

*Abstract*

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## Abstract

Disability is a ubiquitous experience prevailing across the globe since time immemorial and 'Disability Studies' analyses the subject matter as a social, political, psychological, and cultural phenomenon. Through literature the study focuses on the stigmatic constructions of disability in public spaces. The study emanates how individuals with physical impairments and conditions that are congenital or acquired are marginalised as helpless victims that are dependent, weak, or vulnerable. Fictional representations that depict the difficulties of the physically impaired individuals critically assess the underlying patterns of oppression that they are associated with. Disability needs to be studied with respect to characters, physical condition, social setting, and marginalisation within the narrative. The study questions the actions of injustice that are imposed on individuals with physical impairments and seeks to raise the concept of normalcy, identity, and rights.

This research is a critical study that focuses on the excruciating experiences of physically impaired individuals within the Indian context. The novels selected for study are *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. The hypothesis is that if the stereotypical views and biased attitudes towards people with impairments are eradicated, it can improve the quality of their living experience and if information about their legal rights is properly communicated, then the families of individuals with physical impairments can get access to their rightful benefits. The main objective of this thesis is to analyse and highlight the derogatory social structure that attempts to degrade the individuals with impairments. By emphasizing these human rights violations, the thesis tries to establish a politically appropriate understanding of the disabled experience. It also

provides a clear view about their path of transformation for progression. Narratives about disability within Indian context serve as a foundation to understand the cultural influence, power politics, and identity formation of an individual with impairments in the current scenario.

The thesis is organised as six chapters. The introductory chapter provides a broad overview of disability and the evolution of disability studies. It includes the literature review, hypothesis, objectives, and the chapterisation followed in the thesis. The biography of each author selected for analysis is included. The chapter further proceeds to give information regarding the plot of the novels and theories taken for study. It brings out how the fictional representation of individuals who have physical impairments highlights the social, political, and material injustices endured by them as a result of discrimination. Such writing aims at educating to eradicate the social stigma and ignorance, stereotypical definitions, and cultural siege that affect the well-being of individuals with physical impairments.

Chapter two, “Understanding Realities of Disability” focuses on the discrimination, usage of disrespectful terminologies, and architectural barriers that are the most pervasive yet least acknowledged form of inequity followed in the contemporary scenario against individuals with physical impairments. It tries to ascertain a paradigm shift from the currently practiced ideologies through the critical viewpoints of Tobin Siebers as articulated in his book *Disability Theory* (2008). The chapter elucidates the sufferings of physically impaired individuals by studying the social meanings, marginalisation, and architectural barriers that are experienced by them. Such established modes of oppression is questioned in this chapter in order to resolve the crisis of their lives by rectifying the misrepresentations that today’s society holds in terms of disability.

Chapter three, “Transformation for Progression” reviews the developmental patterns and struggles that an individual experiences at each stage of their life. It asserts the social constructions that have the capability to affect the development of an individual positively and negatively. Psychosocial theory propounded by Erik H. Erikson in his work *Childhood and Society* (1950) provides ample opportunities to understand the developmental patterns and changes that might occur in an individual according to their living circumstances. It assists in highlighting the importance of identity, growth, and development. The chapter inspires individuals to move forward in life leaving behind the negative aspects that disturbs them. It tracks the importance of social interaction and identity formation. The study inspires the idea of transformation by confronting failures and other aspects that disturb the emotional well-being of an individual and to safeguard themselves from the disparaged attitudes of the society to live without doubt, shame, or fear.

Chapter four, “Indian Perspectives of Disability” aims at analysing disability through the lens of culture to provide a brief overview of the perceptions of disability within Indian context. The chapter underscores the concepts and findings of Anita Ghai as mentioned in *Rethinking Disability in India* (2015) to understand the social exclusion and stigma that is attached to individuals who are mobility-impaired. It examines disability as an inextricable phenomenon that is connected to the social, cultural, and economical structural pattern within the Indian community as manifested in the selected novels. Further, the chapter intends to highlight the issues of poverty, education, and employment which have created a systematic exclusion for individuals with physical impairments from the core institutions of the society for ages.

The chapter through the characters taken for analysis gives a glimpse of the vivid reality where individuals with impairments are kept at a periphery. It aims to voice

out their struggles and reverse the existing notions that are connected to disability to improve the settings of their life.

Chapter five, “Narrative Constructions of Disability” examines the narrative techniques employed by the authors 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 studies the manner in which each actions and events are interwoven to provide a logical representation of disability. Writing a novel about disability enables the author to communicate the message and seriousness of the issue effortlessly within a literary space.

Chapter six, “Summation” encapsulates the major arguments presented in the preceding chapters. The chapter lays forth the findings and possible solutions that the research has obtained while analysing the selected novels to bring justification to the thesis statement. The study provides a clear image where disability is often regarded as a personal tragedy that is silently endured by the physically impaired individuals along with their families. Their inner struggles and pain are exposed through the theoretical perspectives of the secondary sources to eradicate the social structure that discriminate and exclude individuals with physical impairments. A case study has been carried out to authenticate the study. The thesis accentuates 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.