

Think India (Quarterly Journal)

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ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

DISABILITY, REPRESENTATION AND LITERATURE

held on 03 October 2019 and Organised by P.G. & Research Department
of English

S. T. HINDU COLLEGE, NAGERCOIL-2, Tamilnadu, India



Attitude with aspirations from the core of Uncertainties in Nick Vujic's *Life without Limits*

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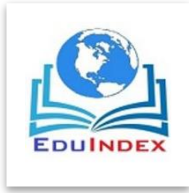
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Abstract

This paper attempts to bring out the challenges faced and the waves of hope thereby mustered by the people with disability in all possible perspectives. Life of Nick Vujicic turns to be a tool to inspire and impact encouragement for all those who aspire to achieve despite being crippled under different physical conditions. Quest for independent living further nurtures their mind to achieve vibrant limits. Nick Vujicic's *Life Without Limits* sketches the various stages of getting adapted and adopted to the social system, without paying heed to restraints with intense strain and abundant hope. Autobiographical traits in the text sets a systematic pattern to observe the rigorous path towards normalization.



Literary theories are contributed in accordance with the prevailing social conditions and the tremendous changes that happens in the trending scenario with special reference to the needful conscience that ripples in the air. Theories of disability emerges as a promising gift with forms and system related with that specific kind of literature. The classification it comprises is the reflection of the role of physical and social environmental factors highlighted in the 1970s. It has gained its academic importance through the work of Vic Finkelstein. There are six types of disability: Physical disabilities, Visual Disabilities, Hearing Disabilities, Mental Health Disabilities, Intellectual Disabilities and Learning Disabilities. Disability can be categorized into broader number of sub-divisions. Disability can be considered only as a functional limitation and it has nothing to determine that the person who is disabled can't participate in the mainstream of the society with equal space and fame. There are different types of models in disability which are influenced by two fundamental philosophies. The first philosophy regards disabled people as dependent on the society and the second considers that they are simply receivers of what is offered to them. While adopting the Social Model of Disability, Charity and religious models of disability are completely excluded from the thought system. Social Model states that the main reason for disability is caused by the way the society is organized and the factors of impairment or differences being not considered. Social model of disability has to it credits for all the changes and impact it had created on the public policy. It also helps to understand the barriers, discrimination, treatment received from the society and the restrictions in rights in general. In the aspect of understanding the disability condition in general social model of disability having a radical shift, "It goes beyond the traditional 'nature' versus 'nurture' approach to understanding people's situation as disabled people"(Peter Beresford). The philosophy of independent living is

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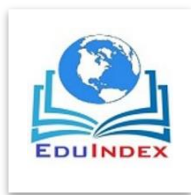
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followed from the social model of disability. Medical model is an outdated element for theorists in the present. In the British disability movement the social model of disability has been supportive towards a person with disability. Thus this philosophy completely rejects the concept of Care and replaces the term as Support, which can be offered either from the family member or from a paid source. Based on the philosophy of independent living they should lead a life with every comfort and equalize their access to all kinds of policies, facilities and services, cherished by the mainstream.

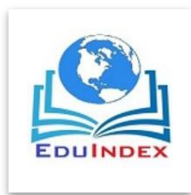
Life Without Limits dwells with the life of Nick Vujicic born to Borris and Dushka on fourth December 1982, soon after his birth he was termed “ Phocomelia’(4) which means no arms and legs. But to the surprise of all around, he has emerged out with limitless possibilities with overvaulting attitude right from eighteen months old learning to swim, at twenty two got graduated from Griffith University with a double major in accountancy and financial planning, at the age of twenty two gets nominated for the Young Australian of the Year Award, at twenty three he films a motivational DVD Life’s Greater Purpose, at twenty five learns to surf from Bethany Hamilton attempting to perform 360 degree spins on his board which gets him on the cover of Surfer Magazine, at twenty seven he publishes his first book on Life Without Limits also stars flashing in the short film The Butterfly Circus winning the Doorpost Film Project’s top prize of 2009, at twenty nine marries Kanae and now he is the father of four children to his pride.

Nick being born without arms and legs did not let his physical condition stop him from pursuing his dreams and goals. His attitude counted for the greatness that awaited him in the future. His attitude helped him overcome the medical model of disability at different stages and



also has traces highlighting the social model of disability from the start. He enjoyed playing golf, football and with his siblings dictating them like an elder brother. Swimming and surfing entertained him to a greater extent and they fetched him fame. Though the adventure he wanted to take up to be in par excellence with the able bodied people did not seem cosy in the initial stages, he did not want to give up. Barriers which stood across him includes social, economic, cultural and political like any other differently abled had to encounter. Bullying and loneliness added intensity to the depression that haunted him. But the attitude to enjoy independent living helped him banish every negative thought that tried to reduce his positive energy.

Nick Vujicic's trials to get accepted did not happen as a cake walk from the initial stages of life. Parents had to make up their mind to have their son after being offered with choices of adoption from his grandparents. Fears of his parents did not materialize as he surpassed all their limited expectations. His attitude did not have any indifference referring to his physical condition. Rather he wishes to excel in the normal stream of able-bodied people. Attitude for survival freshened his conscience from bullying and dejection. Rejections did not let him down as his resource of energy was a mere reflection of his attitude. Luckily Vujicic's parents instilled him a belief that he has every right to live a life, "free of labels and restrictions"(41). An article discussing the impact of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination in the life's of individuals with disabilities and their families states, "labeling involves not only the perception that someone is different but also the assignment of social importance to that difference" (Green, Sara et.al). Vujic's attitude is against labeling and describes how it can impact as, "Labels can provide a tempting hiding place. Some people use them as excuses.



Others rise above them. Many, many people have been labeled “handicapped” or “disabled”, only to soar above, enjoying dynamic lives and doing important things”(41).

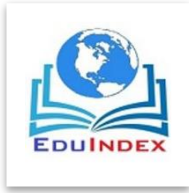
Desire for leading an independent living emerged from the early stages of Nick as it was a watch word for his parents, As the first step of independent living Nick was sent to a mainstream school though he faces indifference in the beginning, he adopts himself to it. He started getting highlighted in the newspapers carrying the headline, “Integration lets disabled boy blossom”(42). He himself did not want to rely on his family members to fulfill his basic needs. In order to bridge his needs, the knobs in the shower were replaced with levers so that he could use his shoulders. They also bought a soap dispenser with a foot pump. He was lucky enough to get a electric tooth brush mounted with a plastic holder. As he wished to dress himself, buttons are replaced with Velcro. These were the first steps in Vujicic’s life to attempt for an independent living. Inclusive education could be the right and attractive option, which is made mandatory in many countries for children with disabilities. The concept of inclusive education came into action through Salamanca statement and consequently framework needed for action also on special education is made at reach only by the year 1994. Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal on inclusive education states that, “ The process of inclusion denotes that ways in which the system makes itself welcoming to all. In terms of inclusion of disabled children, it means the shift in services from care of the disabled child to his education and personal development”(Manivannan).

Aid of prosthetics did not work well with Vujicic. There is a quest for both the individual and those in the intimate circle to make the person who has disabilities to cope with all possible



attributes with an able bodied person. Vujicic's resolution is to find a solution on his own to excel and move with more caliber facing challenges. He was much determined in it and executed plans on it. Though the dream of his parents came true with the funds he received, he felt that things were made more complicated with the presence of prosthetics as he made himself to adept with what was available to him. Self-sufficiency is brought forth as follows, " I'd already become adept at grabbing objects with my little foot, my chin, or my teeth, so the bionic arm seemed only to make daily chores more difficult"(42). Perseverance to fight against all odds resonated in his attitude, which eventually made the medical experts conclude that Vujicic is more efficient on his own without the aid of prosthetics. Nick had many personal heroes like Bethany Hamilton, Christy brown, Mr.Arnold, Joni Eareckson Tada and Reggie Dabbs. They inspired him a lot. Vujicic tried to focus on his abilities instead of his disabilities right from age twelve. It is this sense of acceptance and attitude that put him on the path to thrive and strive hard for self-sufficiency.

In the course of time, Vujicic becomes a "possibilitarian"(63). Attempts are numerous and efforts are priceless in the case of Vujicic. Optimal living had a grip on Vujicic as he learnt to laugh about his own disabilities and about all the strange responses he heard. His attitude to escape desperate feelings is, "Loving and accepting yourself is the only surefire cure for self-pity and victim hood"(87). He manages to convert all his feelings of fears and disgust into thought and attitude for independence and self-worth. Vujicic's attitude is to become all the more self-sufficient by doing things on his own.



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If disability is considered as a punishment either to the individual or the people they belong it is then constrained into the religious model of disability. Whereas in social model it is like helping to cope the individual who is differently abled to lead a life like an able bodied person overcoming social, economic, political and cultural barriers, disregarding all kinds discriminations and oppressive treatments, claiming human and civil rights, adopting philosophy of independent living to have an inspiring life like the globe trotter Nick Vujicic with attitude that brims with aspirations from the core of uncertainties.

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