

Chapter III

Disability and its Social and Psychological Barriers

III.1 Introduction

“Disability only becomes a tragedy when society fails to provide the things we need to lead our lives — job opportunities or barrier-free buildings, for example. It is not a tragedy to be disabled.”

-Judy Heumann & Kristen Joiner, *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist* (2020)

Disability has been a part of society since the beginning of human civilisation, and the prevalence of individuals with disabilities has risen due to increasing industrialisation and other human-induced factors. Further, human perception and attitudes towards the idea of impairment and individuals with disabilities have evolved throughout time. Through an analysis of literary works including *Accidents of Nature* (2006) by Harriet McBryde Johnson, *She Is Not Invisible* (2013) by Marcus Sedgwick, and *Window Boy* (2008) by Andra White, this chapter delves into the different socio-psychological barriers that people with disabilities encounter, which can lead to their marginalisation and exclusion. By understanding these barriers, one can better understand the difficulties that people with disabilities face in different areas of their lives. Besides that, the chapter examines the characters in the novels and how they overcome these barriers to achieve their goals. By looking at these novels from different angles of disability studies, one can gain a better understanding of disability in relation to these socio-psychological barriers.

III.2 Social Impediments of Disability

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, mentioned in his book *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), says that different cultural practices and ideas influence the prejudiced behaviours that exist in the society for longer period (Bourdieu). In another work called *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* published in French in 1979 (*La Distinction*), Bourdieu mentioned how the cultural beliefs are engraved into people's mind which can influence education system, spoken language, standards, choices, strategies of categorisation, and everyday behaviours. Because of such influences somehow unconsciously people start to believe in social inequalities and hierarchical structure of society which results in social exclusion and marginalisation of people. Social impediments of disability can affect a person's ability to fully participate into society in different ways. Most of the time, people with disabilities experience stigma and prejudices in society, which may lead to marginalisation, loneliness, and emergence of different ideologies. Goffman in *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963), said that a stigmatised person "possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us. He possesses a stigma, an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated. We and those who do not depart negatively from particular expectations at issue I shall call the *normals*" (Goffman 5). The term stigma here stands for unfavourable negative attitudes, prejudices, and condemnations that people with disabilities often face in the society. This may include false beliefs about their unique skills, styles of performing activities. people with disabilities may begin to feel stigmatised and seen as inferior to others those who are non-disabled. This unjust treatment of people based on their differences takes the form of discrimination. It may include unequal access to public areas,

healthcare services, workplaces, and education institutions. Social exclusion is another kind of discrimination in which people with disabilities are purposefully excluded from all opportunities or social activities.

In *The Politics of Disablement* (1990), Michael Oliver mentioned, “It is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society’s failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organization” (Oliver 43). Physical barriers such as buildings without lifts or ramps, absence of accessible parking spots can also be the reason behind why people with disabilities become dependent on others while they need to access any public spot. When these facilities were designed and built, the varied requirements of people with disabilities were not taken into account. When accessible transportation and public places are not provided to people with disabilities, then their capacity to engage freely in any kind of activities may be restricted by dependency, which may be dehumanising. These inaccessible situations restrict them to participate into social events, cultural events, or leisure pursuits when they try to enter public areas like parks, theatres, restaurants, airports, banks or any other places. Due to the inaccessibility of such social or public places, it may be difficult for people with disabilities to form social relationships. People with disabilities may even have fewer prospects for work and education if public areas and transportation are inaccessible. This makes it difficult for them to pursue their educational and professional aims and objectives. People with disabilities may have their legal rights violated if physical obstacles and the problems related to accessibility are not addressed properly. Many nations have rules and regulations to guarantee non-discrimination and equitable access, highlighting how crucial it is to create inclusive settings but still these people are excluded from many areas.

The limited and simplistic representation of people with disabilities in the media, literature or in any positions of authority may contribute to the prejudices and restrict possibilities. When persons with disabilities are underrepresented or misrepresented in the media, they seem to get less attention of the general population of the world. People with disabilities could still be seen as something abnormal or unusual due to their limited visibility rather than as an essential and varied part of society. There are few role models for people with disabilities because of this underrepresentation and they may find it difficult to see themselves in prominent and successful positions if they lack role models. Systemic barriers can affect the progress of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. People with disabilities may have fewer career options due to these obstacles, which might lead to an underrepresentation of them in the labour market. If they are underrepresented in positions of leadership and power, they may find that their opinions and experiences are not taken into consideration during decision-making processes. Lack of proper representation in positions of power may make it more difficult to advocate for policies and activities that address the interests and rights of individuals with disabilities. This might hinder initiatives to improve social inclusion and equal rights.

Not all individuals with disabilities may have access to personal care assistants, assistive technology, or accessible education, which make them enable to get involved into the society. Assistive technologies, equipment, software programmes, and gadgets can be costly or unavailable to the people with disabilities who belong to the economical weaker section. Lack of access to assistive technologies may limit the capacity of these people to carry out the necessary duties, communicate clearly, or engage in the workforce, which can be a part of major social barrier. For some persons, personal care assistants are essential part of their daily routines, these assistants provide

assistance with dressing, bathing, and moving about. However, the availability of this form of assistance may be limited by a lack of funding or inadequate support systems. This might lead to a lack of inclusion and freedom. Accessible education is a basic right, yet many persons with disabilities face barriers in their quest for it. This might include a lack of suitable learning tools, physically inaccessible infrastructure, and poor teacher training for working with students with disabilities. As a result, individuals with disabilities may not be able to reach their full potential and might not have equitable access to educational opportunities. If there are no laws or regulations regulating the provision of aid and accommodations, these social barriers may become stronger. Governments and organisations must create and execute inclusive policies to ensure that everyone has equal access to different support services. When people with disabilities do not get the support and accommodations they need, they might be subject to economic injustices. Their specific demands resulting from their impairments may need them to spend more for living expenses, medical care, and education. These essential medical needs might lead to significantly higher costs, including potential out-of-pocket expenses that insurance might not cover entirely. This might perpetuate the poverty and financial instability of this community. Their inability to attain financial stability increase their economic vulnerability resulting from this financial burden. It may restrict chances for social and personal growth and prolong a cycle of disadvantages. Paul Hunt in *Fundamental Principles of Disability* (1976) published by UPIAS mentioned, “Disability arises from social structures and the failure to remove the obstacles that prevent disabled people from participating fully” (Hunt). In order to make the world more inclusive and accessible for those with disabilities, it is imperative that these societal barriers be acknowledged, addressed and removed properly.

III.3 Psychological Impediments of Disability

Disability can also present psychological impediments that may affect an individual's emotional well-being and overall quality of living. Tom Shakespeare in his work *Disability Rights and Wrongs* (2006) mentioned, "Psychological barriers are reinforced by societal attitudes that dismiss disabled people as incapable or less valuable" (Shakespeare 44). A person with a disability may experience a loss of identity and purpose, particularly if she/he was non-disabled previously. A person's perception of his/her own individuality and perception of others often undergoes a dramatic change when he/she becomes disabled. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson in her book *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (1997) mentioned, "Living in a world structured by norms of appearance and ability often causes disabled individuals to view themselves as deficient, rather than different" (Garland-Thomson). Feelings of uncertainty, bewilderment, and a loss of identity might result from this sudden identity shift. Mental health issues including despair, anxiety, and poor self-esteem may arrive with disabilities. These types of people must reconstruct their sense of self, new goals, or reinterpret them, which can fit their present circumstances. This process may need professional assistance and self-acceptance, yet it may also be powerful at the same time difficult too. The lack of autonomy may cause psychological problems and cause one to feel aimless in life. Their sense of identity and purpose may be disrupted as they struggle to adjust to the new reality that their condition has imposed upon them. People with disabilities may redefine who they are and find new meaning and purpose in their life if they have the correct supports, resilience, and self-acceptance.

The issues related to mental health and wellbeing depend on social support system. Feelings of loneliness and isolation might result from a weak social support

system. As per the Social Support Theory (1994) proposed by Don Drennon-Gala and Francis Cullen, those who do not have supportive social networks may be more prone to stress and mental health issues (Cullen and Drennon-Gala). People with disabilities may find it difficult to establish or sustain social interactions because of the particular requirements and obstacles that come with their condition. Living with a disability often involves managing a range of stresses, including bodily restrictions, discomfort, medical interventions, and social impediments. The Psychosocial Stress Model (1984) of Lazarus and Folkman says that long-term stresses may have a role in the development of mental health conditions including depression and anxiety. Due to their conditions, people with disabilities may have difficulties in dealing with useful coping strategies (Lazarus and Folkman). According to Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory (1984), having insufficient adaptive coping mechanisms might make a person more susceptible to mental health problems. Stress and mental health issues may be exacerbated by social isolation, which can restrict access to helpful coping mechanisms. People evaluate their own well-being by comparing it to that of others. People with disabilities could have unfavourable self-perceptions because they compare themselves to their counterparts who are able-bodied. According to Illan Meyer's Minority Stress Model (1995), members of stigmatised minority groups, such as those with disabilities, may face pressures because of their position as a minority. These stressors might include bias, discrimination, and the fear of receiving unfavourable treatment (Meyer). Psychological barriers that affect people with disabilities' mental health and well-being may be caused by the difficulties they have in making and sustaining social relationships as well as the pressures related to their condition.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be a result of traumatic events that have turned a human being into impaired one, these experiences may include physical

harm, violence, accidents, or a mental health issue connected to an incident. In some situations, the impairment itself serves as a recurring trigger for the traumatic event, which may complicate the trauma's accompanying emotional and psychological agitation. Trauma may cause huge changes in a person's physical and psychological state, which might affect their sense of self. The loss of pre-traumatic identity may be especially difficult to deal with in the event of a physical injury or mental health issue. Sense of losing own self, identity confusion, and the sense of "before and after" may result from the difference between a person's present condition and their pre-traumatic self. When it comes to their impairments, people may avoid conditions, places, or involvements that they used to love but are now unable to partake in. This negation might worsen psychological barriers by causing social sequestration and emotional impassivity. Because disability itself may act as unchangeable stimulus for traumatic memories and emotional sufferings, it becomes essential to provide all-embracing treatment that treats both the impairment, and the psychological trauma associated with it. For those with trauma-related disabilities to experience an improvement in their overall health, it is important to acknowledge and cope with these psychological obstacles.

As discussed above people with disabilities may have trouble finding job, engaging in social activities, and educational possibilities. This may leave them feeling frustrated and despairing. Individuals with disabilities often face structural, mental, and physical obstacles that prevent them from pursuing higher education and career prospects. This restricted access might make people feel unfairly treated and frustrated because they think they are being left out or kept back from things that are important for their achievement and personal growth. One basic characteristic of human well-being is the urge for social connection and a sense of belonging. People with disabilities

who are excluded from social activities may experience feelings of solitariness, loneliness, and frustration, all of which may result in a variety of psychiatric problems. People may feel less satisfied with life generally and with their quality of life when they believe that their goals are unachievable and that their life is limited. Individuals with disabilities may not consistently have access to the necessary tools and services to address psychological barriers, such as social support networks, counselling, and therapy. As such, society should work towards creating a more hospitable, inclusive and disabled friendly environment for those with disabilities.

III.4 *She Is Not Invisible*: A Socio Psychological Perspective on Disability

She Is Not Invisible (2013) by British writer Marcus Sedgwick, is written from sixteen years old girl Laureth's point of view, who is visually impaired. The title of the novel *She Is Not Invisible* (2013), indicates the narrator's endeavour to validate her identity, visibility, and involvement in the various social platforms. Beyond a literal reading, *She Is Not Invisible* (2013) explores the deeper levels of the narrative, the characters, and the ideas that are covered. The title fundamentally questions the concepts of perception and sight, therefore, reminds us that there are many ways to be "visible" at outside of the physical world in a society that often favours the concrete and noticeable. Laureth, the main character, personifies this concept. Despite her vision impairment, her presence, brilliance, and willpower make her indisputably "visible" in ways that go beyond sight. Her search for her father, a writer preoccupied with coincidences and patterns, highlights the deep connections and stories woven under the surface of what is visible to the naked eye.

The title emphasises how crucial it is to identify and involve those who may be disregarded or marginalised as a result of cultural conventions or misunderstandings.

Because of her vision impairment, Laureth may look “invisible” to others who make quick judgements about her, but the title argues forcefully that she is a unique individual with a vibrant personality, powerful emotions, and unique viewpoints. This is in connection with broader cultural conversations about elevating the value and potential of individuals who are often disregarded because of circumstances beyond their control, such as disability, gender, colour, or any other attribute. *She Is Not Invisible* (2013) challenges readers to consider their own prejudices and perceptions. It makes individuals to rethink the judgements they make about other people based on the way they seem or behave. The title encourages empathy and understanding by asking readers to contemplate the complex nature of visibility. It also pushes readers to go beyond the obvious and uncover the depth that is hidden under the surface. It challenges readers to consider new viewpoints, challenge age-old assumptions, and acknowledge the intrinsic worth of every person, regardless of how they may be apparently seen. The story invites readers to look beyond the obvious and see the deep complexity that each of human being has, making them all fundamentally “visible” in their own special ways, via the use of this title.

The novel starts with Laureth’s journey with her younger brother Benjamin in search of their father Jack Peak who is a famous writer, obsessed with coincidences and patterns in the world and he is missing in America. Laureth has used stream of consciousness technique to share her story. To some readers the novel has appeared to be based on the theme of coincidences, and they can consider it as a thriller novel. However, deep inside this novel share the story of a blind girl and her struggle or effort of making herself visible to this society. Her journey starts from an airport of London where with the assistance of her brother Benjamin, Laureth is completing the procedures for travelling to New York. At airport she tries, hard so that no one comes

to know that she is blind otherwise the authority at airport will not allow them to travel. The non-disabled people do not think much about their body, or the sense of bodily existence is not dominant there until any injury happens to any parts of the body. The abled body people forget or ignore this sense of body because of their abilities and the props, which are available (food, money, transport arrangements etc) around them. Literature that deals with the themes of disability reminds us that abled bodies are depending on so many factors. However, a body with disability, continuously reminds the person about the condition, therefore, the feeling of embodiment is dominant in that case. Like this, Laureth is also very conscious about her condition. She is nervous and struggling with in herself each moment, but she develops a kind of mechanism through using her intelligence that no one can identify her as blind. This journey for searching her father is symbolising her own effort to find herself, her identity or her own effort to realise her competence/ability which shows indirectly that her problem with eyesight is not a kind of impediment in any condition. Therefore, the search for her father is a search for a way/medium to revitalise her own growth.

As elder sister, Laureth takes care of her brother when her mother is absent at home, and she also assists her father in his works. She takes help of Mac Book, which pronounces the mails to her, and she gives reply to the fans. It is only she, who understood that something wrong had happened with her father because her father was supposed to go to Switzerland, but Mr. Michael Walker in America found his notebook and he was not receiving phone calls. She was confused earlier whether she would be allowed to travel or not but, she finds that she can travel “without the need to register as an unaccompanied minor” (p.18). She reads and searches all the things regarding “accessibility” in the airport for “disabled” and “impaired” people (p.19). She uses her mother’s ATM card to buy the tickets, and she says, “I’ve learned the numbers off by

heart...So I know not only the pin numbers for every one of her bank cards, but also the card number, the expiry date, the security digits, everything” (p.21) which shows the power of her brain. She is very much confused from the beginning of her journey, but she keeps on motivating herself by saying that “you never know what’s true or not, what’s impossible or not, unless you try” (p.24). At airport when she is asked to take off her glasses off to click photo, she is panicking, and the camera operator is asking repeatedly “what’s wrong with you?” and she answers forcefully “there’s nothing wrong with me”. However, suddenly a voice comes from the behind “can’t you see the young lady is visually impaired?” (p.27) This implies that Laureth does not want to consider herself as blind even her brother also thinks there is nothing wrong with her, but the society always try to turn the impairment into disability. In the text once, she says, “If I have my sunglasses on. People often have no idea about me. Which sometimes, in fact more than sometimes, is just what I want” (p.44). Non-disabled people are always curious about the disabled body; the civil arrangements in our society sometimes do not allow people to ask anything directly about someone’s impairments but it does not prevent them from speculating, which creates awkwardness in social encounter, and epistemological crisis. Laureth was forced to articulate in the airport, “I’m blind” (p.27), it was not her own choice. Therefore, one can say that disability is the conditioned by physical environment, social environment, social accommodation and attitudes, once all these things come together, one becomes disabled.

Laureth has mentioned that when she used to talk to her mother regarding her school friend Robert whose sight was getting worse, her mother used to change the topic. However, her mother taught her to clean, to dress and to brush hair by herself, which is good. As a responsible mother, she was trying to train her child with visual impairment so that she can move around freely, independently and can do the basic

things to live a healthy life by herself. Nevertheless, her act of avoiding the discussions regarding the child with visual impairment shows that people feel ashamed to talk about disabilities of their own children. Somehow, people often try to put curtain on the unique challenges, issues or disadvantages faced by the people with disabilities. On the other hand, she likes her father's company because her father makes her to "feel a bit smarter" than she is (p.30). After arriving at the flight also, she was nervous and was trying to act as if she is not visually impaired, because she was afraid of regulations that would get them "thrown off" from the flight. She shares her feeling about skiing that she likes more than flying, as she describes, "I liked the freedom of being out on the slope, with no one holding my hand, no tables to jump out at you, no steps to trip over..." (p.50). This description shows indirectly the difficulties that the people with visual impairment go through in everyday life.

She has mentioned that her father tried to make her understand how people normally use the eyes to indicate or to refer different meanings as a medium of expressing something in conversations but for her that is also not possible to understand. In flight, when Laureth was telling their co-passenger Sam about the story behind her unusual name, she mentioned, "I was born premature. Really premature..." and suddenly her brother said, "That's why she can't...", here she stopped her brother and tried to make the situation normal by forcing "a laugh" (p.53). Laureth was really enjoying talking to Sam, but she avoided the things that could lead him to know about her blindness. When Sam asked her about her school, she mentioned about her boarding school King's College, which was not of "usual kind" (p.55). Beside Laureth, Benjamin too had a problem that the author named "Benjamin Effect" (p.56), the problem is that Benjamin cannot touch any kind of electronics materials, if he touches then the materials will be crashed. The same thing happened inside the flight when Benjamin

tried to watch movie inside the flight, everyone's system crashed. Due to this "Benjamin Effect", Benjamin was not allowed to use phones, computers, and Mac book; even he had to maintain distance with TV while watching it. This thing made him quite alone in the friend circle, "Benjamin is a loner; he's ended up that way because lots of other kids find him strange" (p.60). However, Benjamin indulges himself into reading books and he found an imaginary friend in Stan. According to Laureth, two of her mother's children were not "nice and normal" (p.58) which made their mother's life harder. While describing her type of blindness she mentioned, "Not being able to see is normal. Very few people are born without any sight at all, and I happen to be one of them. I have only the slightest light perception, so I can tell a bright window in a dark room, for example, but that's about it" (p.58). Although her parents accepted them as they were without any hesitation, other family members like her cousins used to tease her. At such a young age, Laureth had the strength to question that kind of attitude, as she said, "It's okay. They're just idiots. Can't handle someone who's bit different" and she further mentioned, "I'm not unhappy with the way I am, because I don't mind being blind. What I mind is people treating me as if I'm stupid" (p.59). Her description about people's attitude towards her as well as her brother proves that so-called normal society cannot accept anything, which is bit different from their idea or definition of norm.

When in the flight there was a conversation going on between Sam and Benjamin regarding comic books, Laureth picks up the fact that in most of the novels, comics, or movies two types of portrayal we find about people with visual impairment. She questions the narrative pattern of writing where blindness has been portrayed, "worse than death" (p.65), how the authors think that the blind characters will not be accepted by the readers. That is why authors try to restore the sight of the blind character in narratives, or they declare them dead, "at least then they're not blind anymore"

(p.65). She also questions the narratives from the Ancient Greek, where the blind prophets, “can’t see in this world, but they can see in others” (p.65). She questions the ideology that blind people gain some superpower over their four senses. She is also against the concept of sixth sense or ESP. Except the senses of “Sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell” she talks about “the sense of balance. The sense of temperature. The sense of the passage of time. The sense of the relative positions of your body parts to each other...” (p.66). She mentions the fictional character Like Skywalker from Star Wars and talks about blind heroes from Japanese films where people feel fascinated by the idea that blind hero is able to “kill about fifteen people a minute.” (p.67) Society has always glorified a particular community that have been exploited over the period, like it has glorified woman as Goddess. At the same time, people know what kind of treatment has been done with the women throughout history and in case of caste system, also society termed the minority community as “harijan”. Lot of terms have been used for the people with disabilities over the period in different cultural settings. People sometimes call them “differently abled”, “especially abled”, “divyang” (that indicates divine power). It gives a positive outlook regarding disability but the attempt of comparing them to the divine power or imposing qualities of superheroes does not make them powerful in actual sense rather it tries to stop the discussion on the matter of exclusion. While talking about her school she mentions how she is ill-treated in her regular school, “This happened all the time when I was in a mainstream school; from simple things like hiding stuff from me to the stuff that can literally hurt like pulling my chair away, to the stuff that’s worst of all; being ignored. As if you’re not even there” (p.77). However, she accepts that fact that there were few who really helped her in different ways in the school. She mentions later that even if she used to go to a school especially for visually impaired students, there also she was being bullied, as

she said, “Some of us are more blind than others, and the kingdom of the visually impaired, the kid with partial sight is king. Or something like that” (p.78).

After reaching New York City when she meets Margery Lundberg in the hotel where her father is supposed to be, she talks about how confidence is essential in her personality so that people don’t treat her like blind fool or stupid (p.125). Laureth was trying her best to find out her father and she was taking her steps very cleverly and making decisions very carefully. Even though from inside she is scared, she says, “but I never tell anyone. I can’t afford to. I have to go on pretending I’m this confident person, because if I don’t, if I’m quiet, I become invisible. People treat me as if I’m not there” (p.139). These lines show very explicitly how society treats the people with visual impairment as if they do not exist in the society. Therefore, Laureth kept her struggle on to be visible. As she says again, “I learned to speak up for myself. I learned to turn my head toward whoever is speaking; I learned to hold my hand out to greet people. I learned not to rock when I was nervous, or to touch my eyes, and I learned to do a thousand things to help sighted people simply talk to me. I made myself seem how I seem now; confident, outgoing, probably a bit cocky” (p.140). She gets through all the clues including numbers, different theories, explanations of words that were written in the notebook of her father. She bravely overcomes every dangerous incident that came in front of her, and she protects her brother at any cost. She accepts or embraces her blindness as, “a different way of seeing things.” (p.193). After passing a series of difficulties finally, she is able to find out her father.

III.5 *Accidents of Nature*: Examining Disability through a Socio-Psychological Lens

Harriet McBryde Johnson's work *Accidents of Nature* (2006) revolves around the life of a teenager character Jean, with cerebral palsy, and is set in the early 1970s. The novel has explored friendship, self-awareness, disability, and the challenges of surviving in a culture that acts as barrier by marginalising people with impairments. As a child, Jean, the main character, struggled with speech and mobility due to cerebral palsy. She has used a speech board for communication and a wheelchair to move. As Jean attends a summer camp for people with disabilities in the opening scene of the story, she meets Sara, another person who has cerebral palsy. Despite their different personalities and modes of communication, Jean and Sara form a deep and intimate friendship. Through their encounters, the narrative demonstrates many ways in which people with disabilities connect, communicate, and support one another as they integrate into society. As Jean and Sara navigate the challenges of camp life and the outside world, they encounter a range of individuals with differing viewpoints on disability. Some individuals are very supportive, while others have biased views, or some people see them as objects of pity. Considering these encounters, Jean and Sara both reflect on their own identity, passions, and goals. Jean faces problems pertaining to her desire for romantic relationships, her feeling of self-worth, and her goal of attending college.

The novel is written from first person narrative mode where the seventeen-year-old girl Jean with cerebral palsy is telling her story of joining a camp. Being a teenager with disability she never really is in touch with any other people with disabilities like her, she always considers her condition as normal, she is studying in a regular school and surrounded by non-disabled friends. As she gets a chance to join "Camp Courage" her mother thinks that it would be a great experience for her daughter away from her

family and home, as she mentions, “She needs to find out she can survive without us. She’s never let cerebral palsy hold her back” (p.6). In the camp she meets another girl with cerebral palsy, Dolly who kept on talking but Jean cannot understand her “CP talk” (8). Jean has mentioned that she is “only crippled student” in her “normal” school and “only crippled person” in her hometown. She for the first time meets other people with disabilities at the camp. She meets Dolly, Sara, Willie and Margie, Yvonne, Robert, who have different types of disabilities, and they are the part of the camp since many years. From Willie, she comes to know that people with IQ level under forty-five are considered “incompetent” and “Untouchable” but “if you take time to prepare an Untouchable, and prepare her well, she’ll accomplish the mission to perfection...” (p.14). Clearly, this remark demonstrates how society views individuals with disabilities as being incapable of achieving success in the future; but, if they are provided with the appropriate support and facilities, as well as an environment that is accessible, then they will be able to do so. Jean has never had the opportunity to experience what it is really like to be in the company of other individuals who have difficulties.

Sara explains how the cripple school she was a part of, declares that the teacher could no longer teach her, and the public schools do not allow people with disabilities in their schools. She also mentions people like her never likes the idea of “Segregation Academy” but in most of the cases they do not get the opportunity to be a part of the “Normal” school. So, the only option available for Sara is the private school and that also because of her mother’s friend she gets admitted. On the other hand, Jean never thinks of herself as “cri-pled”, and is in complete denial regarding her disability, as she mentions, “I’m like eve-ry-one else” (p.18). Hearing such words from Jean, Sara says, “You’re a Crip. Otherwise, you wouldn’t be in Crip Camp. Say it loud, I’m crippled

and proud!” (p.19). Sara’s enthusiasm in accepting her disability reflects a profound level of self-acceptance. She opposes here the notion that perfection should be the ultimate aim and illustrates that accepting one’s own self imperfections constitutes a profound inner strength.

Regarding the camp members Sara mentions, “it looks like we’ve got about the right mix—three wheelchairs, a one-leg amputee, two MRs, and two walkie-talkies...Campers who can walk and talk and look like Norms. Diabetics, epileptics, crazies, whatever. Some of them are more messed up than we are. Eventually it always becomes clear. They want to belong, you know” (p.21). The evidence demonstrates conclusively that there are persons in our society who have impairments yet seem to be like individuals who do not have disabilities. These individuals with invisible disabilities find themselves in a condition that falls somewhere in between, and they would like to feel the belongingness to either the disabled or the non-disabled group. In the camp for the first time Jean sees a member named Denise to get seizure attack. Sara has explained this seizure attack in a very simplistic manner to Jean without taking help of any medical terminology as, “The brain sends electrical impulses through the nerves down to the muscles. She got too much current. You know, this place is full of electrical problems. Like you: With CP, your brain doesn’t regulate the current right. With me, my brain generates fabulously well, but there’s some kind of short where the signal hits the muscles. The muscles get corroded from lack of use. Maybe we all need rewiring. Hey, if we got rewired, do you think we’d be the same people?” This explanation appears to be difficult and critical to understand for Jean because her parents always make her feel as if “CP doesn’t matter”, and she was just like “normal girl”, but she starts to question her old beliefs regarding disability after coming to the camp (p.30).

In the camp they all take the task of cleaning their beds and cabins and successfully they do so. They all go to a lake for bathing, where Jean sees a boy whom she considered earlier as a walkie talkie but at the lake she discovers him removing his fake legs as, “he speeds into the water, a place where the lackings of legless creatures are unimportant”. She feels proud of all her body parts even if they never work properly. She mentions, “I’m not disgusted by the others, people with pieces missing or mangled. I count it a rare privilege to see them all without their coverings, their equipment, their attachments, their replacement parts, as they really are, in all their strange variety” (p.35). Slowly, she starts to accept her own disability as well as others in their own way. Sara comes to know more about Jean, when she sees the photo album of Jean, which contains the newspaper writings dealing with the story of Jean, “Crosstown Girl Learns to Walk...four years of physical therapy, two operations, the high cost of keeping a growing child in braces. Proud parents. Courage and determination...” According to Sara, Jean have missed her a good part of childhood while dealing with this walking stuff. As she says, “It is funny. Therapists, teachers, relatives-everyone- they all think walking is such a wonderful thing. And we don’t question that. We believe it must be worthwhile, or they wouldn’t torture us for it. And then, finally, you get up on your feet, take a few halting steps-pardon me, mean courageous and determined steps-and the cameras flash, and everyone’s inspired... When you start to think for yourself, you realize a wheelchair is a better way to get where you’re going” (p.40). After hearing such harsh truth from Sara, Jean starts to think upon the published articles that only talks about her triumph and glorified the half-truth, but what about the after story. The album becomes a reminder of her “real failure, a disappointment”, which no one ever talks about. She mentions, “surely for most people it makes sense to try to become as normal as possible. But what if normal isn’t the only way to be? It’s an oddly thrilling

idea...” (p.41). Her parents support her a lot but never let her face the reality of her own self.

At the camp, for their evening entertainment, Sand Hills Community Youth Chorale arrives and starts with a song from “Man of La Mancha”, which is according to Sara “The Ideal Cripple’s Code of Conduct”. As the choir starts with “The Impossible Dream”, Wille, Sara, and Margie started to laugh loudly. On being asked by Sue, regarding this matter, Sara replies that every year they listen this song, and it haunts them in crippled school. Though it is a popular song but when it is sung for them, “it’s a put-down; it says we don’t have a real life and certainly not a real future, so we’re supposed to retreat into dreams, and not nice, pleasant dreams but pathetic impossible dreams” (p.72). In the camp Jean starts to feel that walking is something that can be mocked at and not walking is an ordinary thing. Thinking about her childhood days, she remembers that when she gave up on her struggle with walking, she felt like it was a huge failure according to the social norms, “a failure of courage, of character, of faith.” However, at this point of life, she feels that walking can be a “matter of choice” (p.71). Sara is seen here to raise her voice against the stereotypical ideologies of abled bodied people who always want the people with disabilities to live in “pathetic fantasy”, and they thank God because they belong to the so-called category of normal. However, they don’t know the actual meaning of “Walking Through Storms.” She further mentions, “Then so much the worse. They’re dumb passive channels for every dumb idea this society has about Crips Every stereotype. It’s like we’re black or something, considering the amount of abuse and prejudice we get thrown at us. I’ve had enough impossible dreaming” (p.72). Jean slowly starts to question the traditional way of representing disability through biblical stories that she heard and believed throughout her childhood regarding “Jesus cleansing lepers, giving sight to the blind, making the

lame walk” but now as her perspective is getting changed, she desires for a story that doesn’t talk about curing disability or any disease (p.74). Jean’s intellect is evident in her reflections and insights. Her internal monologues demonstrate acute intelligence and profound understanding into how people think as well as social dynamics. Her reflective disposition enables her to recognise the complexity of disability and resist prevalent misconceptions about those with disabilities.

Jean thinks, “I’ve become subject to a routine that has made me part of this place, has merged me with the others, and now governs our collective movements” (p.76). It is very hard for them except the walkie- talkies to ride horse but they had the counselors who would help them to ride. Monty takes charge of helping them out and when it is the turn for Jean, she is afraid, but she is ready to take this challenge. She says, “Beside me, Monty’s long slow stride matches my pace. His head and mine are bobbing along at the same level, more or less. It’s like we’re two walking people, a pair of walking friends, strolling side by side. If I need help, Monty’s here, but I’m not depending on him. I’m not depending on anyone. Well, except the horse, but to the horse I am master. That’s what the big animal believes and by believing makes it so” (p.80). Her words highlight her belief in her inner strength as well as her sense of independence as she takes charge of the horse being in the position of the master. Peggy Jo also loved the ride as Jean did and she mentioned too, “I felt so independent” (p.81). But according to Sara, meaning of independence is something different from what others think. For her, she takes pride and shows her autonomy while “refusing to be put on the horse” (p.82). While sharing their reasons of being into the crippled camp Sara shares that although she is not interested in any activities of the crippled camp but still she is coming every year to give a vacation to her family members. Peggy Jo who had asthma, said that after her frequent attacks, she was asked by her normal school authorities to

move to a “Crip School”, and she preferred to be in “Crip School” as she was always treated as “sick girl” in the normal school. Yvonne also mentions that she is a part of normal school, but she likes to be at a place where no one will care about her leg impairment, or no one will treat them as weird (p.84).

While enjoying the supper night they all came together on the dance floor, at this moment Jean felt they sounded like something more than the sound of thunder as they “yell, squeal, howl and spaz. Walkers clatter, and leg braces squeak. Rubber crutch tips thud on the concrete stoop. Angling for position at the door, the para sideswipes the quad; the chrome rims of their big wheels clang.” She further said, “we reconstitute ourselves; from the formless mass...” (p.87). Except Sara, they all danced with each other even on being wheelchairs which is “like a normal dance. But at the same time, something isn’t right” (p.92). However, the next moment she felt something weird happening when the girl counsellors started to dance with the MR man and CP guy. They started to tease them in a sensual way and continued with “torturous dance”. Sara mentioned the possibilities due to which these counsellors behave such a way, as she said, “they don’t know what they’re doing. They think we’re children, or puppies, or sexless beings from outer space. They don’t realise that whatever else is wrong with us, we all even the quads and paras and the Butner people who’ve been sterilized all of us are capable of being aroused...They think we need it. It’s therapy.” The motive of the Camp Courage mission was to make these people with disabilities feel the “normal experiences” but whatever was happening there, it didn’t seem to be normal at all. Sara further says, “Maybe they like it. Maybe these Norm kids get their kicks from rubbing up against cripples, epileptics, MRs, aussies, and every kind of freak. They know they’re in control; each contact reinforces their dominance, their perfect able-bodied superiority. It’s the special thrill of laying hands-on lepers. It’s how they know they’re

divine. Teasing freaks might just be a turn-on they don't get anywhere else" (p.94). Her words are showing clearly how people with disabilities have either been misunderstood as asexual beings or they are being exploited sexually by their counsellors in the name of therapeutic procedures. Again, when Denise and Margie danced together, Jean's perspective started to change as she thought it was "powerfully alive" which showed "unity of movement, unity of purpose" by maintaining dignity, the way it was supposed to be, "a kind of joining that does not depend on touch" (p.98-99). Soon they are seen about being open about their relationships. Jean hears from Yvonne, Peggy Jo, Denise and Margie, how they liked someone at some point of life, but they never have been into proper relationships due to their disability. On the other hand, Sara thinks she is the "old maid" and the "damaged goods" in "the marriage market", therefore she stays away from these things. On the other hand, Jean hopes that "There's someone for everyone" and she will meet someone in future and get married to her love of life (p.102).

Jean notices that Sara reads a book of a Marxist historian, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (1962) by C. B. Macpherson; on being asked the reason of reading the book Sara answers that she is still trying to figure out why they are outcasted in the society. She thinks it is an injustice to the community of people with disabilities, and it is the "failure of capitalism" because in general capitalism demands individual representation, self-dependency and competitions but it never included people who have disability. She talks about Marx's concept of "alienating power of capitalism" which describes how the people who do not fit into the society, become "foreigners in their own countries." In the process of fitting into the society, people from the margins start to imitate the people those who are in power, and it develops "false consciousness." She takes the courage to raise her voice against the social and

psychological oppression and barriers people with disabilities face in society. She describes how the people from the margins are forced to accept the views of the oppressors then despite questioning the constructed norms they start to think that they need to change themselves according to the expected norms of the society. She mentions, “if we could get over false consciousness, we might start changing the shape of the holes.” She critiques the concept of communism and claims to be a socialist (p.111). Again, Jean notices another book of Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963), Sara says that the book is about the concept of “stigma”, and she suggests that “every cripple who can read should read this book”. She skilfully describes how the societal stigma marks the people with disabilities as different therefore takes away the normal identity. According to her a crippled girl is always “a crippled girl, a crippled student, a crippled daughter, a crippled sister” and the societal stigma associates with a person with disability, determines the ability of that person. The most exciting thing that she finds out in the book is the way it expresses how the people with disabilities manage the stigma and make choices whether they should join the community of people with disabilities or the community of normals. As she says, “We can say, basically, to hell with the normal world and flaunt our differences like carnival freaks. Or we can accept Norm values” (p.113).

In the camp everyone participates into the games where the counsellors already announce that everyone is the winners, and they will give prize to everyone. However, Sara strongly denies taking part into it as the games are already rigged, there is no meaning of participating into the competition or of winning prizes. Jean too supports this thought, and she feels that she too believes in competition. She mentions about the ideology behind organising such rigged competitions, “the program seems to say that handicapped people aren’t up to it; we can only pretend to be winners. I don’t want to

pretend. I want to achieve, really achieve” (p.137). According to Sara there is no point of mimicking the strange “normal activities” like “dancing, playing softball, living the outdoor life...” In the camp. The camp runs on the decisions of the counselors but Sara wishes if they could really do things as per their own choices (p.145). At the camp, when it is the turn of Sara’s group for performing skit, Sara names it “Telethon to Stamp Out Normalcy”. The whole idea of their performance is based on critiquing the idea of “normalcy”. Through their performances they bring out how since childhood they are carrying the stigma of being different, they present a reverse telethon which “was a metaphor becomes plain, literal truth” (p.185). However, Sara is punished and asked to say sorry for such performance. Although Sara is not ready to say sorry, Jean says sorry on behalf of her, at this moment Sara protests by pointing towards Jean, “she’s a regular Norm in Crip’s clothing” (p.193). This accusation makes Jean to question her inner self that never felt earlier that she is a Crip, and she starts to feel sick.

Before leaving the camp, they come together for candle lighting session with the passing flames that mark the journey they have shared together and whatever they have learnt but they will go back to their homes with their own flames which symbolises their own developing understanding of the world as well as their own selves. She thinks about the “fire of hearth” that has “power to consume and destroy”, which can “blasts away the good and bad, the weak and strong, without discrimination, reducing them to their elements” (p.209). Jean’s interactions with diverse personalities lead to a sense of confused thinking, as she confronts conflicting thoughts or attitudes about disability. Incidents that took place in the camp, force her to examine her views and consider others’ viewpoints, illustrating the potential for revolutionary changes in her psychology and personal growth. Throughout the book, Jean undergoes significant growth and a process of self-discovery. Her path involves a rigorous analysis of society

norms, a reconfiguration of who she is, and a courageous declaration of her ambitions. This progress reflects her strong character and her preparedness to confront both internal and external challenges. Like Jean, Sara is a strong person who fights for her own purpose despite encountering challenges. Her objectives show up clearly in her decision-making attitudes, which further demonstrates her profound sense of autonomy. Sara's readiness to acknowledge her flaws highlights her self-acceptance. She questions the notion that perfection is desired everywhere and demonstrates that self-acceptance, along with imperfections, can also be a source of strength.

III.6 *Window Boy*: Exploring Disability from a Socio-Psychological Perspective

The *Window Boy* (2008) is a literary work authored by Andrea White starts with Sam Davis, a boy of twelve years old with cerebral palsy, sitting on a wheelchair, beside the window, looking at Stirling High School and he eagers to get closer to the basketball court of the school. Being in wheelchair, he found himself compelled to navigate his existence within the confines of his rented apartment, observing the outside world through the lens of his window. Regardless his constraints, Sam's creativity and enthusiasm persistently flourished as he cultivated a profound connection with his caretaker Miss Perkins and some of his friends, who unveiled the marvels of the world that lied barely outside his window. The narrative delves into the intricate dynamics of mutual support, the fortitude of the human condition, and the profound capacity of individuals to triumph over social and psychological impediments. Sam's story prompts readers to contemplate the significance of discovering solutions with grace and happiness despite the most complicated situation.

Sam's caretaker Miss Perkins reads a book of Winston Churchill, *My Early Life* (1930) at his bedtime. He started to imagine about Churchill who as a boy had stuttered but he became a great public speaker later. Sam asked himself how is that possible and he found the answer from Churchill through his imagination "I practiced, old chap" (p.11). After arguing with Sam's mother, Miss Perkins finally gets permission to take Sam to the nearby school. The public schools at that time were not ready to accept children in wheelchairs, Sam's mother met the principal many times so that Sam could join the school. Sam is seen to be happy as he will be with the other kids at school (p.16). Sam knows that he is the only student with disability at the school, therefore he needs to be patient. Sam faces challenges on the very first day when Mrs. Martin protests mentioning that "he needs special instructions" and "he can't be tested properly". Once he starts to move forward towards the classroom, he feels that the classroom is not disabled friendly, and the wheelchair may not fit into it. Sam meets his classmates whose "eyes are filled with curiosity, many with pity, a few with fear. He searches the whole room without finding any that hold just basic friendliness" (p.22). On the very first day at school Sam longs for his safe place of home because "his wheelchair separates him from the other kids", and he could not finish the task given by the teacher. Andrea mentions, "He feels he's not attending school so much as watching it--from a closer place to be sure, but still like television" (p.26). The school environment is not inclusive in nature that is visible from the very beginning. Before joining the school, With the help of Miss Perkins, Sam started to read and write mostly about Winnie. In response to Sam's frustration that he is unable to concentrate on his schoolwork, his imaginary companion Winnie continues to encourage him through using words that are courageous. Sam is basketball fan, although Sam is "no longer in awe of basic skills like running, shooting and jumping,

but he is still amazed by the greatest players” (p.31). In school nobody talks to him except a girl named Ann.

Whenever Miss Perkins reads the story of Winnie, Sam thinks about the difficulties Winnie had faced while fighting back with the Nazis. Andrea writes that Sam thinks, “Winnie took risks. Sam will never face strong currents, land mines, or enemy soldiers. Not even basketball team”, Winnie starts to talk to Sam in his mind, “You just want the right to be brave”. Miss Perkins always encourages him to be brave, she often says, as Sam narrates, “I AM A BOY OF MANY GIFTS AND THAT IT IS A GOOD THING THAT I HAVE CP OR OTHERWISE I’D BE VAIN AND PROUD. SHE SAYS THAT I WAS MEANT TO HAVE CP. WHICH IS GOOD BECAUSE SAM IS ALL I AM” (p.70). By the second week of attending the school Sam feels much comfortable in the class. Finally, he gets a chance to see the basketball court closely when Ann takes him to the side of basketball court. He feels “his wheelchair is resting on dirt. He almost got hit by a ball. He’s part of the action” (p.88). Mrs. Martin asks Sam and Miss Perkins to stay back after school to ask few questions to Sam. Once she starts to question Sam, she finds out that Sam not only can frame sentences in his head, but he can also frame paragraphs. Mrs. Martin is surprised as well as impressed to know from Miss Perkins that Sam can remember things once he hears it. She decides to sit with Sam again after school on the very next day. She mentions, “I’m excited. I think Sam’s going to be a good student” (p.94). In his head, Winnie also says to him, “you are better student then I was”. Sam is touched by his words that “he is a better student than one of the greatest men who’s ever lived” (p.98). Meanwhile, Mr. Crowe the owner of their rented apartment, asks them to leave the apartment, this incident makes them worried as this apartment is one of the favourite places to be in for Sam especially the window side from where the basketball

court of the school is visible. Thinking about their uncertain future he prays to God, “If I am to as I am, if that’s your plan, please make me all I can be” (p.111). At his bedtime he starts to think about how Winnie faced all the challenges before and during World War II and then became the Prime Minister of England.

While watching his friends playing basketball the ball comes towards him, and stops near him as he desired, he keeps his tip of shoes on the ball and thinks, “anything is possible”. When Charlie says to him, “you’re our cheerleader”, Sam thinks in his mind, “Make me your coach” (p.124). At class when Mrs. Martin starts vocabulary class, it is observed that Sam “whiz at vocabulary and memorizes their definitions even before she lifts the piece of chalk from the last word” (p.125). Once he gets chance to talk to both Charlie and Mickey and he tries his best to tell Charlie that he should take Mickey in his team as point guard, but before he can finish his words, Miss Perkins arrives (p.135). Mrs. Martin helps him to write an essay for a competition on the World War, after finishing the essay Mrs. Martin feels that “He’s a genius” and Sam’s essay is “the best in the school” (p.141). Sam gains lot of confidence after hearing such words as he shouts, “I’m smart” (p.142). On one hand Sam starts to gain interest in his school activities, on the other hand Sam’s mother is trying to send him to the “Mannville Institution” as she is running out of money, and she does not have money to pay the rent anymore. Sam understands that something more terrible is about to take place, but he is not aware of the specifics of the situation. The ambition that he has to be a competent basketball coach is the subject of an argument that he begins to have with his imaginary friend Winnie. He thinks, “our future is in our hands. Our lives are what we choose to make of them. I choose to be a good coach...”. Both Winnie and Sam know that “Sam’s inner life is Winnie” (p.147). At the school, numerous parents express their concerns regarding the impact

of Sam's presence on their children, leading the Principal to communicate to his mother that his presence will no longer be permitted. Even Ann's mother requests the educators at the institution to monitor Ann's interactions to ensure she refrains from conversing with Sam. This unfortunate incident clarifies the societal barriers that resemble a punishment imposed without any wrongdoing. On the twentieth days of his school, it is over for him because the school authority and other parents "think that Sam's needs are a burden to the system" (p.150). Before leaving he advises Charlie that they should take Mickey the Russian boy as their point guard to win, and Charlie understands that Sam is a genius, he announces to the team that Mickey is going to play with them. Finally, Sam is sent to Mannville Institution and Miss Perkins also takes a job there so that she can observe Sam closely. In Mannville Institution, he finds "new window" but "without a basketball court", still he encourages his imaginary mind that he will be able to find "new twist" in the branches of the oak tree which is visible from the window (p.176). After spending two weeks at the institute, Sam comes to know from a reporter who came to take an interview that "his essay about Winston Churchill won a national contest" (p.180). When Sam's mother observes that her son is not getting proper care at the institute, she decides to take him out of it with her. Miss Perkins becomes happy after hearing that the new Principal of Stirling Junior High School, Mrs. Ellsworth wants Sam back to the school. Sam is also excited to know about the same. The Principal Mrs. Ellsworth mentions in her conversation with Miss Perkins, "Times are changing. Miss Perkins. Soon, I believe that even crippled kids will be entitled to a public education" (p.203). He hears another news that Charlie's team won the match because of Mickey. They accept Sam as their true coach. Sam thinks that sometimes losers can also become winners like he "is an award winner. A Window Boy no more". he has raised a

question against the traditional perception of the society by thinking, “Do people change...or is it just the way we think about them that changes?” (p.207) This is last day when Sam hears the words of his imaginary friend Winnie. He took help of physical therapy so that he could move his fingers, he learnt to operate electric wheelchair. He finishes his school and graduation with full scholarship from University of Massachusetts in journalism and he becomes a “sportswriter for the Boston Tribune” (p.210).

The novel ends with notes from caretaker of Sam Miss Perkins, the schoolteacher of Sam Mrs. Martin, Mickey classmate of Sam and a note provided by the author Andrea White. In the note of Mrs. Martin she mentions how at first sight after seeing Sam in a wheelchair she presumed that Sam could not talk but later she came to know that Sam was a really bright student “like a sponge, soaking up information” (p.218), and he becomes an inspiration for her as well as many other people. She also talks about how moving by Sam’s life, she “worked to pass the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975”. She mentions how American education system has changed over the years by removing various impediments and provided space and opportunities for all children. She says, “Sam Davis the boy who I thought was hopeless the first time I saw him-is now my most successful former student” (p.218). In her note Andrea White mentions that the character of Sam is fictional, but it is based on a real character that she came across while reading an inspiring article by Lisa Belkin, in New York Times Magazine about a boy Thomas Elleson who had cerebral palsy. The article is about the reality of living with disability, emphasising the hardships and social biases or impediments encountered by a kid who has disability. The novel by Andrea, via an empathetic and honest depiction of Sam’s journey, challenges readers to examine their own prejudices and

misconceptions concerning disabilities. The window theme functions as a potent metaphor throughout the narrative, signifying both the constraints that limit Sam and the portal to his imagination. Andrea White employs rich imagery and lyrical words to conjure desire and possibilities, encouraging readers to reflect on the transformational power of imaginations despite suffering.

Through Sam's story Andrea explores the social and psychological barriers as well as the negative stereotypes associated with disability. Since Sam's disability distinguishes from the rest of his classmates, that results in prejudice and solitude. His experiences illustrate the influence of cultural beliefs on personal self-perception and the development of societal identities. Sam's experience underlines the significance of social acceptance as well as integration in cultivating an individual's feeling of being part of whole and self-esteem. Despite encountering considerable hurdles, barriers and misunderstanding, Sam derives comfort and assistance from his connections, especially with his caretaker. Their connection acts as a shield against the detrimental impacts of social exclusion, offering Sam emotional reassurance, company, and a feeling of belonging. The book emphasises the significance of social support systems in cultivating resistance and innovative ways to cope throughout hardships.

Sam's isolation in his own space compels him to depend on his creative, imaginary abilities and intellectual capabilities to engage with his surroundings. Sam exhibits flexible coping skills and perseverance in response to his challenges via his artistic endeavours and academic hobbies. The book emphasises the significance of cognitive functions, including understanding, speculation, and figuring out solutions, in influencing people's behaviours and psychological health. *Window Boy* (2008) reveals the biases and prejudiced perspectives that persons with impairments often face in society. The story examines the psychological underpinnings of prejudice, such as

stereotypes, blaming other and social classification, via Sam's encounters with other personalities. By directly addressing these prejudices, the story compels readers to think through their personal perspectives and beliefs on disabilities and divergence. The novel's fundamental subject matter is empathy, as people gain insight into Sam's perspective and cultivate a profound comprehension of his circumstances. By using empathy and taking on new alternative perspectives, people may go beyond their own viewpoints and engage with others more profoundly, cultivating empathy, respect for one another, and social cooperation.

III.7 Alternative Understanding of Disability Through *She is not Invisible*, *Accidents of Nature* and *Window Boy*

Marcus Sedgwick in *She is not Invisible* (2013), through Laureth's character, represents blindness as an extraordinary trait rather than an aberration. The new, alternative concept of disability may be linked to various reimagining and perceptions of the world. For instance, Laureth's father's obsession, research and writings on patterns and coincidences those others would overlook. For example, Her father had an obsession with the number 354 which he called "his number" (p.114) His distinct perspective on the world may be considered a type of disability since it distinguishes him from more traditional ways of thinking and behaving. On the other hand, "Benjamin Effect" of Laureth's brother is can also be seen as variations of human nature and behaviour. This calls into question the traditional understanding of disability as limited to a physical or mental impairment and opens the door to the alternative idea that other viewpoints on the world might be equally valid and justified and human beings are living their lives based on the social exchange theory of interdependence (Harlod Kelley & John Thibaut). The novel provokes the readers to consider how society often encourages some ways of absorbing and interpreting information while marginalising or excluding

others. It is possible to imagine that Laureth's father's obsession with patterns and coincidence and "Benjamin Effect" are examples of neurodiversity, a theory that sees neurological anomalies as a natural part of human variation rather than diseases that need to be treated. This idea counters the established medical paradigm of disability, which seeks to "normalise" or "cure" individuals with disabilities. When trying to explain and categorise how individuals see the world, the author of *She Is Not Invisible* (2013) embraces a variety of opinions and questions common pattern of thinking. It acts as a reminder that it is beneficial to consider opposing viewpoints and that diversity in perception is a necessary component of the human experience. Throughout the novel, Laureth has embraced her blindness as an essential aspect of who she is. She relies on her observation skills, intuition, and her family's continuous support to understand the outside world via her strength of senses. Laureth's blindness is not shown as a tragedy or as something to be pitied, but rather as a characteristic that shapes her experiences and influences her perception of the outside world. Laureth's impairment does not limit her identity or prevent her from pursuing her goals in life. Instead, her blindness gives her extraordinary perspective on the world, resilience, and tenacity.

Accidents of Nature (2006) has represented disability as another dimension of diversity, which goes beyond the traditional medical model of disability. It emphasises that individuals with disabilities can have unique experiences, perspectives, and ideas to possess. This alternative perspective encourages a change from examining disability merely as an obstacle. *Accidents of Nature* (2006) portrayed characters like Sara and Jean who have disabilities, still they displayed their own authority and freedom of choice. Sara and the other characters in the text consciously assert their autonomy, while engaging in fights for a change. The narrative demonstrated that individuals with disabilities hold a complex array of emotions, including anger and disappointment

alongside feelings of love and happiness. This portrayal has confronted the tendency to underestimate or overlook the profound emotional experiences encountered by those with disabilities. The connection between Jean and Sara went beyond the barriers of their disabilities, which emphasised the depth and authenticity of their friendship. This portrayal challenged the idea that connections between individuals with disabilities can solely be based on feelings of empathy or kindness. It illustrates that genuine friendships can be nurtured through shared passions, empathetic thinking and a deep reciprocal comprehension. The characters in the novel critically examine and challenge the prevailing societal norms and expectations related to disability. Jean's steadfast dedication to advanced learning and the realisation of her aspirations confronts the dominant notion that those with disabilities should limit their ambitions. This portrayal encourages an analytical exploration of the societal limitations imposed upon people with disabilities. The story utilises intelligence and a unique perspective to confront and dismantle common misconceptions associated with disability. Sara's astuteness and irony deconstruct prevailing assumptions, demonstrating how people with disabilities embody a diverse array of characteristics and sense of humour. This portrayal opposes the tendency to consider people who have disabilities solely as figures of tragedy or motivation. The text skilfully acknowledged the intricate nature of identities by depicting various characters with disabilities hailing from varied backgrounds and possessing different perspectives. This representation recognises the intricate relationships between disability and multiple dimensions of identity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and economic status, which subsequently shape various perspectives. The main protagonist in the novel exhibited an extraordinary ability to endure and adjust as they move through all of the complex challenges of their everyday lives. This portrayal challenged the assumption that disability signifies a lack of agency,

demonstrating how individuals can overcome challenges and formulate creative approaches for coping with their environments.

Andrea White's *Window Boy* (2008) has represented an alternative perspective on disability, positioning it as a catalyst for development, imagination, and strength, rather than representing it merely as an aspect of exclusion or weakness. The novel has tried to interrogate the conventional understandings of normalcy by broadening the parameters of what constitutes a satisfying and significant existence. Instead of attempting to adhere to cultural standards regarding productivity or physical capability, the novel advocates for the appreciation of diversity and an understanding of the inner worth of individuals, irrespective of their disabilities. The narrative emphasises the significance of shared accountability in aiding individuals with disabilities and developing inclusive societies. The narrative of *Window Boy* (2008) has illustrated the profound impact of mutual respect and collective assistance among its characters, emphasising how community can transcend obstacles or barriers and foster social equity. In the face of numerous challenges, Sam consistently exhibits a remarkable sense of independence and freedom of choice throughout the narrative. The novel points out Sam's independence and strength in dealing with his situation, thereby arguing the prevailing narratives of passiveness or victimisation linked to disability, while accentuating the significance of autonomy and self-representation. Through Sam's standpoint, the novel encourages readers to critically examine the structures of authoritative society that lead to the exclusion of people with disabilities. By prioritising the experiences of excluded voices and interrogating prevailing narratives, *Window Boy* (2008) has advocated for a society that is fairer and more welcoming, one that acknowledges and honours the involvement of every individual.

III.8 Conclusion

The novel *She Is Not Invisible* (2013), shows how the protagonist Laureth encounters numerous social obstacles, yet she ultimately succeeds in locating her father. She already became a little star. She gave few interviews after her adventurous journey and she said, “for a while there I felt more visible than I had been in my whole life” (p.215). The journey of Laureth for searching her father is symbolising or indicating her own effort to find herself, her identity or her own effort to realise her competence/ability which shows indirectly that her problem with eyesight is not a kind of impediment in any condition. Therefore, the search for her father is a search for a way/medium to revitalise her own growth/power. The narrative makes people aware about their responsibility towards the people with visual impairments or people with disability in general. In the text, Laureth from the childhood days got the supports from her parents. Though, she faced psychological and attitudinal barriers at different stages from different people, but she did not face functional limitations throughout her journey. She took help of Mac Book, which pronounced the mails or messages to her, she was well trained in reading brail, while flying from her place to New York City she did not face any problems while accessing transportation services, she could use ramps or elevators, she could use the ATM machine that was disabled friendly. Therefore, through mobility training, different reading technologies, using different software or other technologies people with visual impairment can move around freely, independently. As Albert Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory proposed in 1977 that a person’s inner belief should be there in their capabilities which directly influences the person’s performances in a particular situation, here in case of Laureth she did so. In the novel *She Is Not Invisible* (2013), Laureth’s mother and father did every possible thing to train her so that she can move around freely, confidently, independently and can do the basic things to live a

healthy life by herself. This disabled friendly narrative *She Is Not Invisible* (2013) by Marcus Sedgwick, sets an example that people with disabilities may redefine who they are and find new meaning and purpose in their life if they have the correct supports, resilience, and self-acceptance.

Accidents of Nature (2006) portrays the strength and resilience of individuals with disabilities and highlights the importance of empathy, understanding, and inclusion in society by removing the socio-psychological barriers. The novel challenges readers to rethink their attitudes toward disability and recognise the inherent value and potential within every individual, regardless of their physical or cognitive differences. Examining the broader Disability Rights Movement of the 1970s, *Accidents of Nature* (2006) tracks Jean and Sara's efforts to change societal perceptions of disability and fight for their rights and their space. Because of the individuals who doubt her abilities, Jean is resolved to establish her worth and advocate for change. Throughout the novel, Jean's narrative voice provides insight into her thoughts, emotions, and observations about the world around her. Her resilience, humour, and self-awareness come together to create a nuanced portrait of a young woman with disability who is about to step into adolescence.

Andrea White's work *Window Boy* (2008), shows how the protagonist Sam encounters many social and psychological impediments resulting from his cerebral palsy. The narrative demonstrates that the challenges are socially created, emphasising the need of changing social beliefs and systems for encouraging inclusion. Despite all the difficulties he comes across, Sam maintains individuality and determination throughout the narrative. By expressing his independence and following his hobbies within the boundaries of his residence, Sam fights the stereotype of immobility. Like the character of Laureth from *She Is Not Invisible*

(2013) in *Window Boy* (2008) Sam also is seen to follow Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory proposed in 1977, he believes in his own capabilities which directly has influenced his actions, and reactions in any difficult situations. His independent thinking emphasises the need of acknowledging persons with disabilities as proactive participants in their own existences, and competent of contributing substantial contributions to society. Opposed to the medical model of disability, which interprets disability as a physical deficiency or dysfunction, the novel *Window Boy* (2008) conforms to the social model, arguing that disability predominantly arises from psychological, social, and ideological impediments that impede the complete involvement and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the general population. Respecting the principles of the social model, Andrea White's novel *Window Boy* (2008) highlights society's need to confront disability-related impediments and encourage social inclusion. In the story, characters like Miss Perkins, Mrs. Martin, many of his school classmates, and Sam's mother highlight the significance of cooperation and encouragement in minimising the impact of Sam's disability. The story emphasises the importance of social connections in promoting inclusion, stressing on society's collaborative duty to provide environments that support distinct abilities and personalities.

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