



Impaired Psyche in *An Unexpected Gift* by Ajay K Pandey

Asmi V R,

M.Phil, Research Scholar.

S. T. Hindu College, Nagercoil.

Affiliated to M. S. University,

Tirunelveli.

ABSTRACT

Disability is any continuing condition that restricts everyday activities. The Disability Services Act [1993] defines ‘disability’ as a condition, which is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments. The novel *An Unexpected Gift* by Ajay K Pandey is a masterpiece, which deals with disability. This novel portrays the central character, Abhay who lost his wife due to brain cancer leaving behind a toddler son, Ayush. It also speaks about the ordeal undergone by a transgender, Sheetal, who struggles to get fit into the society. Sheetal gets into the Abhay household to look after the motherless toddler Ayush. The novel gives an account of a transgender’s life in India, how brave they are in facing life day by day knowing the pain, ridicule and hardships. The present paper focuses on the impaired psyche of the impact of disability faced by Sheetal in the novel *An Unexpected Gift*.

Keywords: Disability, Transgender, Ridicule, Hardships.

Disability reflects the personal situation of the individual who has an impairment. Disability studies relates to disabled people who make up comparatively 15 percent of the world population. They are the most poor and disempowered group in the globe. Disabled as well as transgender people experience excessively poor health outcomes. Socio-economic barriers can complicate disparities in health for people who are identified as both disabled and transgender.



The term transgender relates to a diversity of practices that question traditional ways of seeing gender and its relationship with sex and sexuality. Transgender people with disabilities have negative educational experiences, poor social environment and also they experience negative community interactions and violence. Some people feel that the sex they were assigned at birth does not match their gender identity or the gender that they feel they are inside. These people are often called transgender.

There are a lot of different terms transgender people use to describe themselves. Some people use their dress, behaviour, and mannerisms to live as the gender that feels right for them. Some people take hormones and may have surgery to change their body so it matches their gender identity. Transgender people are diverse in their gender identities and gender expressions.

In recent years, transgender has emerged as a subject of increasing social and cultural interest. The paper entitled *Impaired Psyche in An Unexpected Gift* by Ajay K Pandey focuses on the impaired psyche and the impact of disability faced by Sheetal in the novel *An Unexpected Gift*. Sheetal was a tall woman in her late twenties. She enters the Abhay Chauhan household to look after his toddler motherless son, Ayush. Both Sheetal and Ayush attached to each other within in few days. The almost instant bond between her and the young boy is balm to her soul and like a godsend to Abhay. The boy addresses her as mother inturn she looked him as her own son. Their mother son bonding sometimes create a sense of jealous in the mind of Abhay. He often reminds of his wife Kanika's words, "Krishna had two mothers. One was Devaki and the second was Yashoda" (5).

The protagonist Abhay asks Sheetal to show her aadhaar in order to finish the formalities but she denies. Because she scares that if her present employer Abhay comes to know about her gender identity he will send her out of the job. As the story unfolds, Abhay gets to know the reality of Sheetal that she is a transgender woman. He felt cheated and tells her not to come to the job anymore but further hires her again. She



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



pleaded her employer, “Sir, please do not throw me out of this job. I will have no choice but to dance on the streets” (49).

The story takes us to a ride where it is clearly shown how transgender people are being treated in our society. It is about how much torture, taunts, they face on a daily basis. It shows how prejudice and small minded some people can be when they encounter a transgender in the Indian society. Also, it somewhere connects us on an emotional level and tells us how human being does not need an identity card to be a mother. A mother could be anyone who gives motherly love and care to the child just the way Sheetal gave to Ayush.

As a transgender Sheetal undergoes various glitches in the society. Because of her gender identity she loses her previous jobs. Due to the same reason, she was asked by her landlord to vacate the flat. The landlord yells at her, “I don’t want a person who is a threat to the society to live in my flat” (197). She also encounters negative comments from the guards of Abhay’s flat almost every day.

Sheetal’s only comfort in her life is her friend Subhajit who loves her and wants to marry her. He was always with her in her ups and downs. He wants their eight years of love and friendship to the next level even though his family doesn’t accept her. Marriage between a trans-woman and a man is difficult in our country. Likewise, Subhajit’s family were totally against his idea.

Sheetal can be the best mother and instantly bonds with the kid except that she is a transgender. She showers love on Ayush like his own mother would have if it was not for her demise. She also becomes a friend and a support system for Abhay and they form a bond of friendship. Except, friendships thrive on trust and Sheetal seems to be a reserved person and reluctant to share her identity which makes it hard for Abhay to form a fully concrete companionship.

Though transgenders face all the taunts and sluggish comments of the society in the present world there are some people like the protagonist Abhay who cares for



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



transgenders. At first he had negative thoughts about the third gender then later he realized his wrong opinions on them. Then he arranged marriage for Sheetal and Subhajit and also a get an IT job in Pune for Subhajit. Finally, he gave Sheetal a priceless gift, his son Ayush, as her birthday gift.

The novel *An Unexpected Gift* focuses on both the negative and the positive sides of a transgender's life in Indian society. They must be treated as normal humanbeings and their bodily change must be understood as a natural thing.

REFERENCE

Pandey, Ajay K. *An Unexpected Gift*. Westland Publications, 2019.