



Overcoming Disability: an Analysis of Frances Hodgson Burnett's the Secret Garden

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Abstract:

Disability studies are an academic discipline which examines the meaning, nature, consequences and solution of disability. Disability is mainly connected with the social construct. Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* is analysed in disability perspective. A child suffers a lot mentally and physically due to disability. They find it difficult to overcome their disability. This paper mainly focuses on overcoming disability through two characters Mary Lennox and Colin. Mary is sick at the beginning of the novel and later finds her own way to come out of her sickness and helps Colin to recover from his disability. Novel focus mainly on the recovery of the disability faced by Mary mentally by the society and Colin by physically. Colin is very different acts abnormal when he is in his wheel chair and after meeting Mary he tries to come out his disability and find happiness gradually. Disability is a disorder but still one can really live his or her life by ignoring the entire social construct. Burnett has portrayed this situation beautifully connected to nature and constructed the life of both characters parallel and the way they overcome their disability.

Key words: *disability, overcome disability, love, care, environment*

The present article sweat details the ways to overcome disabilities through the novel *Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Disability is a condition faced by human at some point of life physically or mentally. Even suppression or inability to face certain issues comes under disability. Disabled person faces lots of complication mentally as the normal person fails to accept their inner feelings. Disabled person are different types such as disabled by birth, disabled by accidents, disabled due to old age, disabled mentally, etc. world report on disability says that there is role of social and physical barriers in disability. Disabled person often experience many health issues due to their mental condition, stress,



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depression and by the way they are treated. Overcoming disability is not easily done as it requires lot of courage, ability to handle stress and most importantly making efforts to move on with their life. But once the proceeding is done then overcoming disability is within the reach.

Children go through a great deal of discomfort because of disability. Secret Garden lucidly depicts the problem faced by two children parallelly. Mary lennox the unloved, contrary and spoiled ten year old, is found alone in the deserted house and set to live with an uncle whom she has never known. Mary is described in book as “the most disagreeable looking child ever seen”. She gets ill often as she really lacks the love of her mother. Everybody hates her and that makes her to hate everybody. As she says “people never likes me and I never like people”. This vividly shows that hate seeds only reap hate. So love is a key thing for any kind of disability. When Mary meets Dickon everything started changing. Mary started living after a long time in Misselthwaite manor. Mary started loving people; she says to Dickon, “you are nice as Martha said you were. I like you and you make the fifth person. I never thought I should like five people”. Her disabled mind started to cure piece by piece.

Colin is just like Mary who does not know to love people and he too did not get any affection from his father or from anybody. Colin’s father hated him as his wife is dead immediately after giving birth to Colin. Colin craven same as Mary dislikes seeing people and is always sick. Disabled people particularly face this kind of issues and which make them tough and difficult to handle. They lack confidence as they already root a wrong idea that they are useless. This is pertinent when Colin says

Because I should have been afraid you would see me. I won’t let people see me and talk me over. Because I am like this always, ill and having to lie down. My father won’t let people talk me over either. The servants are not allowed to speak about me. If I live I may be a hunch back, but I can’t live. My father hates to think I may be like him.

Mary and colin secretly explored the secret garden and Colin loved being with her. Colin often have hysterics and that make him more sick even the nurse tell Mary that, “hysterics and



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temper are half what ails him”. Mary triggers him and makes him understand that he is not having any lump in his back and it’s his own thought and temper is killing him. When Colin decided to go out with her, things started to resolve deliberately. Mary, Dickon and Colin in team met together in the garden and they really had a nice time. Even Colin slept well on that day and did not wake up or cry overnight. The disability whether it is physical or mental it always starts with the mind, environment they live in, the people they interact with, the love they get from people, etc. When a disabled person lacks any of these things they get even worse. Overcoming this disability is easy when the above mentioned things are satisfying. Colin after going out started to regain his confidence and says, I shall get well! And I shall live forever and ever and ever!” They set out to explore the garden and Colin even try to walk daily and practice it. Colin gave a great shock and surprise to his father by getting up from the wheel chair and started walking. Colin’s disability is best example for anyone who tries to overcome from the disabled state.

Mary got her life back by the Martha, Dickon and the environment she lives in, while Colin got his life back by Mary. Disability is a state a or condition not the person’s character so treating them differently or making them isolated do not change anything in their life, rather everyone should accept them and love them for who they are. They should be treated as same as other child and should develop their inner confidence as they are not confident themselves. Overcoming disability is possible when they are treated properly with care, love, better environment and making them to interact with lots of friends and people. When all these things are given meticulously they will lead a normal life and overcome their fears and disability mentally and physically.

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