice. From the vantage point of disability, society should take charge of eradicating the stigma, for improving the quality of lives of the individuals with impairments. The study preferred to attain a paradigm shift from the social ostracism that is levied upon them. Disability within academia requires more attention especially in India. An epistemic knowledge about disability is necessary, to understand the meaning that the society has already charted about the human behaviour, appearance, functioning, both sensory, and cognitive in individuals with

physical impairments. Sharing knowledge about disability is required to understand the structures of control and exclusion.

The novels examined in this thesis addresses disability and the abnormal notions that are associated to it. *A Time to Dance* by Venkatraman and *Family Life* by Sharma involve characters who have physical impairments that resulted from accidents and *Trying to Grow* by Kanga and *Simply Nanju* by Sulaiman present characters who battle physical impairments that were congenital. All the selected novels portray the social stigmas and difficulties that were directed towards them because of their physical condition. Along with their medical situation, these characters had to undergo challenges due to the social system in which they reside. Such narratives exemplify how disability is perceived and accepted by families from Indian background. It highlights the fact that each individual represented in these novels yearn for affection and equal recognition from the society. Society failed to meet their expectations and their inhumane approach always traumatised these individuals with impairments.

The main objective of the second chapter, “Understanding Realities of Disability” was to highlight the negative notions that are attached to disability by implementing the idea of normalcy. Secondly, the chapter has focused on the architectural constraints that the individuals with physical impairments had to experience in their daily life. The chapter followed the concepts articulated by Siebers in his book *Disability Theory* to substantiate and validate the findings. The chapter unravels the social meanings, stigmas, and symbols that are connected to disability and it questions the system that enforces oppression on the individuals who have impairments. Disability will be considered as a defect only if the social structure claims it to be so. Mostly, it is the society that imposes on a person that his/her

impairments are a sign of personal flaw or defect. An individual with impairment is considered as the 'other', whose existence in the society is uncertain and questionable.

A brief look at the history of human race reveals that humans are fragile, feeble, and finite. An individual may confront sickness, accidents, injuries, diseases, starvation, old age, and natural or man-made disasters at any stage of their life. It is an unavoidable truth that human body is always subjected to change. It is a gentle reminder for those who believe in the ideology of human ability and then disgrace and denounce individuals with impairments. Siebers believes, "It is not the fact of physical difference that matters, then, but the representation attached to difference—what makes the difference identifiable. Representation is the difference that makes a difference" (17). Pejorative treatment in the form of discrimination that is based on physical differences is identified by Siebers as actions of prejudice.

Siebers briefly details the social model of disability to emphasize on an individual's lived experience while dealing with disability. Social model of disability identifies the barriers, marginalisation, and exclusion that individuals with impairments experience in their daily life. It projects the idea that disability is connected to limitations which invokes fear in an individual, who ponders over. Social model defines disability as socially constructed. It seeks to bring about a society where individuals with impairments are accommodated without any indifference. Siebers states, social acceptance that consider disability as a positive identity can relatively produce changes. He further proceeds to contemplate on the issues when an individual is marked as disabled, the technologies that are designed to make their life better are considered as expensive additions or unnecessary accommodations.

When knowledge is socially situated and identities are socially constructed, some bodies are excluded and oppressed by the dominant structures. These representations should have a politically correct understanding so that no individual will be affected by it. “People with disabilities have forgotten how to suffer and be still. They want to raise the consciousness of others to their plight, to have their oppression recognized and brought to an end, and to feel good about themselves, even though other people do not feel good about disability” (Siebers 35). Disability studies that addresses their issue is a necessity as the readers can be enlightened by it. Narratives on disability through the medium of literature and research are preferred by Siebers and other scholars as the perfect methodology of representing disability to a wider public. The lives of individuals with impairments can be improved only by changing the contemporary political landscape. The changes imbibed by the present generation will be followed by the rest, thus eradicating, to an extent, the negative implications that are associated to disability.

The thesis has tried to introduce the realities of disability identity to the public imagination. The task was to break the uncontrollable ideological forces of society by invoking the importance of acceptance and recognition. Accidents can bring harmful impacts on an individual as the memory of his/her old physique will continue to haunt him/her down through their present agony. Adapting to a new self with limitations that they have not expected to happen is distressing. They can also notice a transformation in the society’s attitude after the occurrence of the accident. To them, negligence is more excruciating than the physical pain. They tend to struggle with depending on others for activities that were hitherto done without any assistance. Indifferent or dominant actions from the side of caregivers could affect their self-esteem. All they prefer is to function normally and live with their impairment with

dignity, without being ashamed or embarrassed for their physical situation. Overruling the misrepresentations by acknowledging the hard realities of the physically impaired individuals can bring progressive changes to the current social system.

It is vital to reconsider the ideas and conceptions of disability in the twenty-first century as the physically impaired individuals should get the deserved attention and inclusiveness. Disability is the inability that an individual who has physical impairments experiences while trying to fit into the society that disregards him/her. Individuals with impairments struggle a lot to gain access into public buildings, educational and religious institutions, banks, food courts, or commercial buildings that are designed against their limitations. They feel frustrated while depending on others for their daily needs. In this age of development where technologies are well advanced, the general public lacks consciousness on the constraints that are associated to architecture and accessibility. Inflexible structures, including the designs of furniture, rooms, buildings, streets, and much more reveals the helplessness of the discriminated community. Every building or public space that is inaccessible, are representations of oppression.

Universal design is the only solution to make a space barrier-free and accessible. The concept of universal design originated in the USA to design buildings, environment, or equipments, in such a way that any individual can gain access regardless of his/her age, impairment, or any factors that causes limitations. The thesis tries to project the importance of accessibility that must be incorporated into any built environment, transportation system, and other infrastructural facilities. Proper signage should be installed in buildings as a warning that certain areas are barrier-free while some are not. Directions to accessible entrances should be specified clearly. Accessibility is their right towards freedom to achieve the basic quality of life.

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) introduced the Accessible India Campaign or Sugamaya Bharat Abhiyan, a programme that was launched by the Prime Minister on 3rd December, 2015 on the International Day of People with Disabilities. The scheme concentrates on three issues, namely the problems experienced by individuals with impairments in a built environment, transportation sector, and the Information and Communication Eco-system Accessibility (ICT). Primarily, the Built Environment Accessibility eliminates every obstacle in institutions such as schools, healthcare departments, and work spaces. Indoor/outdoor facilities including staircases, corridors, ramps, emergency exits, entry gates, restrooms, and parking slots must have proper lighting facilities, signage, and alarm systems. Secondly, transportation being the fundamental component for independent living should be converted as accessible for individuals with impairments. This includes, bus, public vehicles, taxi, trains, as well as air travel. Finally, ICT gives importance to provide information to every individual equally. No social barriers should remain an obstacle for people with impairments to gain information. Their main target is to provide information through websites that have audio-visual facilities and sign language interpreter.

The above mentioned scheme is also a part of the Persons with Disability Act, 1995, under section 44, 45, 46, which articulates equal opportunities for the physically impaired individuals during transportation. The campaign focused at converting at least fifty percent of the current government institutions as barrier-free. It also envisages further development to produce a minimum of twenty-five percentage of the transportation system under the government to be user friendly to all citizens. It also focuses on training individuals to practice sign language so that the hearing impaired individuals can conveniently watch television. The group has also launched

an online library, the Sugamaya Pustakalaya under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with the National Institute of Visually Handicapped.

There are primarily four types of disabilities that should be taken into consideration while preparing for a barrier-free environment. Non-ambulatory, semi-ambulatory, and visual and hearing impairments are the major four categorisations. Impairments, regardless of its cause that confines an individual to a wheelchair are considered as non-ambulatory. Semi-ambulatory is a situation where an individual can walk but with difficulty with the assistance of objects such as crutches, walker, wheelchair, or any other appliances. Visual impairment affects the safety of an individual in public areas and hearing impairment makes an individual insecure as he/she cannot hear warning signals. Installation of braille signs or audible signage, and removal of protruding objects for making the walking space secure are the basic requirements for individuals who are visually impaired to travel safely. Illuminated signage and diagrams can help individuals with hearing impairments to reach their desired location without any difficulties. Walkways, corridors, ramps connecting the entrance/exit, and passages should not be slippery and it should follow proper protocol that accommodates the needs and size of the wheelchair.

The society as presented in the selected novels for study indicates the impact of the conventionally perceived concepts of disability within Indian context. In the novel *A Time to Dance*, Veda had to undergo numerous struggles as the doctors had to amputate her leg after the accident. The first social oppression experienced by Veda was when her dance master Uday rejected her desire to become a dancer. She started to recollect the past events when her talents in dance brought her recognition, glory, and fame. Veda was traumatised in many occasions due to the inhumane attitudes

imposed upon her by society. Veda was offended because these actions of discrimination were from people who were close to her till the accident took place. She was ridiculed by her classmates as her arrival was always marked by the sound of her crutches. Onlookers criticised her for not being open about her accident. Few strangers degraded her for not replying to their queries that were based on her physical condition.

The novel depicts the unpleasant realities where society is reluctant to accept an individual who has physical impairments. It is not necessary for a physically impaired individual to satisfy the expectations of the general public. An individual with impairment may not be comfortable, answering all the queries that are directed towards him/her by the strangers. Society should respect their freedom and let them live and not intrude into their personal space. Venkatraman has mainly concentrated on the inner struggles of Veda which were not results of accident or amputation but the pain of betrayal, ill-treatment, and stigma. At first, she was excluded from her dance institution by claiming that she was not physically perfect for dancing. Disability or impairment is not an obstacle when individuals who are physically impaired have the positive affirmation to exhibit their skills in their respective fields of interest. Society need not interfere nor shower words of pity and sympathy while they try to succeed over their limitations. In the novel, Veda battled through all the oddities of life that demotivated her from following her passion. Society should not put them in a position where they generate self-doubt as their will has the power to guide them to success.

Venkatraman also projects the architectural barriers that caused distress in Veda while trying to gain access. She felt suffocated at the thought of using the staircase when she arrived at her apartment after being discharged from the hospital.

Her predicament would have been resolved if the floor was non-slippery, and had handrails to support the weight of the body. The movements of physically impaired individuals will not be restricted if the social spaces are designed according to their needs. Veda also had difficulties while trying to mount a bus to go to school. Her father was devastated at seeing his daughter's condition but financial constraints restricted him from arranging a private vehicle for Veda. Public transport should be designed in a way that passengers who require wheelchair or crutches can get in and out of the vehicle while remaining seated in their wheelchair. Support and encouragement received from the family and society are crucial for the successful development of any child or person with impairments.

Family Life by Sharma shares instances from the author's own experiences of having a brother who was paralysed. The novel reveals how the Mishra family was excluded from social and family gatherings of their friends and relatives after the accident that had affected their son, Birju's life. The study discloses the medium by which individuals with impairments along with their families are ostracised from community gatherings. While the Mishra family enquired about this exclusion, the family that had hosted the party revealed their perspectives. They mentioned that participating in celebrations can depress the Mishras. Sharma has also tried to instil the image of Birju lying helplessly in the hospital bed, unable to communicate. The irresponsible attitude of the nursing aides who were attending on Birju project the miserable condition in which a child/individual is treated at nursing homes or institutions. Cleaning the patient, providing food and medicines accurately are to be done with utmost care and attention. Negligent supervision worsened Birju's health and condition.

The epistemologies of disability can be understood on observing the perspectives of the society and family to which the child with impairment is born. The chapter was analysed by the following questions: How do families and society perceive disability? What are the different strategies and techniques followed by the family to facilitate inclusion to make their child feel comfortable and safe? The Mishras rendered unconditional love and support to protect Birju from all harm. The commitment of the Mishra family to challenge societal pressures and financial struggles depicts the phase that each family passes through while dealing with disability. The family served as a strong anchor that protects their child from all inhumane activities. Shuba, mother of Birju, treated her son as a person who is fully capable of understanding whatever is explained to him. She persistently communicated with him in a hope that he will recover from his condition.

The family was forced to shift their son from the nursing home as Birju was not given proper attention, despite the expensive stay. The next perplexing situation encountered by the Mishra family was that their home was not designed in a way that could accommodate the needs of a physically impaired individual. The family's biggest ordeal was to safely shift Birju from his wheel chair to the bathtub, each time they clean him. In such situations, the shower cubicles should have seats whose height and width make it easy for the caregivers to transfer the wheelchair user. The cubicles should also have rails for the attendants to have a grip for their safety. Sufficient space is a necessity for the members to conveniently transfer the person with impairments without any struggle. These recommendations are important and can be applied in low-income households. Amidst the financial struggles, the Mishras installed all the necessary appliances that were required for the convenience of Birju.

The family chosen for study explicitly expresses the hurdles they experience while trying to protect themselves from discrimination, shame, and pain. Birju's parents protected their child from the pejorative labels though they had to go through few struggles and arguments. Instead of blaming the child for his condition, the family decided to stay together and share responsibilities by understanding the situation. If the society was welcoming and if the medical system was more systematic, the Mishras would not have experienced so many struggles. The thesis emphasises on the importance of recognising the stigmatic notions that ill-treats families who have a member with physical impairments. The findings indicate that not all families can succumb to the pressures of humiliation that are inflicted upon them under the title of disability.

Simply Nanju by Sulaiman gives an overview of the denial of attention that the physically impaired children experience at educational institutions. The data provided indicates that these children undergo many complexities due to the indifferent behavioural patterns of their school maids. Nanju struggling from incontinence, soils his pants unknowingly. Throughout the novel, the readers find him struggling to hide his soiled shorts to escape the rude comments of the school attendants. Sulaiman depicts how the maids make students like Nanju and other children of the institution wait outside the comfort station for too long. In most cases, the students soil their shorts before their turn. The traumatic pressure experienced by a child who is unable to gain access into restrooms due to the careless attitude of his/her attendants projects their vulnerable condition.

The chapter tries to expose the inequalities and barriers that the children with impairments face from their educational institutions. It tries to inculcate the concept of acceptance by eradicating traces of exclusion that are found in the existing

educational system. This transformative process can enable each child to equally participate in all domains of activities without feeling secluded. The Right to Education Act (RTE 2009) and The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) are few policies that have recommended measures to accommodate children with impairments into the mainstream. The RTE prohibits all kinds of action that affects the mental or physical health of a child. Such frameworks and strategies are implemented for students to lead a harmonious school life. Every child deserves to experience quality education with equality. Society should show enthusiasm at providing a meaningful educational experience by following an inclusive environmental setting to all children irrespective of their condition.

Nanju and his friends are commonly criticised for their physical appearances. It is not acceptable to make fun of an individual for his/her bodily differences. It can cause emotional distress in a person as he/she cannot reciprocate to the situation. While initiating the practice of inclusion at educational institutions, proper guidance and information regarding disability should be provided to all children at their early grades. If the school administration prepares its teachers, students, parents, and supporting staff to the importance of acceptance and inclusion of children with impairments in a well sustained and sensitive manner irrespective of their constraints, then they can provide a wonderful, enriching, and empowering learning experience for these children. A structural understanding about disability can enforce normalcy by reducing discrimination based on physical differences.

The novel also exposes the complexities experienced by the students when they were taken to places of interest like ‘The Vigneshwara Science and Technology Park’. The architectural barriers restricted them from enjoying their picnic. The study focuses on the importance of having at least one entrance that is made accessible for

the physically impaired individuals. This entrance should have a ramp by which they can enter effortlessly. It must be constructed of non-slippery materials to ensure safety for the wheelchair users. It should also follow the required width to turn a wheelchair. Every inaccessible building is a reflection of inequality. The findings propagate the importance of having a barrier-free environment that can be accessed by any individual irrespective of their age, condition, or impairments.

Kanga in his novel *Trying to Grow* reveals the rigid thoughts and social constructions that are associated to the concept of disability. Right from the time of birth, Brit was mentioned to his parents as a ‘bad news’ by the health professionals who supported his mother during childbirth. Society does not celebrate the birth of a child born with physical impairments. It is considered as an unhappy moment when the mother of the child is blamed for her child’s condition. Every creation in this nature is sacred and every life is precious. If the society has enough resources to accommodate the needs of an individual with physical impairments, their condition cannot be considered disabled. The family members are often made to look remorseful as a result of biased social attitudes. It is extremely difficult for the family to harmoniously take part in a social gathering due to the external interruptions and disdainful looks. Strangers being judgemental often consider Brit mentally impaired. It is unfair to treat an individual differently just because he/she is confined into a wheelchair due to various reasons. Mostly, Brit is referred as a burden to the family by the onlookers. The chapter offers a critical reading that sensitises the readers to open the doors for development. To provide care is the fundamental responsibility as human existence at various stages of life is placed in vulnerable situations.

Accessibility and acceptability are the two major issues that Brit experienced during his school life. Although the school authorities were welcoming and showed

no scepticism while giving admission for Brit, he was regularly monitored and was given consolation prizes for no specific reason. Exclusion, sympathy, and negligence can be cognitively repressive and emotionally detrimental. Being confined to a wheelchair had restricted his access, opportunities, and choices. Brit was considered as asexual by his parents when he revealed his relationship with Amy. They were not willing to accept the fact that Brit can step into commitments and marriage. The study tries to propagate oneness among the members of society by respecting individual differences. Even a small unflinching supportive group that has faith in the individual with impairment can create ripples of positive gratification.

The parents have to encounter many trials while trying to raise their child with impairments in a joyous atmosphere. Physical barriers are the most crucial sources of frustration that are experienced by the individuals with impairments in their everyday schedule. The thesis addresses instances where the structural inequalities had denied access to Brit. He was devastated as he was not able to attend the funeral of Madame Manekshaw who was his personal tutor. She was his only source of inspiration and had motivated him to stay strong amidst the adversities of life but the pavement that led to the resting place of Madame Manekshaw was not wheelchair accessible. Such disabling social structures require public attention to redress the issue.

Brit always needed someone to transfer him from his wheelchair to a car or any other public vehicle and he had also experienced difficulties while using public restrooms. He had once encountered such issues while he was at a public library. He was afraid that he might fall inside the toilet bowl as he was too small for its seating. Generally, the toilet bowls are supposed to be small with installed hand railings that enable support to the user. The doors should be outward opening for cases of emergencies. The water jet spray should be placed down as per the convenience of the

physically impaired individuals. Each narrative selected for analysis projects the social barriers that have affected the lives of many. Every text analysed in the chapter “Understanding Realities of Disability” recounts instances that provoke its readers to bring positive and politically correct alterations to the contemporary social system.

The primary objective of the third chapter, “Transformation for Progression” was to provide a clear understanding about human development. It studies the journey of life and the changing perceptions that an individual develops from his/her infancy to adulthood. Life can be regarded as a series of social constructions that can have positive or negative impacts in the development of a person. The chapter is validated using the theoretical framework articulated by Erikson in his book *Childhood and Society*. The psychosocial theory defines the developmental and psychological understanding about humans. The ideologies presented by him can transform an individual’s life phenomenally. By dividing the cycle of life into eight stages, Erikson has displayed the importance of identity, growth, and development. The book projects elements of motivation that leads an individual to move forward in life by forsaking the negative aspects that disturbs it.

The thesis has focused on the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh stages of psychosocial development as based on the age group of the characters taken for analysis. An individual can have a blissful life if he/she is able to complete each stages of their development successfully. The fourth stage, ‘Industry vs. Inferiority’ classifies how every child who belongs to the age group of five and twelve are active and industrious as they enter into this new stage of life. The child learns new activities and makes new acquaintances at school. Educators play a prominent role during their growth and development. Each child listens to his/her tutor as they teach them subjects that are unknown to them. A sense of inferiority affects children if they feel

less competent and statements questioning their ability to study, play, perform, or master new skills can create self-doubt in a child. Children during this stage require attention and if they are left unmotivated, there are chances for them to develop inferiority complex.

Nanju as portrayed in the novel *Simply Nanju* was an industrious boy of ten who was living in an imaginative world where he was not bothered and worried about his physical appearance. The study analyses his character as he felt inferior due to the insensitive approach of his father after his mother's demise. Children should be protected as instances that create fear in a child might affect his cognitive and emotional growth. Nanju decided to stay industrious by joining his friends to solve a mystery. The children actively worked together to find the real culprit who was stealing notebooks from their classroom. Each child found pleasure in their mission as they were considering themselves as professional investigators. Sufficient support should be provided to each child as they take part in activities with utmost happiness. When children are complimented and appreciated for their deeds, it delights their young minds.

The next stage, 'Identity vs. Role confusion' is seen among young adults as they try to establish their identity. The study highlights the social intrusions that have affected the characters during their quest towards achieving identity. Venkatraman through the character Veda has pictured the hardships experienced by her while trying to attain her goal as a dancer. After the amputation of her leg, Veda was humiliated by her dance master, ridiculed by her classmates and the novel also brings out the derogatory terms that were enforced on her under the title of disability. She was encouraged by her grandmother, who lit a spark in her to follow her passion by not lending ear to offensive statements. If proper guidance is provided at a young age, it

will serve as a source for not letting in any confusion that could affect their individuality or identity.

In the novel *Family Life*, Ajay was clouded with isolation when his brother was paralysed after the accident. He decided to find his identity through attaining sympathy from his classmates by narrating stories of his ailing brother. Parents of Ajay invested their time in managing their financial expenses and arguments. They were more worried about Birju's condition and forgot to take good care of Ajay. Lack of attention received by a child from his/her home can make them feel abandoned or lost. It was the feeling of exclusion that prompted Ajay to seek attention at the doors of strangers. All he wanted was to feel included as the act of segregation marked a sense of role confusion in him. The chapter has attempted to state the importance of care and attention that should be rendered by the parents for the child to feel secure at home.

Brit in the novel *Trying to Grow* decided to learn new activities as part of establishing his identity. A spark of 'role confusion' was instilled in Brit when his parents restricted him from going out with his friends. He felt infuriated when his sister, Dolly had all the liberty to live her life the way she chose. Though it was the concern of his parents that made them limit his social outings, he considered living under their protection as a restraining order. Taking away an individual's freedom can either make him/her a rebellious or a conformist. His parents were anxious and expected their son to live according to their rules and regulations. Parents must realise the importance of human interaction as it serves as a strong pillar of support that can enhance the emotional and physical well-being of a child.

The sixth stage, 'Intimacy vs. Isolation' seen in individuals who belongs to the age group of twenty and thirty-five explores the importance of commitment and the

major conflicting situation of this stage is the fear of loneliness. The thesis has put forth the perception of considering the individuals with impairments as asexual. Sera, mother of Brit was against the concept of marriage as she believed no one can be in an intimate relationship with her son. Predetermined notions that consider physically impaired individuals as asexual should be reconsidered as they too have desires and interests regarding their life partners. Disability studies prove that individuals with bodily impairments are oppressed by the disabling social influences under the process of discrimination. The chapter reveals the multifarious conceptions that parents of Brit have towards his sexuality. Impaired bodies are considered as imperfect, incomplete, and undesirable in terms of physical perfection. Brit according to his parents was unfit to fill in the imaginary norms of a partner that women desire. The chapter seeks to explore the hideous facts of social negation that the physically impaired individuals experience in terms of sexuality. Such dominant ideologies curb their freedom of choice and right to live in this world with equal dignity.

As defined by Erikson, 'Generativity vs. Stagnation' is a stage between the age of thirty-six and sixty. 'Generativity' includes caring for younger generations. Adults tend to balance their life at work and relationship with family. They concentrate to be more engaging to make productive contributions to the next generation. Those individuals who fail to attain these goals will eventually become unproductive and disconnected. Primarily the chapter analyses the stagnated situation of Veda's mother in the novel *A Time to Dance*. She felt dejected that she was an unsupportive mother throughout her life until the accident that changed the fate of Veda. Though she knew about her daughter's interest in the field of dance, she never appreciated nor supported Veda in any of her endeavours. Veda was hopefully waiting for the day that her mother would finally understand her decisions.

The mother regretted not being able to show her affection while Veda was yearning for it. Every individual can experience stagnation at some point of his/her life. If people are willing to accept and rectify their mistakes that have caused them to experience stagnation, then they can easily break through the barriers and move forward in life. Small initiatives can produce great results. People should never delay taking actions that can fix their stagnation as individuals can find differences and feel productive through the little steps that they have initiated to achieve their goal.

Life is an unexpected journey that has the power to displace the plans that have already been set up by an individual. The theory propagates the notion to appreciate the little things in life rather than worrying about it later. Mishra in the novel *Family Life* was unable to accept the truth that his son has no chance to regain his old self. What affected him the most was his inability to manage the financial expenses to provide better treatment for Birju. Lack of financial stability was marked by feelings of helplessness. He was persistent to find ways that would enable him to set up an environment that could improve the quality of Birju's life. Parenting during poverty is extremely stressful and it eventually leads to family dysfunction. Mishra was at his most vulnerable state and relied on the consumption of alcohol to forget his worries. This activity shattered the mental stability of the family and the Mishras were engaged in constant arguments. The narrative displays the stage of stagnation, though he was finally able to recover from his condition.

Sam and Sera, parents of Brit in the novel *Trying to Grow* were struggling to find ways by which they can find a cure for Brit's brittle bones. Amidst all the constraints of life the Kotwal's wanted to provide the best living experience for their son. Sam always made sure that Brit can survive independently even after his demise. He prepared and educated Brit as he never wanted him to seek for help from other

individuals. Even at the verge of stagnation, Sera made sure that they worked jointly as a family to enjoy the blessing of togetherness. Each stage as articulated by Erikson describes a crisis between the experiences and psychological needs of an individual while interacting with the social world. The end of each stage can be marked by a resolution that they will fulfil the needs of the next stage. The theory helps the readers realise that children should be taught to balance their life as the problems reported in adulthood has its roots from an individual's childhood. Erikson's theory helps the readers to identify ones' identity, as it is considered as the main driving force of human development. As the theory focuses on development beyond the years of childhood through adolescence and old age, its strength lies in concentrating on the entire life span of an individual.

The fourth chapter, "Indian Perspectives of Disability" presents a comprehensive approach to the various aspects of disability within the Indian context using the concepts elucidated by Ghai in her work *Rethinking Disability in India*. It explores the meaning of disability as perceived by the citizens of India by projecting the complexities of disabled experience. The chapter imparts understanding of the influence of culture, issues of poverty, education, and employment within families of individuals with impairments. It primarily examines disability through the lens of culture. Culture as a concept has a long history as it includes the entire treasure of knowledge, customs, beliefs, and practices. The learned belief system is generally passed on to the next generation and culture is never static in its evolution. The thesis has identified the understanding of disability across the cultural values followed by different families from an Indian background.

Sharma in his work *Family Life* draws attention to the cultural beliefs where the Mishra family rely on magical healers to save Birju from his miserable condition.

Ghai has referred to this cultural construct as the notion of agency or resistance. Cultural imagination and construction in connection with disability provides rich insights into the manner in which individuals with impairments are treated as well as marginalised by the mainstream society. In India, there are a set of well established conventional rules which are followed by many in different ways depending on their geographical location. It is the ambivalence of the parents that makes them explore certain practices. Critical reading of *Family life* brings out the practices which are commonly seen in Indian families.

Families are willing to follow any steps that are advertised as means of cure. They are in a constant quest with the professed intention of treating their loved ones who are physically impaired. The Mishras conducted prayer gatherings where they chanted to the God almighty with hope and faith to provide Birju with his old self. Magical healers who proclaimed to cure Birju visited the Mishras regularly. Shuba, mother of Birju would arrange a feast to each person who comes to see him and wait patiently to see improvements in him. There are times when strangers arrive at their door step to seek blessings from the family who is taking care of a physically impaired child. Sharma has also introduced families who bring their children to touch Birju's and his mother's feet to gain good grades in academics. They believe these actions could bring them prosperity as they are surrendering before a family who have sacrificed their life for their ailing son.

Instances mentioned in the novel *Trying to Grow* by Kanga advocates the presence of unusual methods in the field of medicine that are practiced by magical healers. Brit was taken to Wagh Baba who was known for his magical skills at healing individuals. However, he was later arrested for illegally making money by cheating the common public. The theoretical underpinning of this chapter aims at exposing the

trauma that these children undergo while meeting these practitioners who enforce on them meaningless activities in the name of cure. Brit was made to eat powdered pearls and received unnatural massages with oil, salt, and bone-marrow of a goat. Such actions disturbed his emotional health as he was forced to be a part of it. Individuals like Brit feel tormented when they have to be a part of certain practices without their consent. Narratives shared by Sharma, Kanga, and Ghai are truthful depictions of disabled realities as all of them have personally encountered such instances as elucidated in their writings.

Ghai in her findings has recognised the factors of poverty that have significantly affected the lives of individuals with impairments. The chapter through the excerpts taken from the novels selected for analysis unravels the financial difficulties experienced by families while trying to manage the medical expenses. In most cases, parents feel dejected as they are unable to protect their children. Disability rehabilitation is mainly considered as the responsibility of the family who is bound to provide the essential physical, emotional, and financial support to their family members who are affected with impairments. In the novel *A Time to Dance*, Veda's parents found it extremely difficult to manage the hospital charges. Expenses were reduced as the hospital authorities introduced Mr. James who had initiated a workshop to manufacture prostheses. Venkatraman has also marked instances where Veda had to make use of public transportation as her father could not afford for a taxi or any other private vehicles of their choice.

In *Family Life*, the Mishras struggled to receive the insurance amount that could partially manage the financial expenses of the nursing home. Mishra was emotionally shattered as he was unable to make the necessary arrangements that were essential for Birju's sustenance. They had to shift Birju to their own home as he did

not get proper attention at the hospital. Expenses to reorganize their home, to provide a barrier-free environment, and to appoint a nursing aide was a crucial task for Birju's father. The chapter elaborates on strategies that can be followed to reduce poverty and improve the quality of the lives of individuals with impairments. The main objective was to break the dominant and existing perspectives on disability by instilling the concept of inclusion. Practicing inclusion in all developmental activities can eradicate poverty. If people are willing to donate to underfunded programs that are working hard to provide for their education, food, and mobility aids like, prostheses, white canes, wheelchairs, then it can be of great benefit for individuals who are suffering to manage their daily needs.

In a developing country like India, commitment to provide equal education should be prioritised by the governing authorities. Though there are various acts and policies that constitutes the importance of inclusive education, to see children with physical impairments in a regular classroom is a rare phenomenon. Veda in the novel *A Time to Dance* was enrolled in a regular school and being the only child with a physical impairment, she was ridiculed and often addressed with derogatory terms by her classmates. The practice of inclusive education should follow some policies where the teachers, students, and parents are given proper awareness regarding disability by the school authorities. Educators must also implement more effective teaching techniques and each member of the educational institution must value and embrace diversities without being sceptical about it. Children like Veda should be treated with equal respect as they should taste the essence of education without being ashamed or embarrassed.

Similar instances of humiliation experienced at educational institutions are referred in the novels *Simply Nanju* and *Trying to Grow*. Nanju and his classmates had to undergo many distressing situations because of the unjustifiable actions of their

school maids. The government of India has formulated several programmes and policies such as the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), the Project Integrated Education for Disabled (PIED), Persons with Disability Act (PWD 1995), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), etcetera but the incorporation of these policies in regular classrooms has no real clarity. Brit in the novel *Trying to Grow* is portrayed differently from the rest of the characters as he was gaining appreciation and prizes from his school. Brit was bothered by these actions as his awards were signs of sympathy and kindness. The chapter has tried to instil in its readers the importance of practice and implementation of these policies to eradicate the systematic constraints visible in educational institutions.

The chapter finally brings in the struggles experienced by individuals with impairments in the field of employment. Generally, the society views them to be incapable for employment. Inaccessibility, lack of facilities, and predetermined notions has always caused frustrations in career aspirants with impairments. Veda being physically impaired was doubted by all in her ability to dance again after the accident in the novel *A Time to Dance*. Veda had always considered dancing as her profession and despite facing numerous rejections, she persistently believed in her passion. Brit in the novel *Trying to Grow* was questioned about his ability to work. His parents did not believe in his skills until Brit published his first novel. He was pleased that he was able to communicate with thousands of his readers through his words when no one at his own home believed his talent. According to Ghai, people with impairments are on the margins of labour market as they face a variety of social, political, and economical deprivations. The chapter puts forth this concept to contemplate on the security that a job can offer if individuals with impairments are provided with employment without doubting their ability in terms of their physical condition.

Chapter five, “Narrative Constructions of Disability” examines the narrative techniques employed by each author while creating characters who experience physical impairments. Each plot conveys a realistic idea of disability by precisely concentrating on the construction of character, setting, atmosphere, style, symbol, and point of view. The chapter has analysed the manner in which each actions and events are interwoven to provide a logical representation of disability. Writing a novel about disability has enabled the author to communicate the message and seriousness of the issue effortlessly within a literary space. Such texts can widen the reader’s horizon regarding disability and it can also motivate them to take actions that can be beneficial for the individuals with impairments to lead a contented life.

The thesis, “Resilience and Hope: An Inquiry into Indian Narratives of Disability in Select Novels” traces the representation of disability within Indian context. It highlights the plights that are socially formulated as results of marginalisation and discrimination. The chapters present a comprehensive approach to the social, psychological, and cultural aspects of disability in Indian scenario. It critically explores the various complexities experienced by a large mass due to the physical condition that they have acquired by birth/accident. The lived experiences and brutal realities of people with impairments are highlighted to help the readers develop a nuanced understanding of disability. The central characters from the selected novels developed resilience by accepting their condition and disregarding the negative opinions raised by the society to move forward in life to achieve their goals. The thesis accentuates hope, the importance of social responsibility to incorporate the individuals with physical impairments into the mainstream society by providing them architectural, financial, educational, and employment assistance and assurance.