



## Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

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



### Representation Of Disability As a Narrative Crutch In

#### The Novel Such A Long Journey

Dr. Sunitha Anilkumar

Assistant professor

Pachaiyappa's college

Chennai

#### Abstract

The present study attempts to insight theory of disability in the contemporary literary criticism. The representation of disabled person is age old passion since ancient literature. Many writers like Shakespeare, Milton, and Andrew Clement etc. used disabled character as writing strategy to intensify the narration structure as well as invokes the reader emotion. The study analyses disability of the person used as a narrative crutch in the novel Such a Long Journey by Rohinton Mistry. It inferred that the novel does not use the disability of person for the purpose of the exhibition of the internal turmoil of the character. But, the writer used disability as merely mode of narrative construction of the novel.

Keyword: disability, eugenics, crutch, impairment, discrimination

-----

#### Introduction

The literary criticism had made remarkable transformation in approaching the literature. The reading of the different genre of literature such as poem, novel, short story, biography, autobiography and other literature form are just giving pleasure of reading. Nevertheless, the application of literary criticism to literature would have better insight of social cause of the society. Especially, the marginality gained currency in the contemporary literary criticism. So far the term marginality refers to class, race, gender, and nation discrimination. But at current scenario, stigma of marginality extends to disability of the person.



## Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

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



The word 'disability' can be used with various connotations such as physically challenged, mental retardation in order to reduce the emotion outbreak in the patient. Generally, the term disability applied in medical field. It refers to the person with eternal impairment in the body parts either in the form of physical and mental state. Some of the impairments are deafness, blindness, dumbness, mental disorder, cognitive disorder and partial disabilities such as stammer, stagger etc. Disability critical study has become trend-setting school of thoughts in contemporary literary world. It gained prominent space like other critical studies such as gender, queer, feminism, critical race studies, and more. On the outset, the impaired body has been projected as one's identity like gender, class, race and nationality of person. Disability studies have emerged successfully after establishing disability rights movement in the west during late twentieth century. Moreover, Erving Goffman, Canadian-American social psychologist and Michael Foucault, French literary critic have made influential work which enables interdisciplinary studies in the critical discourse.

Lennard Davis's *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* argued that formative idea of "normal" transformed to abnormal. For instance, the selective breeding or eugenics have attained central focal of human studies whereas, it later on transform to "average man" as national discourse. Disability studies are a critical response to disability of the person in the literature. Theorists Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell developed the narrative structure of disability as an empowering device of characterization in the work *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* and it highlight exemplary usage of disability as empowering aspects of narration from ancient to modern literature such as the disfigured foot of Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*, and cognitive disability of Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury*. It evolved theory that disability is employed as crutch for narrative structure of the novel.

The concept of disability can be aptly applied in the novel *Such a Long Journey*. The protagonist of the novel Gustad Noble introduced to the reader with disability without degrading quality of the personality. Rohinton Mistry expressed the character's impairment as integral



## Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

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



identity of his protagonist. He added weightage to the character by narrating impairment as result of heroic deed in the novel. Gustad remembered the accident as cause of recusing his eldest son Sohrab. The novel has begun with description of disability of the Gustad while he attempts to catch the flown chicken in order to celebrate his daughter Roshan's Birthday.

‘Impossible! Tide it myself!’ Gustad’s slight limp became an ugly hobble when he ran. The faster he ran, the worse it grew, and he did not like people to see. The butcher was ahead of him, gaining on the bird. Fortunately, it had turned right when it emerged in the compound, keeping close the black stone wall, which led it to a dead end instead of the main road. (29)

Mistry presented another character Tehmul-Lungraa as trajectory narration of the main stream of the story. Tehmul had undergone serious problems such as mental disorder and fast speech after the fall from tree. Though, the character has been disliked by others. Gustad loved him personally. Even, he can understand speech of Tehmul “ ‘Gustad Gustad chicken race. Gustad Gustad chicken ran fast fast. I caught I caught Gustad’ ” (32). Mistry deliberately connects these two characters. Though, they had impairments either physically or mentally but, love and bondage neglects disability.

The writer optimistically turned the disability as part of their identity rather than disability of the person. Gustad used his disability for his own advantage. On receiving the letter from his friend Bilimoria and carrying instruction to get a parcel from a person. So, he decided to take leave from the bank. Mr. Madon readily accepted reason of his disability. “ ‘Thank you very much, sir,’ he said, and limped to the door. As he shut it behind him, the Officers’ Enclave resounded with a series of explosive sneezes. He walked down the corridor, remembering to limp pronouncedly.” (97)

The writer brought out normalcy of disability at the end of the novel. The commotion rose between *morcha* and municipality worker for the purpose of demolishing compound wall of Khodadad building. During this dispute, the protestor pelt a stone at Tehmul so, he fatally died



## Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

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



on the spot. Another characters were hesitated to carry dead body of Tehmul to his room whereas, Gustad carried his body even without having least consciousness of his limpness. “Gustad ignored him and began walking down the compound, away from them all, towards the stairway to Tehmul’s flat. They looked in silence now, too ashamed to follow. Sohrab gazed after his father with fear and admiration.” (335) and it highlights his disability as an empowering aspect of his heroic deed rather than defect.

The writer used Tehmul as victimized character to increase intensity of story development. Tehmul employed as errand to carry petition to get sign from each house of Khodadad building “ ‘Gustad Gustad you sign first. Gustad first then everyone. See see see I can say. See see see Gustad Noble signed.’ ” (116). However, Tehmul’s mental disorder is not able to reveal the conspiracy revolved around Gustad to others. But, it increases paramount of tension to Gustad for keeping his secrets. “Tehmul’s frantic hands delineated hills and mounds in the air. Money money money money. So much so much so much money.” (117)

In another instance, Tehmul’s innocence is used as solution for the family problems. Dilnavaz under the guidance of Kutpitia used Tehmul for her own advantage. Dilnavaz asked Tehmul to drink juice in order to apply black magic to recovery her son stubbornness. “She pushed open the front window to look for Tehmul. He was waiting for her. ‘Lime juice lime juice. Very very very tasty.’ ” (282)

Kutpitia, the neighbor of Dilnavaz has always ready to help Dilnavaz to get rid of family problems. One day, she sliced tail of lizard and insert into a wick-holder to light the lamp. The arrangement has made to watch burning tail of lizard by Tehmul. So then, it transforms bad omen of Sohrab to Tehmul.



## Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

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



‘Twistingtwisting,’ said Tehmul. He descended the stairs, leading with his good leg and letting the lame one drop heavily. ‘Twistingtwistingfireturning.Funfunfunfun.’ He waved and disappeared from sight, but his voice came from the stairwell below: ‘Burningburningburningburning.’ That the lizard tail had wriggled its way out of the glass and on to Farad’s tattered exercise book, he let unsaid. (285)

The writer piled up intensity of narration by using Tehmul innocent presence in the commotion. The mental illness of Tehmul would not be able to understand the problems around him. He playfully enjoys commotion “Tehmulwavedexcitedly and moved back one step, his fists clenched. ‘GustadGustad.LooklooklookbigrocksGustadbig.Flyingflyingflying.’” (332)

### Conclusion

Literature is a space for rumination of subjugation in various forms in the society. It alters the consciousness of the mind against marginality of the people. According to the Darwinism theory, natural selection has an outcome of struggle for survival of their own species. Similarly, instinct of survival of persons is an outcome of struggle for their right in the society. The various theories voiced for rights of many subjugated people in the society. One such way, the disability critical theory elevates the right of disabled people who are discriminated in the society. Many writers used physical illness, impaired body, and mental illness as part of human defects which separates them from the normal group of the society. On the effects of struggle for their right, it gives either optimistic or negative effects in the end. It is evident that disability of a person can be discriminated in the society. In the novel *Gustad*, partial impairment does not bring more drawbacks in his life whereas, Tehmul’s mental illness can be viewed differently who lost his life at the end. Many literatures had presupposed ideology that eugenics/selective high breed has only brings best outcome in the novel but, this ideology failed in this criteria. Both the characters have



## Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

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



eternal impairment but paved way to intensify narration development in the novel. Hence, Rohinton Mistry used disability as a narrative crutch in the novel.

### Works Cited

Mambrol, Nasrullah. “Disability Studies” Literary Theory and Criticism, Dec 15, 2018 retrieved from <https://literariness.org/2018/12/15/disability-studies-2/>

Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*, Nodia; Penguin Books, 2002

Singh, Ashutosh. “Representation of Disabilities in Indian Fiction: A Viewpoint”, *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities* Vol. II(X), Feb. 2015