

Disabled Characters in Literature : An Exploration

Roxana Khanam

Associate Professor, Department of English, Government Brajalal College, Khulna,
Bangladesh
email : roxanarahman@gmail.com

Abstract :

Literature has very often been enriched with disabled characters having multidimensional forms and fashions. Literature picks various characters; some possess superhuman qualities with mythical stature, some are normally able people and some are disabled persons. From time immemorial, literature, both oral and written has been invested with disabled characters, their physical pains, sufferings, their mental agonies as well. Besides, literature has also canvassed how these disabled characters have been maltreated in different levels and how they overcome the unfriendly social, religious and cultural prejudices and other issues. They are differently able people. Through the supreme creative brilliance of the writer, some of the disabled characters become an inspiring model for the real life people. Along with normal characters the fictional characters try to create spaces of their own in stories, try to overcome the hurdles and obstacles imposed on them. Some have overcome their problems and proved their worth as they are especially able in another field. Some fictional characters have been seen to crush out for their struggle for existence and accepted their sorrowing destiny. But, the fictional space or position accorded to such characters has never been the same as that of other normal characters projected in literature or in real life situation. In many times, they are presented antithetically or as derivatives to the normal characters surviving at the periphery of the world of the normal beings. This paper tries to search out how these physically challenged characters have been projected in literature in different times in different countries along with the societal attitudes towards persons with disability. This paper also focuses on how various factors like gender, education, religion, occupation, income, nationality have a significant impact on the life of the disabled characters in literature.

Key words : *Literature, Character, able, disabled, mental,*

1. Introduction :

The portrayal of disabled characters both of physical and mental levels takes a greater part in literature since its origin, both in oral or written, mythologies or fantasies, folk or fiction. Deaf,

dumb, blind, lame or mentally challenged characters are copious in literature to serve untypical purposes. But such disabled characters are weak and always play the second fiddle to the strong characters. In the world of fiction, disabled characters find their justification in accentuating the normality and correctness of the able characters by either misrepresenting their abnormality or reducing them as stereotypes instead of normal human beings. Such negative depictions of disabled characters in literature remain etched in our memory even long after we forget the storyline. Prejudices like these lead to ill treatment of such people denying them of their equal rights to opportunities and livelihood. In this paper, the commonly known physically challenged characters in literature have been chosen randomly to portray the severe hardship they need to face for their survival. Priority has been given on fictions and dramas in different ages in picking up disabled characters for this study.

2. Objectives of the Study :

The main objective of the study is to explore :

- Some physically and mentally handicapped characters in Literature.
- The immense torment both physically and mentally faced by the disabled characters in different phases of their life.
- The social hurdles imposed on the physically challenged characters while fighting with the normal human characters.
- How these characters establish their identity and influence other characters around them.
- How these disabled characters appears differently able persons.

3. Review of the Related Literature :

The literature that has been reviewed in ornamenting this article is as follows :

Dr. Somdev Banik, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Tripura University in his article titled *Representation of Disabled Characters in Literature* tries to show how some of the disabled characters are portrayed in literature. The representation of disabled characters both in the oral and written literature always remains either to act as prop to the main characters or as villains. Disability is often equated with evil and portrayed negatively in life as well as in literature. He has investigated the social, religious, cultural attitudes of the people surrounding them. In his paper, it has also been mirrored that some disabled characters are taken into positive light and considered good and excites sympathy for themselves. Some characters are taken into negative light and considered as evil omen.

Deborah Susan Mcleod, University of South Florida, in his *The "Defective" Generation: Disability in Modernist Literature* has studied on disability issues in modern literature. The paper provides an analysis of how Anglo-American authors in the early twentieth century conceived of, utilized, and portrayed disability in their fiction. Her study focuses on some pieces of Modernist literature that continue to exploit disabled characters' potential for metaphor and sometimes evoke traditional stereotypes. Unlike traditional representations,

however, these modern works do not resolve what the authors perceive as the "problem" of disability by curing or eliminating it; instead, they portray characters struggling to lead fulfilling lives despite feeling limited by their health. Working against the public's conception of disability as solely a medical condition, many of these authors further depict the social forces that turn a perceived "difference" into a "disability."

Ashutosh Singh, Assistant Professor of English, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, India in his scholarly article *Representation of Disabilities in Indian English Fiction: A Viewpoint* explores that literary study of disabilities has contemporary relevance as it helps physically or mentally challenged people to come into the mainstream society and to establish their equality and enhance their self-esteem. His wide range of literary examination on Indian literature makes him able to have a better understanding of the lives of people with disability and generating not sympathy but empathy for the people with disability.

Heather Mufford, The College at Brockport, Heather in his article *Disabilities in Middle-Grade Literature* stresses the importance of mental health of the teens. He thinks most people with mental illness are often reluctant to share how they feel. This would make it very difficult to accurately portray a person with this type of disability as a character in a book. While struggles of those in a wheel chair might be easy to assume, those with mental illness deal with much more beneath the surface. However, he considered the many struggles and emotions felt by middle school students who may be living with a mental illness. His study finds that the gap in literature is too great to ignore.

4. Methodology of the Study :

The methodology of the study is Descriptive Analysis. The study is mainly based on secondary data collected from various sources like published books, thesis, journals, web pages and blogs, etc. Texts have been chosen randomly where physically challenged characters are given much importance.

5. Analysis and Interpretation :

5.1: The Wide Volume of Physically Challenged Characters in Literature :

Literature picks a rich texture of diversified characters. Each character has its own forms and functions. Disabled characters both physical and mental are also presented from different perspectives by various authors. Although mental illness is not always included in discussions of disability, many scholars including Rosemarie Garland Thomson and Susan Wendell, adopt a broader definition of the disability category including conditions such as chronic and mental illnesses. Among this rich texture of characterization of disabled characters in literature, the texts that have been picked as a random sampling for this study are *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar* and *King Lear* by William Shakespeare, *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams *The Caretaker* by Harold Pinter, *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka, *The Stranger* by Albert Camus,

5.1.a: The Physical and Mental Deformation of Oedipus :

The blindness of Oedipus and his swollen ankle bears the testimony of the protagonist's physical disability. Besides, the king is a bit waspish and very inquisitive in nature; and this very mental impairment contributes a lot to accelerate his tragic doom.

Blindness plays a two-fold part in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. First, Sophocles presents blindness as a physical disability affecting the blind prophet, Teiresias. Though Oedipus has a bright eye sight at the very beginning; he can't see and perceive that he is the man he is searching for. He is the killer of his father; and marries his own mother. Though Teiresias physically blind but he can perceive things that others can't see. That's why he feels hesitated to reveal the identity of Oedipus. But when he has been under much pressure, he utters :

*"I say that you yourself
are the very man you're looking for."*¹

The irony is that Oedipus, while gifted with sight, is blind to himself. On the contrary, Teiresias, though blind physically, able to see the evil to which Oedipus has fallen prey to.

Later, blindness comes to him as a punishment by himself that means an inability to see the evil. Oedipus becomes so torn up with life that he accepts the punishment pronounced by the Delphic Oracle; he blinds himself and chooses a life of banishment. After being blind, he addresses his daughters Antigone and Ismene and asserts about himself :

*"He was a man who,
seeing nothing, knowing nothing, fathered you
with the woman who had given birth to him."*²

Another physical impurity of king Oedipus is his swollen ankles by which he has been recognized at last. When Oedipus was three days old, his parents received a prophecy saying that he would one day kill his father and marry his mother. So, they pierced and bound his feet and sent him off to be abandoned on a mountainside. Oedipus, though survived the incident, was left with scars on his feet. In fact, his name in Greek translates to "swollen foot." The scars also highlight the irony of Oedipus' ignorance. Although his name blatantly points attention to his scarred feet which are the keys to discovering his identity, Oedipus doesn't realize his true identity until it's too late. This is also true to Jocasta as well. She might have clued in to Oedipus' name long ago and asked him how he got it or just looked at her husband's feet; she could inquire about his whereabouts.

Regarding mental impairment, Oedipus' hot temper and too much inquisitiveness may come into reflection. The caring King Oedipus was paranoid and short tempered, and these characteristics brought him to his downfall. He is a man of hot temper and proud of his intelligence. He became tempered to Teiresias when he found the prophet reluctant to reveal the truth. He curses Teiresias :

*Truth is not in you—
for your ears, your mind, your eyes are blind!*³

He smelt something bad and thought that it might be a conspiracy against him. He wanted to investigate and his obsession with the investigation indeed leads to tragic catastrophe. It is because of his excessive inquisition that he went to the oracle to investigate about his parentage. Only through his profound interest, he carried on the investigation to find out the murderer of king Laius and later on tried to know his parentage. Oedipus can also be blamed for quarrelling with an old man like his father and murdered him later on.

5.1.b: Physical deformity with Richard III by William Shakespeare :

The historical play Richard III by William Shakespeare has always asked viewers to pay attention to Richard's body, to expect to see a body that he calls 'deformed' and we might today call 'disabled'. He has been presented with a hump, a limp, an immobilised arm. Richard describes himself as "cheated of feature," "deformed," and "unfinished;" Anne and Elizabeth deride him as "diffused infection of a man," "hedgehog," "bottled spider," and "foul bunch-backed toad," which all link insult to anomalous and inhuman body. While this language draws attention to Richard's bodily difference, the play ultimately remains ambiguous about his physical form, staging instead a frenzy of interpretive fervor about what Richard's body really means. Many adjectives have been poured forth for Richard III like:

*"Fool, fool! thou whett'st a knife to kill thyself."
"The day will come that thou shalt wish for me
To help thee curse that poisonous bunchback'd toad."⁴*

Malicious, power-hungry, and bitter about his physical deformity, Richard has mental deformity too. He began to aspire secretly to the throne and decides to kill anyone he has to become king. Using his intelligence and his skills of deception and political manipulation, Richard began his campaign for the throne. He manipulated a noblewoman, Lady Anne, into marrying him. But later on, he had his wife, Queen Anne, murdered, so that he could marry young Elizabeth, the daughter of the former Queen Elizabeth and the dead King Edward. Richard was not successful and was killed in the battle with Richmond. Keeping all these things in mind, critic Jeffrey R Wilson, referring to Sigmund Freud, likes to call him an 'exception' too :

In this speech, Richard sees himself as what Sigmund Freud would later call (with reference to Richard) an "exception" – someone who has been slighted by nature, has suffered an unfair congenital disadvantage, something he did not deserve and something he would use to excuse himself from the laws and morals that govern civil society – so, in a breathtaking conceptual slide, Richard vows to slash through his family and become the other kind of "exception" in early-modern England, the king.⁵

5.1.c: The Physical and Intellectual Instability of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare :

Another very prominent historical tragedy *Julius Caesar* represents the physical weakness and tyrannical tendency of the protagonist as well. Having some major physical disorder like

deafness, epilepsy and impotency, Caesar becomes the ruler of Rome. Caesar in course of the play, reveals to the audience that he is deaf in his left ear. He tells Antony:

*Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf.*⁶

Again, when Cassius attempted to persuade Brutus to join him and the other conspirators, he argued that Caesar was an unfit leader because of his tyrannical tendencies and physical weaknesses, such as the time he jumped into the river, but called to Cassius to help him. Also, Caesar always suffers from "fevers" and "fits." Cassius tells Brutus that when Caesar was in Spain, he had a fever and was of a "feeble temper" :

*And when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake...
His coward lips did from their color fly,
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
Did lose his luster: I did hear him groan;*⁷

Again, Caesar's virility is fully revealed in the Lupercal festivities, where a foot race was arranged, and the young Mark Antony prepared to participate. Known for his athleticism and licentious behavior, Mark Antony was called upon by Caesar.

*Forget not in your speed, Antonius
To touch Calpurnia, for our elders say
The barren, touched in this holy chase
Shake off their sterile curse.*⁸

Certainly, in the time of the Elizabethans, the lack of fertility was thought to be the fault of the woman; however, Caesar's asking the obviously virile Mark Antony to touch his wife clearly suggests that Caesar may be impotent.

5.1.d : Physical, Mental and Intellectual Imparity in *King Lear* by William Shakespeare

In the tragedy of *King Lear* we find two portraiture of disability. King Lear after dividing his kingdom between his two daughters, and banishing his youngest daughter, he receives hellish torture from his daughters. Another character in the parallel sub plot The Earl of Gloucester receives heinous punishment from the daughters of King Lear and from his illegitimate son, Edmund for giving shelter to Lear. He has been made blind and was driven out in the street. King Lear and Gloucester are the two older characters that endure the most in the play *King Lear* by William Shakespeare. Throughout the play their stories foreshadow the events that will occur in the other's life. However, while Gloucester goes blind, Lear goes mad and of course he was mentally blind previously. In doing this Shakespeare is indicating congruence between the two conditions. Only after losing their faculties, Lear and Gloucester recognize that their blindness to honesty costs them dearly.

Lear begins to realize once he has gone mad that Cordelia is the daughter that truly loves him,

and Goneril as well as Regan are deceitful. The first real signs that are given to us that Lear is going mad are in Act I, Scene 5, when Lear joins in with the Fool's nonsense. In those same lines Lear utters, "I did her wrong." This means Lear did Cordelia wrong in exiling her. However, Lear fluctuates between sanity and madness throughout Acts I-II, and in Act II, Scene II he leaves Gloucester's castle and is pushed into insanity for some time. Once Lear has been thrust into the storm he can see people as the audience can, and not in the blurred images as before. Lear yells,

*Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters;
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness
I never gave you kingdom, called you children;
You owe me no subscription.⁹*

Although Lear is insane, he is now able to see what is true that he could not see when he was sane. He can see that his daughters have wronged him, although he has given them his kingdom. Lear is screaming this to the storm and he does not blame the storm for coming down on him because he has never given the storm his kingdom or called it his child; therefore, it does not owe Lear anything.

5.1.e: The Physical and Psychic Weakness of Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams' memory play *The Glass Menagerie* is narrated through the main character Tom's memories of his mother, Amanda, and disabled sister, Laura. Tom is the filter through which we see Laura and her disability. This filter becomes critically important when thinking about how disability is portrayed on the canvas of drama and how the physical sickness of a girl weakens her mental stability.

Laura has a slight physical defect — a limp — but she has magnified this limp until it has affected her entire personality. Laura's oversensitive nature makes her think that everyone notices her limp; it becomes for her a huge stumbling block to normal living. She cannot get over it and into the real world. Her inability to overcome this defect causes her to withdraw into her world of illusion. The limp then becomes symbolic of Laura's inner nature. She lives in a world of old phonograph records and glass animals.

Laura is presented as an extremely shy and sensitive person. She is so nervous that she cannot even attend business school without becoming violently sick. She is frightened and nervous when Tom and Amanda quarrel. She possesses a glass menagerie which she cares for with great tenderness. And she has withdrawn herself from the real world to a make-believe world.

When the gentleman caller arrives, for the first time we see Laura's inner charm. She is fresh and pretty, and she does have charm not as Amanda wants it, but in her own individualistic way. She is even capable of forgetting her physical disability. She responds to Jim because he responds to her difference. With Jim, she sees that her difference is an asset and not a handicap. But ironically, she leads Jim more into her world than she enters into his. Thus, when the

evening is over, when the unicorn is broken and the hopes are shattered, Laura does not have to retreat back into her world because she has never left it sufficiently enough to necessitate the retreat. Quite the contrary, now that the unicorn is broken, is ordinary like Jim, she sends it forth with Jim, and she remains in her unique world with the other unique glass animals.

5. 1. f : The Physical Deformity of the War-stricken Aston in *The Caretaker* by Harold Pinter

Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* offers us a bleak vision of humanity. All three characters in the play are a bit deformed both physically and mentally. They are more or less isolated, lonely and vulnerable to the extreme. Futility of human relationships and the vulnerability of human existence are the dominant concerns of the play.

In course of Pinter's absurd play, we come in contact with three alienated figure-Aston and Mick who were two brothers, and Davies, an older man living as a tramp. Aston once received electric shock treatment and the resulting brain damage left him isolated. He's very vulnerable and was looking for companionship. He seemed very benevolent and anyone could take advantage of his kind spirit.

When the play opens, Aston invites Davies home. He's saved Davies from a bar brawl and wants to look after him. When Davies gets to the flat, the first thing he does is to complain about how messy and neglected it is. It's so untidy that Aston struggles to find any clothes to give Davies. Davies just wants to go to Sidcup, London, to get identity papers to prove who he is, but he will stay the night and head off in the morning.

At the end of the play each character remains in the same position they were at the beginning. At the very beginning Aston was fixing the electric toaster and at the very end he is still fixing the toaster plug. Mick's dream of converting the room into a luxury penthouse remains static. Davies is once again a vagrant, alienated, dispossessed, and alone. This suggests the absurdity of the play that nothing was accomplished during the play.

5. 1.g : Physical and Emotional Deformity *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck is a novel of defeated hope and the harsh reality of the American Dream. George and Lennie are poor homeless migrant workers, doomed to a life of wandering and toil in which they are never able to reap the fruits of their labour. Their desires may not seem so unfamiliar to any other American: a place of their own, the opportunity to work for themselves and harvest what they sow with no one to take anything from them or give them orders.

Four of Steinbeck's characters are handicapped: Candy is missing a hand, Crooks has a crooked spine, Lennie is mentally slow, and Curley acquires a mangled hand in the course of the novel. They are physical manifestations of one of the novel's major themes: the schemes of men go awry. Here, to reiterate the point, Steinbeck has the actual bodies of his characters go awry. It is as if nature herself is often doomed to errors in her scheme. And whether they be caused at birth, or by a horse, or by another man, the physical deformities occur regardless of

the handicapped person's will or desire to be otherwise, just as George and Lennie's dream goes wrong despite how much they want it to be fulfilled.

All the characters wish to change their lives in some fashion, but none are capable of doing so; they all have dreams, and it is only the dream that varies from person to person. Curley's wife has already had her dream of being an actress pass her by and now must live a life of empty hope. Crooks' situation hints at a much deeper oppression than that of the white worker in America – the oppression of the black people. Through Crooks, Steinbeck exposes the bitterness, the anger, and the helplessness of the black American who struggles to be recognised as a human being, let alone have a place of his own. Crooks' hopelessness underlies that of George and Lennie's and Candy's and Curley's wife. But all share the despair of wanting to change the way they live and attain something better.

By killing Lennie, George eliminates a monumental burden and a threat to his own life. Lennie, of course, never threatened George directly, but his actions endangered the life of George, who took responsibility for him. The tragedy is that George, in effect, is forced to shoot both his companion, who made him different from the other lonely workers, as well as his own dream. The sad truth is that one has to surrender one's dream in order to survive, not the easiest thing to do in America, the Land of Promise, the land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.

5. 1. h : The War Stricken Traumatic Septimus Warren Smith and Emotionally Alienated Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf:

Septimus, a veteran of World War I, suffers from shell shock and is lost within his own mind. He feels guilty even as he despises himself for being made numb by the war. His doctor has ordered Lucrezia, Septimus's wife, to make Septimus notice things outside himself, but Septimus has removed himself from the physical world. Instead, he lives in an internal world, wherein he sees and hears things that aren't really there and he talks to his dead friend Evans. He is sometimes overcome with the beauty in the world, but he also fears that the people in it have no capacity for honesty or kindness. Woolf intended for Clarissa to speak the sane truth and for Septimus the insane truth.

Septimus' delusions are portrayed through stream of consciousness style :

'Once you fall, Septimus repeated to himself, human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you. They fly screaming into the wilderness. The rack and thumbscrew are applied. Human nature is remorseless.'¹⁰

It's Septimus' bleak view of the world. His thought shows that he is a helpless victim of people's inconsideration. His attitude reveals a common symptom of psychosis.

On the surface, Septimus seems quite dissimilar to Clarissa, but he embodies many characteristics that Clarissa shares and thinks in much the same way she does. He could almost be her double in the novel. Septimus and Clarissa both have beak-noses, love Shakespeare, and fear oppression. More important, as Clarissa's double, Septimus offers a contrast between the

conscious struggle of a working-class veteran and the blind opulence of the upper class. His troubles call into question the legitimacy of the English society he fought to preserve during the war. Because his thoughts often run parallel to Clarissa's and echo hers in many ways, the thin line between what is considered sanity and insanity gets thinner and thinner. Septimus chooses to escape his problems by killing himself, a dramatic and tragic gesture that ultimately helps Clarissa to accept her own choices, as well as the society in which she lives.

5.1.i. The Non-normative Disability of Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka

The Metamorphosis is a disturbing story by Franz Kafka of a young salesman Gregor Samsa who awakes one morning to find himself transformed into a bug. It can't happen as a man can not be turned into a bug. It's the mental transformation. Samsa does a pretty cruddy job. He is constantly traveling. He's tired. His body hurts. we're talking of bumpy, muddy roads, trains, and carriages—no traveling in the first class here. And his mind is restless and bored. So why does he do it? He has a family to support. His family does not consist of wife and kids, but of parents and a sister, each of whom, though physically well, seems to be simply unprepared for life in this new modern world. Kafka was writing in the early 20th century, when the genteel life of the Victorian era was shattered by World War I and the rapid social changes of an industrialized Europe. Non-normative bodies are "disabled" because they aren't uniform; they can't be standardized to look or behave like all the others, nor can they be interchanged with all the others. And so they must be excluded. Gregor's suddenly extraordinary body makes him useless in our modern industrial world. He is no longer financially or social productive, and so he is hidden away—covered—until he dies. His disability may be a cause of his inability to communicate and it is termed as Dys-communication. Critic like Robert Wenginger supports this argument,

'And we feel from the beginning and throughout the story as it evolves that there is so much to be said between father and son, mother and son, and even sister and brother, that remains uncommunicated. Gregor's metamorphosis not only originates from a deficit, it nurtures rather than corrects this familial shortcoming. Familial dys-communication is a paralyzing force.'¹¹

5.1.j. Sociopath of Meursault in *The Stranger* by Albert Camus

In the novel *The Stranger* by Albert Camus, the main character Meursault has strange views and behaves different from what people think of as normal. It is believed that this is because Meursault has a condition known as Antisocial Personality Disorder. In *The Stranger* by Albert Camus, Meursault appears utterly detached from other people and behave like a stranger to them. He experiences life as a spectator. He becomes emotionally indifferent to everyone around him. He seems to have no reaction to the death of his own mother. His relationships with friends and with a woman who loves him have no emotional depth to him. He does not accept any of the societal demands as to how he is supposed to exist in the world and in life. After he kills the Arab for no apparent reason, the focus shifts from the crime to the kind of person he appears to be.

In *The Stranger* by Albert Camus, we see everything goes by with the perspective of Meursault

who lacks in feeling. Though Meursault views his actions as normal human behavior, in reality they would be diagnosed as the actions of a sociopath and they are not acceptable in society. Meursault views his actions as normal behavior and is not necessarily at fault for his mistakes when he is acting without regard to others' emotions. Medically, a sociopath is someone who does not feel empathy, sympathy, emotions, or true feelings for others. The word 'sociopath' gives us an image of a maniac or a psychopath. Though the acts of a psychopath and a sociopath are different, their mindsets are similar in many ways. The psychopath is violent. This distinction makes it easy to classify them as equivalent. He is completely unaware of reality, confused about his own situation and simply accepts what he knows as the truth. If people live far from the normal standards, society rejects him, but we should consider whether the acts of Meursault are crime or not. Robert Champigny does not like to consider what Meursault does as crimes. 'Meursault's wrongdoing is not so much abhorring committed a crime as it is being... in the eyes of theatrical society...' ¹² he says.

6. Limitations of the Study :

Though a sincere and careful study has been initiated, this study does not claim all its all exhaustiveness. Literature from its very origin is so rich in texture and volume that it is really a mammoth task to choose characters in the viewpoint of disability studies. When selecting characters of this issue from the vast ocean of literature, a random sampling of the well-known texts has been initiated. Only the known disabled characters from the drama and novel are introduced and analyzed. There are many characters in Bengali literature portrayed with disabilities and taken challenges for survival. Numerous characters with multifarious disabilities are found in Manik Bandopadhyaya's fictions. Kalu in 'Jibika', Mohini and Sanatan in 'Andha', Suchitra in 'Mahakaler Joter Jot', Fulbanu in 'Peranta', Habo in 'Tarpur', Pagli Meye in 'Kondike', Shambhu in 'Durgatana', Viku and Bashir in 'Pragaitihasik', Abala in 'Level Crossing', Fuli in 'Voyankar', Bibha in 'Mimangsha' etc. are the characters showing physical challenge. Poetry, non-fiction, biography, etc. can also be included. But because of time and space, only some prominent physically handicapped figures in literature are randomly chosen for this study.

7. Findings :

The study titled "*Disabled Characters in Literature: An Exploration*" has explored some key issues that the disabled characters depicted in different genre of literature are not really very sound or sympathetically drawn. They are treated just the outcast of the society. The prevailed social and religious attitude of such people is also negative. It has been believed that disability is the punishment of some core sins. The physically and mentally disabled characters are very often seen to be locked or hidden from the common mass and are very often received torturous behaviours. As the social laws are not against them, the pattern and practices of the people surrounding them are not very congenial for the handicapped characters. It has been found that because of the unfriendly attitude, the sufferings of the disabled character are accelerated much. It has also been observed that though the disabled characters have any shortcomings for a particular issue, they have many more potentials; they are differently able people of the

society. They have other latent talents too. If their other potentialities along with their particular health hazard are considered with love and affection, they can be proved their worth as an unbeaten personality.

8. Recommendation :

Disability in literature or in real life is a very sensitive issue. Much work remains to be done in this area. Literature has no doubt, a great impact on the social people; it can very easily shape and mould the beliefs and attitudes of human being. Writers should be encouraged to frame fictional characters with disability in a positive light. The potentialities of these sorts of people should be focused. Though these special characters have some limitations, their other positive forces should be driven out in the fictional domain. Their shortcomings should be overcome through endurance, sincerity and cordial efforts. Through their strong will and determination, they should be represented as a successful human beings. Some critics say,

... disability is allegorical – it has to stand for something else – weakness, insecurity, bitterness, frailty, evil, innocence, etc. – and be the occasion for the conveyance of some moral truth – that people are good, can overcome, that we shouldn't discriminate or despair.¹³

More studies can be taken focusing more on the other incapable characters. Poetry, Non-fiction and biographies can also be included as a sample for the study. Literary study of disabilities has contemporary relevance as it helps physically or mentally impaired people to come into the mainstream society and to establish their equality and enhance their self-esteem. It will be therefore worth pursuing for further research to have a better understanding of the lives of people with disability and generating not sympathy but empathy for the people with disability.

9. Conclusion :

Literature mirrors life certainly. It has a far reaching impact on influencing the societal attitudes. Thus, disability should be given of utmost importance either in literature or in real life situations and the depiction of these characters should be handled with great care and love. People with disabilities have been historically underrepresented. Despite society's progression, the social people, either in fiction or in real life situation, still remain very left behind to handle with these characters. But this is utterly inhuman and this attitudes and social prejudices should be changed. If literature has been invested with disabled characters as protagonist and through a realistic character portrayal, if these characters are invested with other admiring qualities, they must be able to secure an honourable position in the society. The mode of life of these fictional characters will surely be inspiring and imitating issues to the readers in the real life situation who are facing the same problems.

References

1. Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, Translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, Harcourt, Inc, 1949, Page-14
2. Ibid, Page-38
3. Ibid, Page-13
4. Shakespeare, William, *The Complete works*, Wordsworth Editions Ltd. Ware, Hertfordshire, 1996, pg-105
5. <https://wilson.fas.harvard.edu/stigma-in-shakespeare/richard-iii%E2%80%99s-deformities>
6. Ibid, page-592
7. Ibid, page-584
8. Ibid, Page-583
9. Ibid, Page-903
10. Woolf Virginia, *Mrs. Dalloway*, The University of Adelaide, 2015, Page-108
11. Weninger, Robert, *Sounding out the Silence of Gregor Samsa: Kafka's Rhetoric of Dys-Communication,* " Studies in 20th Century Literature, 1993, Vol. 17: Iss. 2, Article 7, page-276
12. Champigny, Robert, *A Pagan Hero : An Interpretation of Meursault in Camus' The Stranger,* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969, Page-15
13. Anne Waldschmidt, Hanjo Berressem, Moritz Ingwersen (eds.), *Culture – Theory – Disability Encounters between Disability Studies and Cultural Studies*, Bielefeld, Germany, 2017, Page-44