

ACCEPTANCE

INCLUSION

INTEGRATION

CONNECT

RESPECT

EXPERIENCE

RESILIENCE

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Department of English and Modern European Languages
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From the Chair

11th Nov, 2021

It is with pleasure that I introduce to you, the autumn issue of *Rhetorica Quarterly* (Volume II, Issue II). In our journey through the following pages, let us rediscover that Art knows no boundaries and that there are no set or preconceived sources from where creativity flows. With a special focus on the theme of Disability, this issue celebrates the experiences and creativity of diverse minds and bodies from across the world. It is an attempt to curate a space that enables free expression and welcomes all voices. It is also a call for inclusion and acceptance of all through a dialogue.

The various sections in the issue inform the readers on disability, in terms of the challenges faced and hurdles overcome, and bring together high quality of submissions. In addition to our regular sections on Poetry, Fiction, Non-fiction and Book Reviews, this issue includes a section, 'Real Lives' which attempts to bridge the distance between life and art through personal narratives.

We are humbled by the enthusiastic participation of experienced as well as emerging writers and poets from diverse backgrounds. We have contributions from activists and poets Gaele Sobott, Abhishek Anicca, and Anand Kumtha. The contributions merge a large variety of genres, languages and experiences, truly pushing and dissolving boundaries.

I express my gratitude to the Honourable Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alok Kumar Rai for his guidance and encouragement. We, at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, continue to seek the love and support of our contributors and readers for our ongoing literary endeavours. Our student editors have once again done a brilliant job of putting this issue together

Do not despair, but move on despite odds is the message for all the readers in this empowering issue of *Rhetorica Quarterly*. I am reminded of the words of Hellen Keller: "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." There is enough to inspire, ignite and illuminate young minds.

Happy Reading!

Ranu Uniyal
Professor and Head,
Department of English and Modern European Languages,
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PUT TOGETHER BY

- Non-Fiction -

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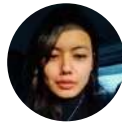


Her area of interest includes feminist discourse and the psychoanalytical approach towards maternal thinking.

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- Real Lives -

Editor

VEDAMINI VIKRAM



Her areas of interest include performance studies, indigenous literatures and travel literature.

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THEME • YOUTH

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

This special issue is born out of our initiative to mark our endeavour towards an issue that needs special attention and acknowledgment. The theme for the Monsoon issue of the journal *Rhetorica Quarterly* Volume II, Issue II is *Disability: Diversity And Inclusion*. The issue aimed to explore the diverse nature of disability as often it is limited only to physical incapacities of the body. The need of the hour is to acknowledge disability as a whole.

The submissions were spaced out bringing out the different shades to disability. As we were putting this issue together we were careful to include only those pieces which were dismantling the preconceived notions and paving the path towards the inclusion of the disabled as part of society. As an editor, it was challenging to go through the submissions as the pieces were extremely intriguing and thought-provoking. This issue is blessed to have so many guest submissions on a topic that needs to have a greater reach and understanding not only in literature but in all spheres of life.

On behalf of the *Rhetorica Society*, we are thankful to our Vice-Chancellor Prof. Alok Kumar Rai for acknowledging the contribution of the students from the department. Our gratitude to Prof. Ranu Uniyal, Head of the department is eternal for providing us with this platform to give voices to the creative mind of the young students, scholars, teachers alike. Also, the support from the professors of the department gave much-needed encouragement to our team. It is always a daunting task to be an editor because it comes with big responsibility however with the support of members of the *Rhetorica Society*, among our agreements and disagreements we gave our efforts to the best of our capabilities. I would like to convey special thanks to my co-editors Chetna Rawat and Vedamini Vikram for working as a team with me. We hope our readers, the integral members of our journal, enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed working on it.

Regards,

Nikita Yadav

Editor, Non-fiction.



Fiction

**"Writing fiction is
the act of weaving a
series of lies to
arrive at a greater
good."**

- Khaled Hosseini

Jasmines for Shanti

Bhola was born a healthy and good-looking boy. The irony was that he was born to illiterate parents, who were sharecroppers in a backward village of drought ridden *Bundelkhand*. They came to Jhansi to earn their living and Bhola started accompanying his father, who collected scrap from houses. When both his parents died, Bhola continued to earn his meagre living from collecting newspapers and scrap as a *kabadiwala*.

Today, like any other day, he navigated his difficult way through the cacophony of traffic, pushing his *thela* ahead of him through the ceaseless flow of cars, scooters, buses, bigger *thelas*, *rikshas* and pedestrians. Crossing a road was like swimming from one bank of a turbulent river to the other, because one of Bhola's legs was undeveloped and limp, like a dry branch of a tree without sap. He was polio-ridden since the age of three. The traffic came threateningly from both sides and often the cars screeched as they saw him arduously crossing the road and then he had to bear a volley of abuse; if they called him a *langda* he did not mind but the sister or mother abuse filled him with rage. But Bhola was undaunted. This was part of the game of his daily struggle to earn money to survive in this cruel city. He would cross the teeming roads and come to the quieter residential areas where the houses stood silent behind tall boundary walls and hedges. He would cry out in his hoarse voice: "Kabadiwala. Kabad de do..... Kabadiwala". Invariably, some servant or the *Sahab* or *Memsahab* herself would come out of the closed gate and let him in. The *Memsahabs* would come out with rings flashing on their fingers or all dressed up to leave home. None of these women were as beautiful as his Shanti, who stayed back at home, cleaning their small shack in the *jhuggi basti*, cooking and then waiting for him to return. These women were rich but they haggled for every rupee and suspected him of cheating in his weighing scales. There would be arguments and threats to turn him out but through his gentle manner, Bhola would succeed in getting kilos of newspapers, old beer bottles, broken pots and pans and other junk to sell in the *Raddi Bazaar*. With this scrap that Bhola collected, he would buy the day's flour and *dal* and some potatoes and onions and make his difficult way back home.

The sights of the city never ceased to fascinate him. The tall buildings of black, shimmering glass, the dozens and dozens of shops with figures standing like stiff puppets wearing female garments or men's clothing, the big provision stores where the rich folks parked their cars to which they returned with loads of bags. How much they bought! What a lot of things they needed! How

much money they must have to buy all that stuff! The people too looked like a different species from those he had known back in his village. Most had wires stuck into their ears and looked self-absorbed. The women walked freely with the men. Not everybody was rich. There were beggars at every corner, some able bodied unlike him, others showing stumps instead of hands and mumbling for money. He was a witness to all this but what particularly fascinated him was a flower shop full of the most beautiful flowers; pink lilies, red roses, white *rajnigandhas*, huge bouquets with every kind of flower arranged to attract the customer. Somehow this shop reminded Bhola of the flowering mustard fields of his childhood: acres and acres of yellow mustard dazzling in the winter sun. Bhola would pause at this shop and park his *thela* beside the pavement in front of it, only to buy some peanuts. The cars would come gliding by to the shop and a *Sahab* would emerge and vanish into the shop from which he would leave with a bunch of flowers. Bhola would imagine how he would go home and give it to his wife and how happy his wife would be! Young girls would stop at the shop and would come out with baskets of roses and other flowers such as he had never seen. Something in the shop enchanted the poor village boy that he was.

Then one day, he wondered if he too could buy flowers for Shanti. He chuckled inwardly at his foolishness to even think of such a possibility. All that he had in his string bag was money for the day's flour and *dal*. But he was young and he yearned for some of those flowers. Day after day he crossed the shop and after a few days, he stopped pausing there and went ahead. But even as he made his way through the streets, he kept thinking of what else he could buy for his Shanti. He would come to the fruit hawkers and would stop to haggle with the *jamun* seller because she loved those. Then at the risk of being dismissed by the *Jamunwala*, he would spend thirty rupees to buy a leaf cone of big and ripe *Jamuns*, which he would give to her when he returned home. She was a quiet and beautiful woman with long hair which she plaited neatly. He was so happy that she had accepted him despite his withered leg. He had always wanted to buy her something really nice but he knew he could hardly afford anything.

Then one day, just near the flower shop at a safe distance he saw an old man with a basket of jasmine flowers. He paused to look at the customers choosing small strings of jasmines. This was it. These would not cost the sky. He could buy a string for Shanti. So, he came to the old man and asked how much a string was for. "Twenty- five rupees", said the old man and held one up for him. "Won't you give it to me for twenty, *bhai*?" asked Bhola, afraid the old man would dismiss him but to his surprise the old man agreed and handed him a fragrant string of fresh jasmines which Bhola asked him to wrap in a newspaper. Then he made his way home and leaving behind the traffic and shops and

crowded roads he came to the *jhuggi basti*, which was his home. His shack was a makeshift hovel of black polythene sheeting stretched out as a roof and blue plastic sacking that made up the walls. Inside it was dark, but just outside the shack, Shanti was getting the *chulha* ready, keeping away safely from the fire as she poked a dry twig and then another, always slow and careful, taking her time.

“Here is the flour and here is the *dal*,” he said handing them to her.

“And onions and potatoes?”

“Oh, onions were too costly at sixty rupees a kilo and potatoes I could not get today.”

She blinked her large eyes and asked him why.

“Because I wanted to buy you something today” said Bholu as he unwrapped the crumpled newspaper to take out the fragrant string of jasmines.

She blinked again and giggled, “What did you buy Bholua?”

He remained silent. Then drawing near her, he crept behind to her braided hair and lifting it, he began to tie the string of jasmines.

She sniffed and smiled. “What is that Bholua? Are they flowers?”

“Yes”, said Bholu, “A string of jasmines for your hair.”

Shanti sniffed again and he described them to her. “They are fresh and yellowish white and they smell so good. Can you smell them?” he asked. Then when he had tied the string around her plait he smiled contentedly.

“You look more beautiful now.”

She giggled and then sighed. “I wish I could see myself in a mirror.”

He said nothing and remained silent. Then in a very matter of fact tone, he said: “I am like your mirror.”

She giggled again and then he saw her eyes full of opaque pain, “But I can’t see you Bholua!” she mumbled.

The dark shack through which little light penetrated was filled with the rays of love. With her opaque eyes blinking, Shanti smiled.

“You know what?” she asked and he looked at her askance, waiting.

Feeling the cluster of jasmines coiled around her thick plait, she said: “I pray that you and I could always be together in every new birth.”

He sighed and then said, “But my leg should be muscular and your eyes should be able to see the world!”

She smiled and remained silent. Then after some time she said, “But I don’t mind being blind as long as you are with me in every life, just as you are!”

About the Writer

Vijay Prakash Singh is a Professor of English Literature at the University of Lucknow. His interests are wide-ranging from reading Fiction, Travelogues and Buddhism to Classical European and Hindustani Music. He is an avid traveller and loves taking off to the Himalayas about twice a year. He has published a research survey entitled *Mountain Travelogues on the Himalayas and Tibet* published by Pilgrims and a book of short-stories entitled *A Day in the Life of Ghulam Sarwar and Other Stories* published by Writers Workshop, Kolkata.



He can be reached at vijayprakash.lu@gmail.com

Autism and 'Obsessions': Three Takes

Take 1

Bliss

The Experience

Have you ever observed the hide and seek
Of sun rays descending through dense treetops?
Have you ever counted the numerous shades
Of the rioting colours in the sunset sky?
Have you ever experienced the calm continuous hum
Radiating from a sea shell?
Have your feet ever heard the soft and crisp smell
Of the grass crushing under them?
Have you ever felt your body melting
In the pouring rain on the shore?
Have you ever turned a kaleidoscope 1729 times
Letting the colours, shapes and patterns (e)merge and separate?
Have you ever lined up cars to such a perfection
That leaves you absolutely breathless?
Have you ever flapped your hands so fast
That you experience each miniscule muscle grain in your hands?
Have you ever tried to hold the 5-beat *Rupak Taal*
In your body for days, till it is flowing in your veins?
Have you ever known how pure it feels
To try writing down the prime numbers to infinity?
Have you ever rocked your body so hard
That you become one with the universe?

Have you ever experienced your entire being
Fully immersed in sensing the moment?

What would you call it?

I call it meditation.

Take 2

Synonyms / Antonyms

Kaleidoscopes from Thesauruses

Obsession (noun) restricted interest, repetitive behaviour, craze, silliness, madness, monomania, fetishization, preoccupation, fixation, subjugation, surrender, captivation, domination, compulsion, coercion, constraint, predisposition, fuss, hang-up, hook, addiction, crush, one-track mind, bug in the ear, something on the brain, bee in your bonnet, monkey on the back, phantom, glorification, deification, idolization, faddism, fanaticism, weakness, dependence, over-reliance, habit, pressure, compulsion, avidity, allurements, magnetism, seduction, tantalization, lust, passion, spell, hypnotization, mesmerization, bewitchment, enslavement, helplessness, subservience, clinging to, abuse, overzealousness, fever, constricted vision, narrow outlook, quirkiness, eccentricity, peculiarity, idiosyncrasy, oddity, kink, tic, itch, faddism, whimsicalness, irresistible impulsiveness, obstinacy, caprice, aberration, disorder, insanity, repression, rage, delusion, pathological, mania, psychoneurosis, ...

Passion (noun) special interest, keen interest, fascination, engagement, engrossment, focus, attention, concentration, holding, eagerness, keenness, willingness, enthusiasm, spiritedness, thirst for (knowledge), curiousness, imagination, hobby, avocation, enchantment, fondness, love, zeal, fervor, dedication, commitment, will, belief, duty, purpose, verve, enthrallment, rapture, bliss, ecstasy, elation, exhilaration, gaiety, mirth, choicest, most select, prized, pearl, gem, jewel, paragon, finest, crème de la crème, pride, treasure, A-list, enthusiasm, drive, inclination, leaning, tendency, propensity, pursuit, dream, aspiration, ambition, obsession, wholeheartedness, resoluteness, fortitude, steadfastness, seriousness, tenacity, strength of mind, what it takes, fire in the belly, ...

Take 3

Scenes from Life

Screenplay jottings for a shot

Scene 1

In an online group of tens of thousands of regular die-hard R D Burman fanatics in which minute details of his music and his life get excitedly discussed 24 by 7, the current conversation is about how just a four-notes pattern of the bass guitar just before each *antara* lifts up the song to give a heavenly experience.

Scene 2

In an international mathematics conference, a distinguished researcher, after his detailed breathtaking presentation in differential topology leading to some outstanding results that he could prove after years of relentless pursuit (and which only 7 attendees could fully understand), says with a sparkle in his eyes, “I just love to spot the patterns!”.

A participant remarks how these results could help some others working in theoretical astrophysics (which only a set of 2 attendees might be able to grasp), which could, in turn, help future spaceship voyages.

Scene 3

From the stage of his special school’s annual gathering, a sweet autistic adolescent is instantly providing anyone in the audience with the day of their birth if they told him the date, a la Shakuntala Devi – The calendars for a large number of years are firmly imprinted in his memory.

His father says humbly, “We have no idea how he does it. He has learnt this on his own”.

Scene 4

In the waiting area outside the therapy rooms at a clinic, a fully engrossed autistic kid is carefully arranging all the yellow blocks in an amazingly perfect straight line. Another autistic kid there, super-excited by watching this line, which he perceives to be a train, starts reciting the entire time table of the Western Railways’ Mumbai local trains.

Later, inside the therapy rooms, the mothers of both kids get a huge dose of advice on how to reduce these “obsessions”.

The Last Shot

“Mereko feeling nahi hai? Tumhari feeling tumhari?”

“Twada kutta Tommy; sadda kutta kutta?” - Shehnaaz Gill in ‘Big Boss’

About the Writer



A proud father of a young entrepreneur with autism, **Anand Kumtha** continues to learn about and advocate for autism. He is trained in narrative practices of counseling and works for adults with disabilities using leisure activities. He shares some of his learning from his research on leisure on his FaceBook page ‘Khel Khel Mein – Play Ideas for Special Persons’.

He sporadically writes poetry, songs, fiction and non-fiction in English, Hindi and Marathi. They have been published in periodicals / anthology and some songs have been included in a documentary. He has also written, directed and acted in a few plays.

'A Gift from God's Hall of Angels'

It was the end of the day for the boy. He had played hard and fought well. The children generally played with him, but the occasional discord brought forth a lot of disdainful comments like, 'mental', 'crack', 'tortoise' and 'mad'. He fought them well but never stopped going to play as these friends always included him in the games. He tried to play just once but came out of the game soon. He stood there cheering for his team.

Today his dad had come back from a long tour. So, he came back early, had dinner, watched TV together with his dad. Finally, it was time to hear the wonderful stories about dad's tour. However, this time he had some questions in his mind. Putting his legs over his father's belly, he started the conversation.

Boy: 'Papa, how did I come to you?'

Papa: 'What do you mean, Son?'

Boy: 'Mama & You always say, that I am very special and God gave me to you both. How did he give me to you?'

Papa: 'Oh, that, but why do you ask?'

Boy: 'My friends tease me that I am different and very slow. I mess up with the game. I want to know, if I am different and very slow then why did he give me to you?'

Papa: 'Oh, well, that is quite a story! Do you really want to know, why?'

Boy: 'Yes Papa!'

Papa: 'Ok, then get ready to listen to your very very special journey to us.'

The boy came closer to his dad with eyes sparkling. Mom, who generally did not interfere in the twosome's conversations on dad's day of return, found her interest getting piqued, watching the boy clinging to his dad. She was not surprised at Dad's story time, but the kind of questions the boy was asking, made her a little emotional.

Dad started the story of the boy's journey to his lap.

Dad: 'My son, before you came to us, you lived with God, in his Palace of Joy. You loved living there, happily doing whatever God asked you to do.'

Boy: 'I did everything!'

Dad: 'Yes, of course! Everything! Then ...'

Boy: 'Then what?'

Dad: 'One day, God called you and told you that you have to leave for Earth.'

Boy: 'The Earth? What is Earth?'

Dad: 'This world, where we live.'

Boy: 'But we live in these apartments, don't we?'

He read out the address. Generally he was able to remember the entire address including the apartment name and number, the street and the city but the excitement caused him to miss the number. His dad asked him to complete the address including his mom's mobile number. The boy slowly completed the address and with some efforts, he could give out the mobile number.

Dad: 'Yes, but Lucknow is in UP. Where is UP?'

The boy yelled: 'India.'

Dad resumed his story: 'India is in Asia and Asia is on the Earth.'

Boy: 'Oh Earth!'

Dad continued slowly: 'Yes, so God said, you have to come down. And God asked you, if you wanted anything special on the Earth. You thought for a while and then said, "I want a place of learning that is special." God said, "OK! ". And then God said that you also had to choose your Mom and Dad.'

Boy: 'Really! God asked me to choose my Mom and Dad.'

Dad: 'Yes, you asked for a special school, so you needed to have special Mom and Dad, who would send you to a special school.'

Boy: 'Wow! Then what happened?'

Dad: 'God showed you a screen on the sky of the Heavens and waved his magical hands. Lo and behold! The faces of many Moms and Dads started appearing on the screen.'

Boy: 'How many ... so many (looked at his Mom and spread his arms wide)'

Mom: 'Yes' (she smiled). 'So many!'

Dad: 'You saw so many Moms and out of so many them, you chose your Mom.'

Boy: (Throwing a kiss to his Mom) 'I love you, Mama.' (This time, Mom was left wiping her tears.)

Dad (looking at Mom's face): 'Ok, ok, back to the story my dears! Once you had chosen the Mom at God's palace as your Mom, you chose Me as your Dad (his voice almost cracked here). God separated our pictures and said happily- "Great! They are going to be your Mom and Dad on earth."

Boy: 'Oh Boy (he got very excited)! Wow! What next, Dad?'

Dad: 'What next! You just wanted to come running to us, so you asked God how you were going to meet us. God said, "Have patience my child. Have patience!"

Boy: 'Patience? What is that?'

Dad: 'Patience means that you had to wait without any rush. So, he said, "At the moment your would-be parents are studying. They have to meet and then decide to get married. Once they do so, they have to decide to bring an addition to their family.'

Boy: 'Oh, so much of hassle! Why could I not come to you immediately?'

Dad: 'Well, you said that to God also and God told you with a smile, "My beloved, there are rules even in the house of Gods. So, you will go to them only when they want a child in the family."

Boy: 'Ok, so Mom and Dad, you got married and then I came to you.'

Dad: 'Not so soon, my dear son! Your Mom and I were living in different cities. As God told you, to become a family we had to come to this city and get permission from our parents to get married and then live together. Once we started living together, worked hard, got ready to decide and to receive a child from God's house.'

Boy: 'So, I came to you?'

Dad: 'Not really, if we were preparing to receive you here, you were working hard there, my boy.'

Boy: 'Oh really!'

Dad: 'Yes, the rule in God's house is this. Once Moms and Dads like us decide to receive a baby from God's palace, a Door of Parent's Lap opens in God's Hall of Angels.'

Boy: 'Hall of Angels! Hall of Angels?'

Dad: (laughing) 'Yes, the Hall of Angels! In the Hall of Angels, those like you who have chosen to go to parents like us gather together. They are all called angels, special angels.'

Boy: (Impatiently) 'So, I am also an angel from God's Hall of Angels!'

Dad: 'Yes, all these angels had also chosen us to be their Mom & Dad.'

Boy: 'Wait, wait, Papa, wait!'

Dad: 'Yes, son?'

Boy: 'I don't understand this. If they chose you as their Mom and Dad, then how come I am your son?'

(Dad, along with Mom who was now interested in Dad's narration, laughed heartily.)

Dad continued: 'Ha! Ha! Ha! I have not finished, my child! Let us go ahead.'

Boy: 'Ok, sorry! What then?'

Dad: 'I forgot!! Where were we?'

Boy: 'I came to the Hall of Angels.'

Dad: 'Yes, the Hall of Angels! So, all the angels gather there and God's Minister of Birthdays tells them the rule about the Door of the Parent's Lap. The door has "Nine Leaps of Completion" to reach it. The Door of Parent's Lap opens with a flash in the sky. As soon as the door opens, all the angels have to rush to the door. While they are running towards the door, they have to keep chanting, "I love you, Mom, I love you Dad" and reach the door stepping on Nine Leaps of Completion.'

(The boy was left with his mouth agape at this eye-opening revelation.)

Boy: 'Nine leaps, I love you Mom, I love you Dad!'

Dad: 'Yes, you raced fast, in fact you were the fastest!'

Boy: 'Fastest! You mean, I came first in the race.'

Dad: 'Yes, my son! You came first in that race too. As soon as you reached the Door of Parents' Lap, God, who was waiting there, held your hand and ushered you in.'

Boy: 'Ushered?'

Dad: 'Ushered means that he welcomed you and brought you in through that door. As soon as God brought you in through that door, you came onto your Mom's lap like a little, beautiful **rosy** baby.'

Boy: 'Pink, I was pink when I came to Mama's lap.' (Looking at his Mom) 'Mama, was I pink when I came to you?'

Mama: 'Yes, my darling!'

Boy: 'I love you, Mama!'

Dad: 'Yes, so you were pink when you came on Mama's lap and that is called "birth of a baby". Mom worked very hard to receive you carefully. Before God brought you to Mamma's lap, He said to your Mom & Dad, "Hear O Parents, here I give my very special angel. Promise, that you will take good care of him and send him to a very special school."

Boy: 'Wow! God said that!'

Dad: 'Yes!'

Boy: 'And you promised that?'

Dad: 'We promised God that we will take real good care of you and send you to a very, very special school. And here you are. At a very special school, "Your School".

Boy: 'Wow! So, my school is a school of angels!'

Dad: 'Yes, our dear!'

Boy: 'And all my friends there are angels from God's Palace?'

Dad: 'Yes, our dear!'

Boy: 'And all of them came first to come to this Earth?'

Dad: 'Yes, our dear!'

The boy suddenly noticed his Dad's voice becoming heavy. He looked at his dad and saw him wiping his tears. He went to his dad and nestling his head in his Dad's warm embrace, he went off to sleep singing, "I love you Mom, I love you Dad."

About the Writer

Dr. Naval Chandra Pant, a graduate in Mathematical Statistics, switched to Educational Philosophy for his Post Graduation and Ph.D. His area of interest is Effective Learning and Teaching Methods for School Children.

He is the Founder of PYSSUM (www.pyssum.org), an organization working for Children and Adults with Special Needs in Lucknow. Established in 2005, PYSSUM believes in inclusive and quality education.



Fowlers

(i)

“Listen to this,” Wifey went into her act as soon as I got back from office, “Ma has issued a fresh decree today. Jeeji’s birds have to be brought back here.”

Jeeji had died a fortnight ago. At her husband’s place. The husband she had acquired five months back. Of her own accord. Through a court marriage. Despite my disapproval.

“Do not tick me off with Ma’s ridiculous whims!” I was irritated, “Get me my evening tea.”

“As if it pleases me to listen to her rubbish all day long.”

“Okay now, stop, I shall go to her right away and tell her to behave...”

Ma was reading *The Ramayana* in her room.

“What will satisfy you, Ma?” I shouted at her, “First you said we have to bear the funeral expenses and I bore them. Then you said we have to dash clothes and cash for that loathsome family and I went ahead with that rigmarole too. What is this new rubbish regarding the birds now?”

“You tell me,” Jeeji’s death had taken the lid off Ma, “If those birds perish there, can Prabha’s soul rest in peace?”

“And you tell me, Ma,” I fumed, “Should Varsha stop taking care of Vishu and start taking care of those birds instead?”

Our son, Vishu, was two years old then.

“I will take care of them, not Varsha.”

“You? But how?”

A stroke had left her left side paralysed. Three months ago.

“I shall, I will,” she wept.

“Do not argue with Ma,” Wifey came into the room with a changed strategy. She feared my indignation against Ma may disappear if I continued to stay there. “Come and watch TV with Vishu while I prepare a snack for the tea...”

(ii)

I see Jeeji that night wandering in a tall building with me...

Halting suddenly in front of a door....

‘Come,’ I pull her by her arm...

‘Want to see the dark?’ she asks, bringing into play the same playful manner when, as a child she would wave her water brush over her magic drawing book and ask, ‘Want to see magic? with each stroke manifesting colored figures on blank pages...

‘No,’ I get scared,

‘Let’s go...’, says she.

We move towards another door that opens into the light...

A large crowd is gathered there, helter-skelter.

Jeeji turns back abruptly...

‘What is it?’ I follow her.

‘Satish is looking for me,’ she goes straight ahead, leading herself away from the crowd...

“Which Satish?” I forget Satish is her husband’s name.

‘He will jump down my throat if he sees me,’ she whispers.

I turn to the crowd...

It is organized now...

Seated on chairs arranged in neat rows.

I begin to recognize the chairs...

These had been hired by Satish...

On the occasion of Jeeji's '*Rasam Kiriya*'.

For two hours only...

I dash pell-mell towards Jeeji...

(iii)

I woke up with a start.

Wifey and Vishu were sound asleep. Lying on our bed, beside me.

I looked up at the clock.

It was half-past three.

I got out of the bed and went to the courtyard.

The light meandering from the street-lamps lent long shadows to the flower-pots. With some of their outside edges joining each other upon the paved floor of the court-yard.

I do not remember how long ago it was when Jeeji and I were playing hide-and-seek, one night, under Father's supervision and it was Jeeji's turn to hide and mine to seek. I had failed to locate her anywhere inside the house and had just about begun to scream when she appeared forthwith.

'Where were you?' I had asked.

'In the court-yard', she had giggled.

'In the dark?'

These street lamps came much later.

'I am not afraid of the dark.' She had replied.

'Nor should you be,' Father had taken my hand in his, 'the dark is a trusted ally. It gives us such a grand cover...'

I leaned against the wall and began to cry.

Ma switched the light on in her room.

“Do you want something Ma?” I went to her.

“Yes, I saw Prabha again. Looking for her birds. They ought to be fetched back.”

Jeeji had been gung ho about her birds. She had come into them through father. She was nine years older than me and had therefore spent more time with him. I was only ten when Father died.

“Does she appear to you, Ma?” I sat down on her bed.

“Yes, she does, many-a-time,” Ma started crying, “All the more now. Always looking for her birds...”

“She appeared to me too,” I cried along with Ma, “just a while ago. I will certainly go to Satish’s place as soon as day breaks and bring her birds here...”

I raised Ma’s hands to my lips and kissed it.

“Will you?” She was aflame with excitement.

“Yes,” I said.

(iv)

I did not go back to my room.

From Ma’s room I came to the drawing room and stayed there till the livid September night departed.

I knew Satish left his house every morning at seven sharp. For his golf.

I wanted to catch him before seven o’clock...

(v)

“Saahib is at home, isn’t he?” I reached Satish’s house at ten to seven.

“Yes, Saahib is in,” said the servant, who had come to answer the front door.

“Who is it?” Satish called out from his verandah.

“It is me,” I strode up to him.

His hands froze at the laces of the sports shoes that he was putting on.

A widower twice over in two years, he yet had the swagger of a dandy in his manner and attire.

“Cheese it,” all at once a cat came from inside and leapt at me with a little girl following it into the verandah.

She was Satish’s youngest daughter, between five and six.

“Please take her away,” I said.

I had a limited acquaintance with Satish’s daughters. They were three of them; the eldest, a young woman of sixteen. I had always managed to stay away from home during their occasional visits.

“Come Mausī, come,” the girl took the cat away from me.

“You call it ‘Mausī’?” I was aghast. The word ‘Mausī’ had discomfited me.

“Yes”, the girl giggled.

It was a long-haired cat, its head larger than the girl’s. It was shaded grey, with its shades running gradually down its sides, face and tail. From dark on the edge to white on chin, chest and belly. Its eyes were green, whose rims were out-lined with black. The centre of its nose was brick-red.

“Has it kitted?” I had heard cat reproduce anytime between seven and twelve months.

“No way,” the girl almost screamed, “she is not a day older than five months. We got her the day your sister came to live with us...”

“Go inside, Chulbul,” Satish did not let the girl stick around.

“Say Cheerio to Pa, Mausī,” the girl tossed another cheerio in the air and disappeared with her cat.

“What brings you here?” Satish turned to me.

“Ma has sent me,” I seated myself opposite him.

“For?” Satish asked brusquely.

“For the birds,” I said.

“Which birds?” he looked askance at me.

“Jeeji’s birds,” I said.

“Those teensy-weensy tweety-birds?” The servant burst out laughing.

“Yes. Those birds,” I stiffened.

“They died within a month or two of their stay here,” said the servant.

“How?” I bounced off the walls.

“Some poisonous seed-corn got mixed in their pickings,” Satish returned to his shoe laces.

“By mistake” added the servant.

“Whose mistake?” I brushed aside the tears, welling up in my eyes.

“Nobody’s mistake,” Satish shook his head, “Just one of those things. I wonder why Prabha never mentioned this to you...”

“She had never mentioned the cat either,” I said-“May I see the place where they lived? Their dovecot?”

I wanted a pretext to have a look at the interior of the place where Jeeji had spent her last days.

“That dovecot?” laughed the servant again, “How long could that structure last? It got dismantled soon enough...”

“And that corner?” I persisted.

“That corner is now Mausī’s domain, the cat’s territory,” said the servant.

“Anything else?” Satish stood up from his chair, “I have to leave now. For my golf...”

“No, nothing,” I, too, rose.

Satish offered his right hand to me by way of a farewell.

I did not accept it.

Instead I raised both my hands up in a Namaskaar. I preferred that to a handshake with that bum.

(vi)

I could not, in all conscience, go home-empty handed.

It was impossible to bounce the disappearance of the birds around with Ma.

I advanced my scooter in the direction of the Bird-Bazaar.

I bought three pairs each of Jeeji's favourite humming-birds and waxbills. I also bought a box for them and loaded them all into a rickshaw and started for home.

"Terrific!" exploded Wifey the moment she saw me, "Splendid! Here comes the Mama's Boy! Doughty and obedient! Never questioning the whys and wherefores of her decrees! She says the maika has to arrange the kaath-kafan of the wayward daughter of the house and he does it. She says he has to dole out more money at her Rasam Kiriya. He does that too and now after a fortnight she tells him to fetch these damned birds and he goes ahead with that too and fetches them... That's all I needed now!"

"What do you know?" I blew off steam, "when Father died Jeeji was only nineteen! Studying for her post-graduation. But she discarded her studies and took up that job in Father's office. To gut it out for whom?"

"Fancy that!" Wifey hit the roof again "What the heck! Now you talk your head off about Jeeji this and Jeeji that! In high stepper!! Forgetting you held no brief for her when she got hitched to that high-stepper, that boss of hers..."

"Go and chase yourself," I was caught short.

"And how! With these birds jerking me around? Expecting me to feed and nurse them?"

"Cut out your jibber-jabber now," I shouted, "let me go to Ma..."

(vii)

“These are not Prabha’s birds,” Ma raised herself with my help and inspected them, “Are these waxbills? And these their red munia? No chance. These are lapwings who have been painted red. And look at these! These are not Prabha’s humming-birds. And no mistake. Look at those bills! Their wings! Prabha’s birds had long bills. Almost like swords. Occupying half the length of the birds themselves. And their wings were long and blade-like. In their flight they moved upward, downward, sideways and even backward, whereas these birds stay put when I put them down and ask them to fly...”

“Surely you can take them back to that high-stepper,” Wifey was tickled pink, “After all he must know we won’t buy his jiggery-pokery...”

“What do you say, Ma?” I looked at Ma.

“Surely they should be deposited back at Satish’s place,” Ma’s was an instant reply, “And he must explain what happened to Prabha’s birds...”

“Yes Ma,” on the instant I left the house with the birds.

To hit out for the Bird-Bazaar a second time.

About the Writer

Deepak Sharma born in 1946, published 21 collections of short stories in Hindi including *Hinsabhas* (1993) *Ghoda ek Pair* (2009), *Tal-ghar* (2011) and *Pichali Ghaas* (2021). She retired as Reader and Head of the Post-graduate Department of English from Lucknow Christian P.G. College, Lucknow. She lives in Lucknow. She has been awarded Sahitya Bhushan by Uttar Pradesh Hindi Sansthaan for contribution to Hindi literature. Her stories have been broadcast by AIR, Lucknow & Delhi.



About the Translator

Dr. Vinita Prakash is a former Associate Professor and Head of the Post-Graduate Department of English at Lucknow Christian College, Lucknow and presently, the Principal of Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. She holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Lucknow. She has presented several research papers and delivered many guest lectures at various national and international seminars and conferences. She lives in Lucknow.



The Untouchable Ganesha

“I have been living all alone for ten years for the sake of my child.” Thus, she began her narrative in a sad tone, confiding in me. I never expected that she would take me into confidence with so much audacity and conviction. I befriended her recently at a two-week Yoga Camp.

She was Sunita. Her name sounded elegant. Brown, medium-sized, she came up to my ears when she stood. She was a school assistant at a private residential school in Vidyanagar, three kilometres from the place where I had been living for long, almost five years.

When she attended the camp, she was silent, reticent, and buckled. She rarely mingled with other participants. After practice, she would quietly walk away with her folded mat. She was punctual and cooperative.

One day when she appeared gloomy and dispossessed, I took the unusual liberty to probe into her private life. It was morning, the practice classes were over; the sun rose little high, yet the pinch of chill had not been completely dissipated.

When she said that she had been living all alone because of her child, I could not understand the implication.

“Who is this child?” I asked her. She did not mind my intrusive behaviour. All practitioners had left, and we were left in the spacious hall which I hired for the camp.

“He is Ganesha. I named him so. Because of him, I was turned down by my husband who no longer lives with me. Where he lives, I do not know. Ours was a love marriage. He is Rakesh from Sholapur. We studied B.Ed. together at a college in Kadapa. We fell in love and married against my parents’ wishes. Three years after marriage, a child was born with unbelievable features. The doctors called it microcephaly, a rare, incurable condition in which the head of the baby is abnormally small. It is caused by an obscure mosquito-borne virus called zika. The virus got its name from the zika forest in Uganda, Africa, I am told, where it was first identified in rhesus monkeys in 1947. Later it was reported in humans in 1952 but was unknown to India. The virus is transmitted by the mosquito which is also responsible for the spread of dengue and chikungunya. I am told that there is no medicine as yet to treat this disease. After the child’s birth, my husband was disgusted with it. He told me I should abandon the child and live with him. I opposed, and the arguments ensued that led to heated quarrels. One day, he said firmly and shamelessly that he would not allow me to step into

the house with the child. He insisted that if I wanted to live with him forever, I should give up the child. I tried to convince him since this was the first child. I told him to accept the arguments. He remained obdurate and would not allow me to live with him. As I could not snap the umbilical cord, I told him that I would not live for a moment without the child. That was the end and our relationship broke off. I was driven out and all my belongings were thrown out. I collected them and made my way to a home for the deserted which gave me shelter and I started making my living. I named the child Ganesha because this god has a deformity of head. But for this deformity, Ganesha is active. He listens and receives my lessons. He is undersized for his age. His intelligence is low. He mutters, but does not speak properly. He plays with none as no one of his age treats him as a fellow mate. Thus, he has become an untouchable Ganesha.”

“Can I see your son now?” I asked her pleadingly.

At my request, she nodded her head. No sooner had she given her consent than we walked briskly and headed towards the home with the deserted women in Saraswati Nagar abetting the vast unclaimed land facing the North, the Hills.

The twenty- minute walk was bereft of any conversation between us. Nothing transpired. The sun rose sharply; the rays sweeping the houses and trees all along.

At home, I was led into a room in the east after unlocking the door. At one corner facing east, a small table was noticed. On it was a stove, beneath it a gas cylinder. On the other side was a wooden stand with four compartments filled with utensils and small containers. There was no cot, as the room was small. On the other side of the room, facing the kitchen table, was the bare floor and on it a mat was stretched. Another old wooden stand was standing and on it were hung a few clothes.

“Where is Ganesha?”

Instead, she brought me a glass of water. I held it and took a sip as she moved away from me a little to the left, opened a box and removed a brown cover. She turned to me and showed me the photo of her son, and said, “Here is my son.”

I was devastated and speechless.

About the Writer

Poet, short story writer, novelist, book reviewer, and critic, **K.V. Raghupathi** holds a PhD degree in English Literature and writes in English. He has taught at Central University of Tamil Nadu, Thiruvavur. Since the early 1980s, when he began writing, he has published twelve poetry collections, two short story collections, two novels, eight critical/edited books besides five books on Yoga, and many stimulating and thought-provoking articles in various international journals, both online and print. He is a recipient of several awards for his creativity at the national level. He lives in Tirupati, AP and can be reached at E mail: drkvraghupathi9@gmail.com



Non-Fiction

**"We write to taste
life twice, in the
moment and in
retrospect."**

- Anaïs Nin

Tagged

Disability! A tag? An icon? For whom? For those who challenge the need to certify the privileged position of the non-disabled individual who lives under constant fear of the fragility of his status of ableism.

According to Rosi Braidotti, our cultural arena is divided between ‘his self and his many others’, where the ‘self’ of an embodied man is considered to be white-skinned, urbanized, heterosexual with spontaneous speech of a standard language and ideal citizen of some political unit. This is the ideal mirror that is used to fit our figures in, to get a tag, or become an icon of ableism.

The network of social discourses, societal norms, behavioral codes, and mannerisms that is woven around disability is in no way a protective cover but is an invisible cage that is constructed to protect the fragile ableism from being shattered by the challenges posed by disablism.

In cultural models, Goodley illuminated how impairment and disability are modeled by various charities, sciences, and dominant cultures to displace disabled people psychologically, far away from the edifice of normalcy by bracketing them, or rather enclosing them in a miniature construct to inhibit them from realizing their potentialities.

According to Davis, disabled people are the significant modality through which we can understand the phenomenon of exclusion as well as diversity and inclusion. They are the intersectional subjects.

Disability is only one of many strata of personality, existence, or identity and mode of lifestyle due to which sometimes a person has to deal with more barriers than others. According to Thomas, “Disablism is a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered, and undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being.”

The disability community itself has diverse perspectives and though it is confusing, it is not beyond comprehension. The thought processes and life experiences diversify the patterns of reaction and response in disabled people.

First and foremost, the type of disability that one is suffering from, defines his personality. Physical, sensory, cognitive, mental health, and learning disability can be categorized broadly whereas cerebral palsy, depression, anxiety and many such can be enlisted as specific ones. Each of

these provides the person suffering from it, with a characteristic mode of behavior. Next, the difference comes with the length of time for which a person has a disability, that is, whether he is born disabled or made disabled, and in the latter case how he acquired disability, whether due to illness or accidentally or due to senescence. Whether a person is born or made disabled, each experience in life comes in a variegated form whether it is a sense of loss and identity, or hope and despair. Next, the intersectional nature of disability comes into existence when it gets aligned with other categories of discrimination and experiences of marginality. Intersectionality explores the convergence and divergence of multiple markers, such as disability, race, gender, class, and sexuality. Next, behavioral variation in a person with a disability is molded by his interpretation of disability which is based on a long range of disability-related writings, discussions, and activities. For instance, the ‘Medical Model’ of disability considers it as a set of impairments that could be treated to make a person’s functioning normally; Whereas, the ‘Social Model’ considers disability as a matter of fighting against discrimination to gain equality on one’s terms. Thus, the Medical Model prepares the individual with a disability to shoulder the responsibility for treatment whereas the Social Model prepares one for collective effort to make society better and more inclusive for people with disabilities.

Disability inclusion, that is, to include people with disabilities in everyday activities and helping them to acquire roles similar to their peers with ableism, not only requires encouragement but also the assumption that befitting practices and policies are in effect in workplaces such as communities, organizations or institutions. Inclusion also enwraps participation in various life roles such as being a student, worker, spouse, or parent, or even a sports person. Socially expected activities call for participation by the people with disabilities using public resources such as libraries and transportations.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, people “...with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Creating a disability-friendly culture that is favorable and supportive to people with disabilities is vital in overcoming biases and stereotypes.

About the Author

Richa Agrawal holds a D.Phil. in English Literature from the Department of English & Modern European Languages, University of Allahabad. Her thesis was titled *English Translations of the Ramayana: A Comparative Study*. She is the author of the book, *The Cherry Orchard: A Critical Study*. She has received high appreciation for her research paper “Rama: An Ecotourist”.



Repercussions of Covid-19 on Students with Disabilities

As a social researcher, I have always been keen to learn about social problems which exist in our society. I got an opportunity to attend a webinar on the challenges faced by students with disabilities which reflected that education in the disability sector has come to a standstill since the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the representatives from the schools and non-governmental organizations stated that during the lockdown period, study materials became inaccessible. In certain States, the teachers in government schools were allotted election duty. There was no means of communication, schools were not operating, there was a lack of information on how to enable technology, and no training for parents to help the students.

There was a complete exclusion of students with disabilities in terms of their physical, emotional, and social well-being. In the physical aspect, there was no activity for children or therapy in government schools. Emotionally, children were unable to voice their opinion which leads to frustration and manifested behavioral issues in them. The parents were incapable of identifying these behavioral issues. Many children showed suicidal tendencies. In the social aspect, children with disabilities could not go out. Their support circle was cut off and they did not have the guidance of their teachers. The impact on students with dual disabilities was a multitude. The struggle is huge because these students required high support in teaching strategies and modes of communication. This includes sign language, basic therapy, daily living skills, academics, orientation on mobility, and Braille. In most Government schools interpreters are not absorbed so online support could not be extended. Parents used gestures which confused communication. The inconsistency in approaches lead to severe behavioral patterns and a lack of therapeutic support resulted in deterioration and de-learning among children. Many of these children had comorbid conditions and needed adequate medical and nutritional support. They faced difficulties in the lockdown when parents lost their jobs. The lack of resources was the primary struggle for these students to afford smartphones and internet data packs.

The UNICEF's Universal Design for Learning provides a list of guidelines, software, and content. Many universities and schools trained parents through video conferences about how they can help their children. In some schools, parents were asked to take videos of the children and send them to the teachers. These videos were shown to professionals who suggested changes that turned out to be helpful for the children. Children with disabilities are taking a step back due to the

education gap. They are losing their acquired skills so we need to design solutions that would perpetuate their learning information.

Covid-19 exposed the cracks which existed. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the solutions so that education is accessible to everyone as it is an individual's fundamental right. It was suggested that organizations working for the welfare of the disabled have come up with several surveys and these reports can be taken to the Supreme Court so that legal action could be taken. There is a need to invest in different modes and devices of learning such as the internet and smartphone. The non-availability of smartphones and reliable networks was a challenge and the government should provide basic smartphones. In some cases, the awareness video on Covid-19 created in sign language and similar positive work done by the organization was helpful.

We must continue to build the capacity of service users, parents, educators, coordinators, and staff through online modules. It is essential to enhance the use of technology and the internet in reaching out to more service users, parents, and other stakeholders. As online education would be the norm, efforts must be made to provide smartphones, devices, and technology. It was suggested that this could be a Corporate Social Responsibility project of a company or the initiative of the Government. It is essential to take into account the mental health and psychological support of caretakers. In most cases parents and students are the caretakers therefore support must be easy to avail.

We are still in the middle of the pandemic yet there is a lack of information about inclusive education in schools. There is an urgent need for the training of teachers so that they are in a position to handle special students. It was seen that although the structures existed, they were broken. A proactive and collaborative measure from the Government is indispensable so that the institutions can work together during a crisis. Budget allocation in this sector could be useful in such situations. The importance of resource mobilization and preparedness to have a structure to deal with emergencies in the future is undeniable. When the world is striving to be inclusive to accommodate diverse and vulnerable people, this seems to be an unfortunate circumstance.

About the Author

Amrita Chanda is working as a Consultant at Sruti Disability Rights Centre based in Kolkata. She has pursued Master of Social Policy from the University of Melbourne and Master of Social Work from Christ (Deemed to be University). Some of her projects include working towards flexible work arrangements in India, the need for policy intervention, spiritual management at the workplace, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of employees in the workplace, etc. Her interests lie in the social development field and inclusive policy management.



Disability: Confronting Discrimination

The World Report on Disability published by the World Health Organization and the World Bank in 2011 estimates that about one billion people around the globe have some form of disability. Cambridge University describes disability as “a physical or mental condition that makes someone unable to act in a way that is considered usual for most people.” This diversion from the ‘usual’ encompasses a wide array of physical, mental, intellectual, and cognitive limitations.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 classifies disabilities as follows:

I. Physical Disability

1. Locomotor Disability

- Leprosy cured person
- Cerebral palsy
- Dwarfism
- Muscular dystrophy
- Acid attack victims

2. Visual Impairment

- Blindness
- Low vision

3. Hearing Impairment

- Deaf
- Hard of hearing

4. Speech and language disability

II. Intellectual Disability

- Specific learning disabilities
- Autism spectrum disorder

III. Mental behavior (Mental illness)

IV. Disability caused due to

1. Chronic neurological conditions

- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease

2. Blood disorder

- Haemophilia
- Thalassemia
- Sickle cell disease

V. Multiple Disabilities

VI. Any other category as may be notified by the Central Government

There is heterogeneity among the disabled which goes beyond the typical forms of disability mostly recognized by society, like the blind, the deaf, or people on wheelchairs. A disability can range from a child taking birth with congenital anomalies like Down syndrome to an adult who has lost his arm in an accident or an elderly man with dementia. Each of these categories of disability has its own set of challenges, strengths, and weaknesses, and also discrimination and stereotypes. Also, not all disabilities carry the same amount of disadvantage in a particular setting. Furthermore, people with disabilities may have diverse differences in race, gender, and socio-economic status that may put them in a more disadvantaged position than others. The above classification draws attention to the diversity in the disabled community but there is more to diversity in disability than just categorization. A large number of disabled people often not only fight with health issues but also ableism frequently. Ironically, discrimination exists inside the disabled community too. There exists a 'hierarchy of disability, where a person with a certain kind of disability tries to assert a sense of superiority over another person with a different form of disability to boost their confidence. Also, there is 'Oppression Olympics' within the disabled community as well where one group of disabled people try to seek validation from others by downplaying the challenges and difficulties faced by people with other forms of disability.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) presents a 'bio-psycho-social model' of disability which is a dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual factors, both personal and environmental. It is a blend between the medical model and the social model of disability. The environmental factors in the classification include attributes like technology, natural and created environment, relationships, policies, etc. The classification also includes 'participation restrictions' arising from factors like discrimination contributing to disability

in a person. Under personal factors are included motivation and self-esteem. This highlights how social acceptance and positive environmental modifications can constructively influence disability and promote 'inclusion' of disabled people in employment areas, businesses, education, and communication among other things. The inclusion of skilled individuals with diverse forms of disability in employment areas and businesses not only improves the productivity of the disabled individual but also augments the performance of the organization.

The International Labour Organization outlines the below-mentioned steps for better participation and inclusion of disabled individuals at workplaces:

1. Making disability a company policy for recruitment.
2. Making sure that disabled employees have full access to training activities as other employees.
3. If someone becomes disabled during his/her employment in an organization a disability management program should be in place to avoid absence from work.
4. Asking suppliers at a company to comply with disability legislation.
5. Including disabled workers in employee networks along with people without disabilities.
6. Publicize your disability inclusion initiatives and disability diversity so that others may follow through.

Apart from these, the external environment at a workplace and in the community, in general, can be modified to make it more disability-friendly. This can be brought about by changes in policies and legislation and by using technology to provide better accessibility. For example, wheelchair accessibility, hearing aid, transport arrangements, providing options to work from home, sign for the sensory impaired, better health accessibility, education, rehabilitation, and support services. There should also be Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programs to alter the negative attitudes of people towards individuals with disabilities to bring about the best in each person irrespective of their physical, mental or, intellectual abilities and disabilities and create a society where every one of us is valued.

About the Author

Dr. Nida Hamid holds a post-graduate degree in Public Health Dentistry. She has worked in research as well as clinical fields in various organizations and has several research publications to her credit in national and international scientific journals. She is currently working as a Dental Officer at ECHS Polyclinic, Almora.



Real Lives

**"A man with
outward courage
dares to die; a man
with inner courage
dares to live."**

- Lao Tzu

Nirbhay- The Fearless Buddha

‘Inclusion’, ‘diversity’, ‘different’... these are words we encounter day in and day out. What they really mean ... let us understand from the life experiences of a person with diverse or special or different needs.

Hello everyone, I am Nirbhay Yadav. I am going to be twenty one in December this year. It is beautiful to grow up, isn't it? But for me is it the same? Let me take you through a journey down memory lane. I am a second born and I am the only child. My mom is a single mom and she knew before my birth that I am going to be different.. umm rather very different. She chose to give me birth- was that easy? NO, it was very tough. She chose to keep me with her and leave her family and home for me- was that easy? NO, It was enormously tough. Were my early days smooth sailing? No, I spent my first seven years majorly in the hospital which slowly decreased to four to five visits and then one to two visits (here visit means occurrence of severe conditions and hospitalization- sometimes even ICU admission). So a lot of challenges medically and physically we faced but the biggest challenge was with the attitude of the society. We faced rejection and discrimination on multiple levels and I never understood why I should not get all those opportunities which any one of you can easily access. Why should I be included – Am I not INCLUDED already? Where did I take birth? I was born in a so called neurotypical family and this family was part of the same society, but why was I looked down on and looked at differently? Is it because I have different needs or I look different? But don't all of you have different needs and look different from each other? I am a part of this very same society and I don't want to be included as I don't believe that I am excluded. Yes I don't get opportunities like you all, you must have many friends that are your age, I have none, my mom and her friends are my friends. You must enjoy going out and partying, I too love all this but no one invites me and because of me no one invites my mom too. When we throw a party at our home, no aunty brings her children to our house. You know I have a great music sense and I love to play the synthesizer but I play my own music which only my mom appreciates, for others it's just playing with keys, not exactly playing music. I love to listen to romantic songs, I am very romantic in nature, but no luck, I don't have any girl friend, but my mom is my BGFF (best girl friend for ever).

Basically I am like any other twenty one year old boy. It is just that I learn and communicate differently. Why do I need to fight for my inclusion? I am already a part of the society and I should be counted as an included member and I should be able to get what I am supposed to get. Tell me one thing, do you all wear the same colour in the same style and same clothes everyday or do you eat the same food everyday or do you wish to have only one type of flower in your garden? Don't you like va-

riety? then why do we get so uncomfortable with seeing variety in human beings? Just think if the whole family and neighbourhood and all your relatives and friends start looking like you, behaving like you, have the same food habits, same clothes and same thoughts, hobbies and likings, will you be able to survive in that environment for long? Will you feel happy and good about it or you will yearn for something different?

Our presence is actually like a cool breeze and hot tea. We provide you all with an opportunity to get a better understanding of human beings and human behaviour; we give you an opportunity to learn about differences and diversity and to appreciate those differences. I am learning to be independent, as my mom says to me, “Nirbhay, you will earn for yourself, I am not going to feed you after that” and believe me I will do that. It is because I belong to this same society and it belongs to me as well. I don't need a parallel world to be created for me, I want this same world, bad or good whatever it is.

Thank you For reading.

Yours Only,

Laughing Buddha

A.k.a Nirbhay



About the Author

Arpita Yadav and her son, Nirbhay Yadav are a loving family of two. Arpita is a social worker actively engaged in issues surrounding gender, disability and sexuality in the sectors of education, employment and legal/policy frameworks. She has worked with organizations such as AADI (Action for Ability Development and Inclusion) and DISHA (A resource centre for multiple disabilities). She has written the article on behalf of her son Nirbhay,



who is an independent twenty one year old who overcame a rare neurometabolic disorder. Nirbhay is soon to be economically independent and is described by his mother as a “happiness giver”, a “music lover” and her “mentor and Guru”.

Never Give Up

I am a blessed mother of two special children. All kids are special to their parents but my children are special in a different way- My elder daughter has hearing impairment whereas my younger son is autistic. I, as a mother found out the special abilities in my children and nourished them to achieve their goals.

Life has never been kind to us but the 'Never Give Up' slogan has helped us stand strong in all the consequences that came our way and yes, it would never have been possible without our togetherness... My children, my husband and I always stand for each other. I am a non-practicing pathologist, my husband is a lawyer, my daughter is a national-level Bharatanatyam dancer, a yoga instructor, a makeup artist, an aspiring model and an art teacher. Along with this, she owns an online, hand-made jewellery business, whereas my son is focused on reaching his goal of doing PhD in Mathematics but at present, he is doing his masters in Mathematics.



My daughter was around six months old when we discovered that she was hard of hearing so she had to undergo many tests and when she was almost one year and eight months old, she started wearing hearing aids, and after that, speech therapy, special training and school life started; meanwhile my son was born. He used to respond to sounds but was not responding to his name or any commands, so again we had some doubt that there would be some issues with him. His tests came in and he was diagnosed with autism.

My daughter took pre-school training from The Central School for the Deaf. Her schooling had started late and there weren't any proper schools for special needs in the city where we were based, so when she was just three years and five months old, for her special training we had to travel daily for four hours up and down; later when my son was diagnosed I used to travel with both the kids to Mumbai for special training. To reach our destination, we had to change two trains and then travel by bus or taxi. This journey continued for two years and after the pre-school training I got both chil-

dren admitted in a regular school. My daughter who had learnt lip reading used to sit on the first bench and lip read her teacher- that helped her to cope up in her school life. Simultaneously, my son slowly and steadily was adjusting to school life too, my son who was non-verbal till the age of four, later on started speaking and doing well in his academics. He always used to top his class.

Along with their regular schooling my daughter who had a passion for dancing was admitted to Bharatanatyam classes whereas my son became more friendly with books. Both children have gone through different medical issues from their childhood. My daughter from the age of one, was suffering from severe migraine attacks and used to get admitted to the hospital. Later on when she was twelve years old, she started to face issues with low blood pressure; whereas my son at the age of seven, was first detected with celiac disease and then after biopsy, was diagnosed with early stage of intestinal cancer. After treatment for six months, my son recovered from his issues but till date, he has to maintain a restricted diet. Facing different issues has taught us never to give up. These difficulties in life made us stronger and stronger.

As days passed by, my daughter completed her twelfth class, she later on did a diploma in Nrityayog Sutra, completed her Art teacher training (she has been conducting different Art workshops in a school for children with special needs), she completed an advanced course in Bharatanatyam and has now performed in more than thirty five stage shows (she is blessed with many awards for her achievements). She has stood first in India in an online dance competition organised by Le Rhythm affiliated by Ministry of culture, India; Apart from this she has done modeling for Tribes India, a government brand and also owns her own handmade jewellery business for the past six years. Her journey with her jewellery making, dance shows, modeling assignments will keep on growing and she needs everyone's good wishes for that.



My son, who apart from being autistic, is good in academics and has bagged more than thirty different scholarships till date; He is an NTS scholarship holder, he has topped India in the KVPY scholarship, his JEE rank is sixteen (PWD); At present he is doing his Master's in Mathematics; He has been independent for the past six years, managing all his expenses on his own and has a wish to do a PhD in Mathematics, so he too needs everyone's best wishes.

Life has never been an easy game for us but the 'Never Give Up' slogan in our family has helped us to stand strong always.

About the Author

Archana Suresh Patil is a non-practicing pathologist, blessed mother of two special children, parent counsellor and motivational speaker. She has been the recipient of several awards like Best Parent, Supermom Aadhunik Hirani, Mai-lekh puraskar and Swayamsiddha. She is actively involved in talks, seminars and communication around Disability in the social and academic community.



PYSSUM- “Wonderland of Angels”

PYSSUM (Paramahansa Yogananda Society or Special Unfolding and Moulding) is a non-profit voluntary organization that caters to the needs of intellectually challenged individuals. Located in a prime area in Lucknow, the bright white building with multistory classroom spaces, a small playground, a temple, an in-house grain grinding area, an exhibition area and a physiotherapy centre, forms an efficient space for holistic education, training and development. It is this tidy space, great infrastructure and more importantly, the humble and driven people inside the building that seem to give the place a unique character and make it an inclusive centre for learning and thriving.



The pedagogy in the school is guided by the principles of Shri Paramahansa Yogananda’s philosophy. The children studying in the school are called angels, there are large portraits of Shri Yogananda across the school. There is a small, beautiful shrine next to the playground outside and there is a large assembly hall where prayers form an important part of the day for the teachers as well as students. This kind of educational practice where equality, inclusivity and healing are inspired from Indian spiritual thought and is fused into teaching methods and the classroom space, comes as a breath of fresh air in the field of education and forms a model of pedagogy worth exploring.

Class segregation is based on an initial diagnosis and evaluation following which, the angels eventually grow across pre-primary, primary first, primary secondary, pre-vocational and vocational levels. The courses are approved by the Rehabilitation Centre of India and the exams are regulated by the National Institute for Disability. The school uses wholesome, offbeat and artistic methods to train the angels and uses art as the medium to ensure the growth of the school as well as its angels. Crafts and skills like jewellery-making, printing, grinding, painting etc form





an important part of the co-curricular activities along with dance and music. This art and acquired skills are put on display through stalls that PYSSUM routinely puts up in various venues. Mrs Anju Mishra, the Principal of PYSSUM school says that the goal is to spread awareness through these stalls. She says that there is an attempt to put up stalls in spaces where sensitization is required and which can be achieved through interaction. Seeing the arts and crafts on display and interacting with the angels who manage the stalls enables people to get acquainted with their abilities, capabilities as well as limitations while also increasing outreach.



Having recently had the privilege to visit the school, I had the opportunity of meeting the people of PYSSUM. I was greeted by two smiling young boys, Mukund and Chetan. “Didi, my birthday is coming soon” and “ My nani has pain in her knee” are the first words that were spoken to me. Formal niceties and the preconceived idea of introductions and greetings were immediately thrown out of the window

and was replaced by uninhibited exchanges and the most authentic, candid smiles. The visit came post-COVID and so I was able to meet a small, mixed group of angels from various classes, sitting together. It became clear to me very soon that it was a goal-oriented classroom and peer learning was an important component. Each angel had a different set of goals, both educational and behavioural, which the teacher was closely supervising. The angels were also aware of each other’s goals and were reminding each other of what was to be done. When Chetan was asked by the Principal to show me around the campus, Mantasha, the girl sitting next to him reminded him to not touch me or anything around him. She was also helping the rest of her classmates, reminding them to wash their hands and keep their volumes low. I was told by their teacher that it was important that each angel could be independent in every way, as much as possible and that was essentially what everyone was working to-



wards. An excited Chetan proudly showed me every single item that was made and sold by the PYSSUM children and adults. My interaction with the angels was completed with a spontaneous, fun and fully choreographed dance performance to ‘Bum Bum Bole’, followed by a game of ‘chidiya urh’ in the playground. I left their company feeling happy, energized and free.

Mrs. Savita Shukla who has been a teacher at PYSSUM for eight years now, lovingly said that she was relieved the COVID lockdown was over because she deeply missed the angels and her life felt empty without them. She said “I have a very deep affection for the children here. One of them is three years old and I never get tired of hugging him. He is like my own child... I hope more and more children join our PYSSUM school. It is a wonderful place and I hope to see it grow even more in the coming years”. Mrs. Shukla said that she was inspired to join the school long ago because she had a cousin in the family who had autism and no such avenues for education that were tailored to suit his special needs could be found for him. When she heard of PYSSUM she was thrilled and having undergone two years of training and working there since she has been very happy and satisfied with her job.

The people of PYSSUM consist of a very driven Principal, trained and passionate teachers, talented and friendly angels, a team of workers such as speech therapists, physiotherapists and adults that work in the grinding area and other such vocational training spaces. It consists of parents enthusiastically involved in school activities. It consists of a number of accomplished individuals constantly involved in growing PYSSUM in keeping with the latest academic developments in disability studies. But above all, it is an ever-growing dynamic community at the core of which, are people as human beings with their own unique experiences and drives, striving to erase margins and making inclusiveness a lived reality.

My visit to PYSSUM was an educational experience on multiple levels. Most importantly, letting go of inhibitions and feeling free in my interactions made me realize that restructur-



ing of social behaviour can perhaps occur on both sides to create a new ‘normal’ which could possibly be a better mode of communication- giving us uninhibited avenues of getting across to each other. Interactions with the specially-abled are not only to be normalized but are in fact crucial for the mainstream community where attitudes and worldviews can be evolved and changed for the better. Educating and sensitizing oneself as well as being acquainted with the “abilities, capabilities and limitations” of the differently-abled, as Mrs. Anju Mishra pointed out, is what is needed and that is exactly what the PYSSUM school and community are striving to do. The positivity and passion with which this is done are what truly makes PYSSUM a wonderland of angels. Angels, both big and small, ‘different’ and ‘normal’.

About the Author

Vedamini Vikram is a research scholar currently pursuing her PhD in English from the University of Lucknow. Her areas of interest include spiritual literature, performance studies, indigenous literatures and travel literature.



Representation

My words carry a detailed visa with graphic representations
of body parts, present and missing from conversations
Every time, a new page unravels itself into fresh blank paper
waiting for the world's stamp of approval, for someone to say, please come in!
There is a special line for us, my experiences, words and stories
and we stand in queues of never-ending diversity and difference
Dear officer, do we always have to wait for our special date or month?
Why can't we enter without a visa, why is our passport different?

About the Author

Abhishek Anicca is a bilingual poet and performer. He identifies as a person with locomotor disability and chronic illness which shapes his creative endeavors. His poems have been published in Nether Quarterly, Gulmohur Quarterly, The Sunflower Collective, Indian Cultural Forum, The Alipore Post, RHiMe, Jankipul, Samalochan, Posham Pa and Apni Maati. His first Hindi poetry collection, Anrang, was published in 2019.



poetry

**"Poetry and beauty
are always making
peace. When you
read something
beautiful you find
coexistence; it
breaks walls down."**

- Mahmoud Darwish

A Lonely Story

In that still village surrounded by luxuriant fields,
like a nightjar sitting calmly,
I saw an abandoned fakir-like young lank with scruffy hair.
A stick in his hand dangling like a pendulum,
he moves, struts, ambles
murmurs himself like a parakeet.

And another lonely story I saw in my life
without any care from the world,
and I can't help but stare in my walks
at all his lonely walks
Leaving my heart dreary and cold.

For him the sun and the moon make no difference
I look at this guy in the same grubby clothes unchanged for weeks and months.
As he tries to cry out his heart
But there is none to hear, nor listen
But luck, maybe he thought
“What a world!
With so many hearts filled with no sincerity for sorrow and grief.
Surely no one will lead me back to the light.
No single man lends me a hand
in the sweetest creation of the world, I must
have lost my way as the sun doesn't shine in my eyes
the moon doesn't reflect in my eyes.
Remember, my dear
life is full of surprises and accidents
and one day
you may find yourself standing next to me.”

So,
If you see a lonely story as this

stare if you dare
and sympathy flows like an array of colours.
Finally, likely that one day
it could be you as standing next to him.

The Invalid

I know this invalid has no full life
like you and me in this broken world.
Half-naked, with perforated shawl
across his upper body, like a hanging tendril from garret.
Walking along, as old as his stick
with the only companion, black dog.
Is the disciple leading the master or the master the disciple?
He for the dog, the dog for him.
That is their world, a perfect union in imperfect world
A gift for both – mutual trust
With boundaries prohibited
destined nowhere. I know neither has full life.

About the Poet

K.V. Raghupathi is a poet, short story writer, novelist, book reviewer, and critic. He holds a Ph.D. in English Literature and writes in English. He has taught at the Central University of Tamil Nadu, Thiruvavur. Since the early 1980s, when he began writing, he has published twelve poetry collections, two short story collections, two novels, eight critical/edited books besides five books on Yoga, and many stimulating and thought-provoking articles in various international journals, both online and print. He is a recipient of several awards for his creativity at the national level. He lives in Tirupati, AP. And he can be reached at E mail: drkvraghupathi@gmail.com



being sentient being sentient being sentient being

Like fragments of trapped placenta
torn from your mother
I fester inside the insufficient,
the raggedy place
as time collapses
somewhere you beat me infant with unrequited fury
beat me with a blue plastic hair brush
inflammatory markers measure your rage
my vision cannot hold
shifting patches of non-seeing
there are no borders around
the places you thrashed me child with the bitterness of nettles
thrashed me with a fly swat
for sins I did not commit
each small bone in my spine
a worry bead disintegrating
everywhere you scolded me teenager with the venom of ten inland taipans
scold me more with a red hot tongue
branding iron pain into my hip joints
my shoulder joints polymyalgia searing rheumatica
sucks on the accumulation
of emotion repressed into my foliated gut
silenced exhausted hemiplegic words slur
where you froze me teenager with the force of an ice age
froze me with psychological permanence
wherever sentient beings are nauseous
sentient beings vomit
sentient beings take drugs

being sentient being

pain

being your pain

Revoltng Crone

A hen's-teeth crown rests gentle on my head,
wild parsley, sage and thyme festoon my hair.
I'm crow, old cow, I'm crone. My blood is bled,
this hag-faced third of life in winter's lair.
Frogs chirp. My wheelchair creaks a languid tune
among the weeds of tangled years. A haze
of bees unfolds the yellow sky at noon.
Dear friends are shadows, darkening grief a maze
of memories dulled. But I've not lost the plot.
Not yet. My wrinkles map raw dreams that scorch
and screech at heartache sold as women's lot.
I light the path with an ancient torch.
I ride hyena, pig or toothless ewe
raising my fist before the last adieu.

About the Poet

Gaele Sobott lives on Darug land in Western Sydney, Australia. Her publications include *Colour Me Blue*, a collection of short stories, and the literary biography, *My Longest Round*, the life story of Wally Carr. Her animated poems have received international awards. She was granted a 2021 Varuna Writers Space fellowship and shortlisted for the 2021 Queensland Poetry Awards Emerging Older Poets Mentorship. Gaele has a PhD in literature from the University of Hull, UK. She is the founding director of Outlandish Arts, a disabled-led arts company.
<https://linktr.ee/gaelesobott>



The Ones Who Really Belong

Not being able to do
the things I have dreamt of doing
I call 'disability'—
We are all hampered
in small unseen degrees,
by numerous glaring disabilities;
A fear of heights—
unable to step on escalators
unable to spend of riches
unable to limit our greed
unable to love and reach out
And many more—
The mind becomes confused;
Are wheel chairs, crutches and braille
letters of disability in a hostile world
or the language of limitless abilities:-
Intelligence,
Creativity,
Warmth,
Understanding,
Humour,
that the so called 'normal'
can never reach.
The 'We' that is normal
is scripted in broken letters.
'We' need to overcome impairments—
In our hearts and minds:
The pitiful lack of hearing
In spite of sound listening,

the dismal lack of sight
In spite of perfect seeing
the abysmal lack of feeling
In spite of sound heart.
To lose an arm or leg
To be without physical eyesight
To have estranged motor skills
Can all be addressed,
No transplants, therapy and healing
Can cure the dreadful affliction
Of malice, greed and hate
Other than a miracle perhaps,
How does one address
The disabilities of heart, mind
And soul?
How to make them belong
Who would make the world
A kinder place.

In Memory of a Friend

(Javed Abidi Bhai*)

His wheelchair
was not his impediment
though our expectations of him
were sadly small.
A penny for our disabled vision.
He travelled and worked
faster and better than us
There was no limit
to his aspirations.
We joined his Book Club

and remained
slow actors
Childlike dabblers
Frequent squabblers
His word quietening us
and showing us the way.
He was born
to teach others to fly
to fight against
the accusations of disability.
It was not him who was limited
But us,
bound by fears, doubts and pressures.
For him
anything was possible
He never gave up
till his last breath,
though we remain burdened
by unseen obstacles.

(* Javed Abidi (1965-2018) did his graduation from Aligarh Muslim University. At graduate level, he was very active in promoting and organising literary activities of different kinds. He went on to study Journalism and Mass Communication at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. He became an activist for disability rights in India. He served as the Director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People in India and was also the founder of the Disability Rights Group.)

About the Poet

Professor **Sami Rafiq** teaches English at Aligarh Muslim University. She is a writer, translator and poet. She has published and translated the Urdu poetry of Asrarul Haq Majaz and Firaq Gorakhpuri into English besides many others. She has also published short stories, features, and poetry on the subjects of environment and women. She has also written for children and was writing regularly for the Innerside Column of Hindustan Times. She is the Founding Editor and Chief Editor of *Cloverleaf* a journal of SHEN a non-profit based organisation in Canada.



The Morning Routine

With the alarm clock
Going off, he got up
Age old routine
But no, just sat up
Lowering his legs down
Straight down on the ground
Looking for his shoes,
But such a glitch
Such a gap!
Such pain! What's the distance?
Sleep erases so much!
Even the close
Memory of yesterday!
He remembers slowly
The long practice
Prosthetic feet
No, never the word handicap!
Paraolympics !
Rigorous adaptation!
The daily routine
Like an athlete's training
Blade running!

Sure ! Its possible
Can be done!
Life as usual !
Nothing given up!

The bright sunshine
The dew drops on grass
The breeze in the trees!
Its the memory of having
His feet, that makes it
Hardest!

And he just can't decide
How come they never
Caught the drunkard
Who ran over his feet!

The Cliché About Learning Disability

In an age of plenty

When the gap is enormous

The rich so rich

The poor so poor

Frictions abound

Rifts arise

Lives so tense!

A term so fast

Gaining ground

'Learning disability

Loosely used

Looses gravity

A condition severe

In growing age

Can be conquered

Treated and cured

But the cliches too

Point to something!

People customarily saying

'Gave you a second chance,

Must be a learning disability!'

'Loved again, believed in the system,

Must be a learning disability!'

Open satire

Deep irony

Defines our thoughts

Infiltrating our language

Making jargons of things

Belittling disability

But speaking volumes

On world health

Dealing with pain

Of multiple kinds

Unbearable pain

Inexplicable pain

Refusing classification

In a world increasingly

Obstinate , hell bent

On teaching lessons

In life, outside classrooms !

The handicap reserve sign in local bus

Two seats carry the handicap sign

Both occupied

By people slightly

Challenged, physically!

A third arrives

Severely in need of a seat!

The two don't budge

Someone standing

Asks someone sitting

To give the seat to

The third person

The person explodes

In anger, why should he?

What a hard day

He had, has it everyday !

His limbs are hurting!

What is the government doing?

Long lecture

During which his voice

Quivers! Subsides! Almost breaks

Down! Has a change of heart!

Expresses regret

Stands up! Offers his seat!

But the blind man

With a twisted arm

Crippled leg, refuses to sit!

His stop is almost here!

Besides, he can stand !

He says and looks away!

This is late evening

National capital

Local bus

Regular feature!

About the Poet



Pankhuri Sinha is a bilingual poet and story writer from India. She has to her credit two poetry collections published in English, two story collections published in Hindi, five poetry collections published in Hindi, and many more lined up. She has been published in many journals, anthologies, home and abroad and won prestigious awards, including the Seemapuri Times Rajeev Gandhi Excellence award, awards in Chekhov festival in Yalta and in Premio Besio Poetry competition in Italy, Sahitto award in Bangladesh, and Premio Galateo in Italy for poetry

in mother tongue. She has also been awarded by Albania, Nigeria, Romania among others and her works has been translated in over twenty five languages.

Nature's Rebellious Star

With disdainful eyes,
and all those pricking frights
adding a pinch of abhor,
I wonder what are they for!
 Telling each other Oh! What an impropriety!
 One of them whispered, have some pity.
 Focusing on the positivity,
 sweated day and night with alacrity.

I knew there's light at the end of the tunnel,
Keeping their exclusivity at null.
Relished the pungent sweat,
Could see the angelic silhouette.

 With lapse of time,
 Happened the cleansing of mind's grime.
 When they saw me making representation,
 Told, 'we knew already you're a pride of the nation'

But the retort was an effulgent win,
which broadened everyone's grin.
They called me subsequently a natural star,
I rectified it ultimately as Nature's Rebellious Star.

About the Poet

Anindya Tiwari is pursuing her MA in English Literature from University of Lucknow. Her interests include compering, debating, reading, theatre and sports. She is also an ardent traveller and is eagerly looking forward to all the adventures and learning. She hopes to bring some positive changes through her works.



DIFFERENCE

They say, for me
it's dark around,
But I see only
the lights around.
They say my world
is colourless,
I wonder have they
much hues as mine?
At my heart,
I have seen
the sky that belongs
to me alone.
There I have
my twinkling stars,
and rainbows with shades
strange to the world.
They wonder if I
dream at night,
and yes of course,
I do, all nights.
For me it is
the moment of awe,
in which I'm as
sighted as them.
They say I am a bit
slow at things,

can they ever do them
with just closed eyes?
Never seeing things,
never ever mean
I'm oblivious of
their presence,
for I'm with
my other senses
though are not
to see, but feel.
For me, mere seeing
is superficial
and feeling is the
sense with depth.
not beneath you,
not beyond you,
just a human
with a mild difference.
The world is never
homogenous,
Difference is its
core essence.
Only if you
feel this fact,
the sense of sight
shall earn its worth.

About the Poet

Sayoojya C. S. is a Research Scholar at the Department of English, University of Calicut. She received her Bachelor's degree from Little Flower College, Guruvayoor, and completed post-graduation from the Department of English, University of Calicut.



Win I Will

There are these uncles and these aunts
Pretty cousins, petticoats they flaunt
Who can see everything; me they can't
Nothing they expect in me; no they won't.

What defines me? my personality?
Who measures my worth? my ability?
Manmade rules are for inequality
Myself I describe with my unique creativity.

Diminutive creation, they give me a sorry look
Every word hurt, from their mouth's fish hook
Beyond walls of indifference their giggles shook
Yet deep in my smouldering heart, my poetry I
cook.

World will one day know me as a poet
My verses will speak, strength my mind will set
My readers willingly will see my poems an asset
I can tell the world, now I have hit my target.

Hold my hands

How I long to tell you,
my heart wants to fly.
I know my wings can
lift me high, higher!
And my eyes want to behold
the beauty of this world
and feel the wind on my face.

The kindness of these souls
who try to wear my shoes,
to know how it is to be me
come and sit with me, talk

talk to me more and more.
My ears ever love the rhythm
of your song, sweet song.

Moving forward, your hand I hold
listening to the music, jumping over
stones that will not melt.
Let's jump; higher; together
I know you will still hold
my hands and watch me learn
to fly high among wind driven-
balloons of colours, in the blue sky.

When I Dance...

Do I? I do! Really!

Can I? I can! Absolutely!

Will I? I will! For sure!

Must I? I must! Very soon!

But give me your time

And trust my dreams

Those echo my floating mind

Ever moulding my desire to win

That I hope will merrily bloom.

Your invitation for me to dance

A hundred colourful butterflies rise

Weaving a rainbow

Amidst the cotton clouds white

As they drift unsure.

*The music makes me feel

A thunderstorm rolling

Lightning flashes around

Blue, yellow, green and red

I search for the colour of silence.

**My head fears to explode

And covers itself

Among tapping shoes

My rainbow has vanished!

Call me to dance with you once more

On a bright sunny day

When no thunder will clap

A silvery streak will line

If any dark cloud: and on me it will shine

* <https://otsimo.com/en/sensory-overload-autism/>

#: ~ :text=Hypersensitivity%20in%20Autism,noises%20to%20activate%20their%20senses.

** <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/behaviour/meltdowns/all-audiences>

About the Poet

Sherin Mary Zacharia (19) lives in Kochi with her parents, sister and her pet cat. She loves nature, travelling, film songs and good food. She has contributed to various English Anthologies. She is the recipient of Asia region first prize ‘under 17 category’ for poetry contest by Common Wealth Youth Council (2017), National Trust “Autism Marvel” award by the Social Justice ministry (2017), Reuel International prize for poetry (2017) and many more. She has secured certificates for participating in National Poetry Writing Month (2020, 2021) conducted online by a poets’ group. She published a book titled “Moonlight” which is a collection of poems and short prose in 2018. *Musings of Sher* (www.musingsofsher.in) is her own blog where she regularly contributes. A determined self-learner, she also follows online material for undergraduate courses in English to know more about English poetry.



Adamantine

I might not run like you but
we both think curiously
Or I might be locked in a cage
in my head that you cannot see.
My mind might work differently than you
but oh, at heart
at heart, we are one
maybe few seconds apart.
I might not speak as you do
but we wish to say the same thing.
We might not hear the same
but smile when the birds sing.
Keep a hand on your chest
and keep the other here, on mine
Feel how we beat the same
With the tick-tock of passing time,
my face might look different
but we both bleed crimson hue.
Our walking paths may also differ
But the sky is phosphorescent and blue

Yes, my life can be a task
but whose isn't? You see,

yes, I can learn much from you
but you too, can learn from me.
To never give up
no matter what the sabotage is.
It might feel good for a bit
My friend, it is merely a mirage
Life is a garden and we are all free
to plant wherever and bloom, endlessly.
Together hand in hand
even if I have none
We can always join our hearts,
and all problems will come undone
The colour purple is not
just my disability
It is also the flower that
I want you to see,
have, smell and love
An olive branch
in the beak of a dove
I have so much to give,
love and shine
My spirit will not break,
for it is Adamantine

About the Poet



Amisha Srivastava is a student of M.A. English, third semester at the University of Lucknow. She takes great interest in creative content and poetry writing. She has a penchant for music and movies and is an avid reader with a passion for English literature.

Crip Life

Cripples are given all the freedom in the world-

Except they can't decide when to sleep, when to get up,
when to go outside and be themselves, when to say *that's enough*
How can they? How will they?

There are cities that will always remain beyond their dreams
and in dreams they often fall, with everyone looking at them with disgust
What can you? What did you?

No matter how much they search their pockets for agency and choice,
they live at home, someone's idea of work, unproductive, chronically unemployed
What are you? Why are you?

Schedule

My legs don't work on odd days.

Water is my enemy. Friction or lack of friction. Should I get back to a Physics book one of these days?
My jeans are all torn, where my knees touch the ground. War memorials. Fighting with my legs is
never easy.

Legs don't win. Legs don't lose. They pretend to be dead at times. They are good at acting. Or
perhaps just inconsistent.

They twist and shout. Say it aloud, Ouch, I am in pain. Their curves make men watch with glee.
Sprained.

On even days I run like the wind. Dance like no one's watching. Admire the angles at which my legs
bend. Love my body.

There are hardly any even days on my calendar.

Toilet paper

In December, the morning water in my bathroom is cursed.

It touches me and my legs fall apart on the wet floor

Fever takes over, organs begin to fail, and darkness ensues

Does God punish me for not having hot water in all the taps?

Never have I ever crossed the seas, yet, in my eagerness to survive,

I cross civilizational boundaries, from water to paper

Long for heated apartments, and heated floors

Pretend to be rich, look outside, and feel the invisible snow

What do ugly people do in Goa?

The dead parts of my legs love the sand; they go in deep, often subconsciously deeper than necessary to find their worth on a beach, their weight in desire and return with existential angst, leaving me stumbling for balance and peace
I recover only because there is beer, and at night I can drink the roaring sea.

The woman in a bathing suit walks up to me, nods, and then wants to talk and my body is desperate for a conversation but speaks in a muffled voice, buried in an oversized t-shirt, it reeks of fish vindaloo, booze and shame, maybe she just wants to talk about the book in my hand, and that's alright.

What do you do when you uninvite yourself from the carnival of life?

Do you withhold the tide of the sea in your palm, unsuccessful as it might be?

Or move away from the shore, away from the beach, to an air-conditioned room hidden from the image of yourself, away from the comforts of a castle made of sand.

About the Poet

Abhishek Anicca is a bilingual poet and performer. He identifies as a person with locomotor disability and chronic illness which shapes his creative endeavors. His poems have been published in *Nether Quarterly*, *Gulmohur Quarterly*, *The Sunflower Collective*, *Indian Cultural Forum*, *The Alipore Post*, *RHiM*, *Jankipu*, *Samalocha*, *Posham Pa* and *Apni Maati*. His first Hindi poetry collection, *Antrang*, was published in 2019.



dis-ABLED

From able to disabled
to differently abled,
from isolation to recognition
to inspiration,
from chains to rehabilitation
to mentor,
from separation to acceptance
to inclusion,
from wild to learners
to winners,
from 'let me live' to 'let them live'
to hope,
from no-one to family
to global citizen,
from baby –steps to walk
to fly,

-that's our journey!

I am ADHD...

I wanted to peep out of the class
throw chalks and duster on the walls;
Couldn't sit straight
being 'pendulum' was my state;
lectures were interesting
but listening to them was boring;
Co-curricular activities were my relief,
notes, books, exams were necessary sheaf;
Inside, with utter disbelief and impatience
to my teachers I bowed with reverence;
Along with trust and obeisance, I knocked
and the door of my ignorance was unlocked;
He listened and asked me to BREATHE
now I have the key to be an expert;
I feel better, happy and cured
Breathe and Believe was the mantra, I could afford.

About the Poet

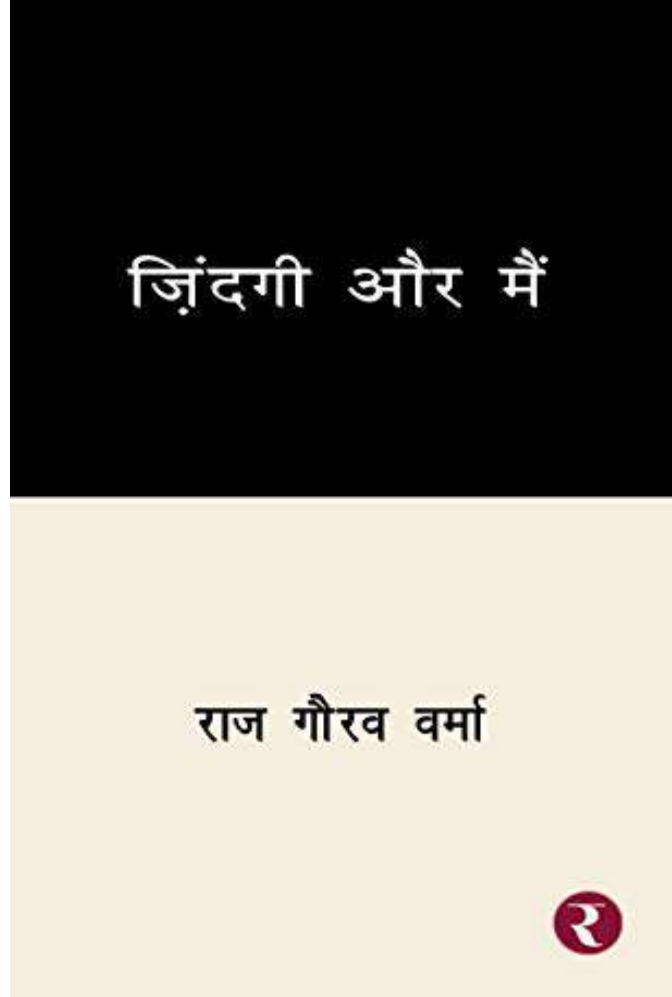
Suman Kumari is a Research Scholar in the Department of English and Other European Languages at Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya Sagar, (M.P). Her areas of interest include cultural studies, feminism, inclusive education and ecocriticism.



The background features a light gray, textured surface with faint, overlapping handwritten text in a cursive script. A prominent yellow brushstroke is visible in the bottom right corner, adding a dynamic, artistic touch to the composition.

Book Review

Zindagi Aur Mai (Life and Me)



Name of the Book: Zindagi aur Mai! (Life and Me)

Author: Raj Gaurav Verma

Language: Hindi

Genre: Poetry

Publisher: Rajmangal Publishers, Aligarh, India

Year of Publication: 2021

Price: ₹129

Pages: 66

ISBN: 978-9390894642

Zindagi aur Mai, a compilation of poems written in the Hindi language spoken chiefly in India, is the debut verse collection by the Lucknow-based author Raj Gaurav Verma, published in February 2021. As a poetic assemblage of forty-three verses, the collection offers a reading of contemplative musings expressed in differing contexts. Alternating between ‘life’ and the ‘self,’ the poet draws upon a poetic canvas that appears essentially contemporary and rooted in the present.

As the poet states in the foreword to the collection:

“Struggle is synonymous to life, life stands synonymous to struggle. I have been told and taught this by my elders. Not just men, but every life form undergoes this struggle. But life offers us many experiences of different stages as well. These stages are never stagnant, but keep changing and moving towards an evolution.”

The poems that follow this foreword thus revolve around the evolving self and a conscience that moves parallel along with it.

As the contemporary poetic genre remains a free ground for verses that experiment with construction and style, the poems thus composed reflect unconventional patterns that explore the personal and the public spaces. Written in a new and free stylistic manner, *Zindagi aur Mai* remains a collection that carves reflections of a poetic persona in a commonplace stance. The poems appear conversational, simplistic and as outright statements. For instance, the poet writes:

Bas sochta rehta hoon, sochta rehta hoon
Kisi khayal se jujhta rehta hoon
Aine ke samne khud ko ghurta rehta hoon”

I just keep thinking, I keep thinking.

I keep struggling with a thought

And keep staring at my image in the mirror.

The poems vary in length and stylistic appearance and the sequence does not appear to follow any thematic constraint. The contexts and paradigms explored are essentially drawn out of a persona that may or may not be read as autobiographical. The subjective indulgence into the psyche contrasts with images and metaphors drawn out of socially constructed notions and a paradox of pathos and personal acceptance runs throughout the collection.

The last poem in the collection, “Zindagi aur Mai” (“Life and Me”) that lends the title to the collection, remains the most expressive of the paradox among these poems. Written as a dialogue

between 'life' and the poet's 'self,' the conversational structure questions the constant search for love that remains paradoxical between the notions that surround life and its meaning.

*“Zindagi- Mai fir akeli reh jaungi. Akeli...akeli.Dost hoon na isliye tumhara sath nahi chhod sakti..
varna toh keh deti dhoondh lo kisi aur ko.*

Mai- Par...

*Zindagi- Aaj toh tumne mujhe pareshani mein daal diya. Kahin aisa nah o tumhari kisi aur ki talash
mein mai ghut ghut ke mar jau...”*

Life-I shall be left alone again. Solitary...again!

As a friend I refrain from abandoning you. If not, I would ask you to search another comrade!

Me- But...

Life-You have left me in distress today. I might perhaps die in your search for an 'other'

While the themes of the verses remain conventionally moulded, the form and structure of the poems thus experiment with free verse written in differing patterns. The diction remains simplistic and easy to read throughout the collection. While the search for love and the emotional angst appear as the recurrent themes across the verses, the poems leave an impression of paradox that overshadows the pathos.

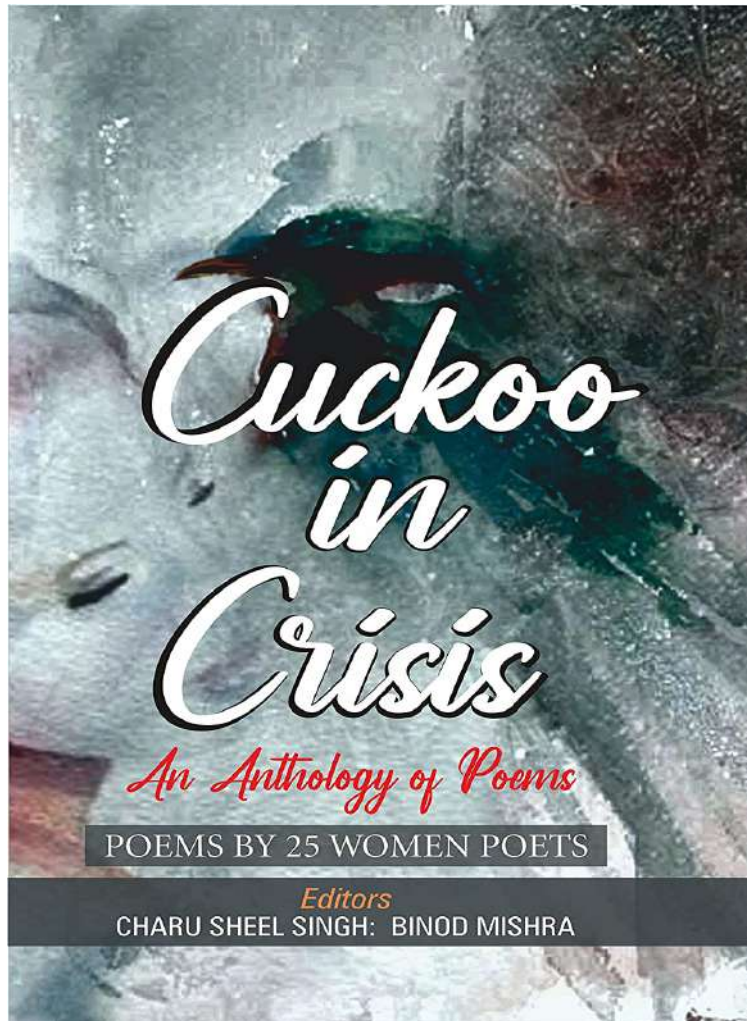
The first collection of poems by this young poet is recommended for a reader who wishes to indulge in poetic thoughts that are rooted in contemporary ethos and tinged with a free flow of words. As Hindi poetry continues to witness many new experimental forms and voices that weave words in a free format, this collection by Raj Gaurav Verma remains an addition to such a form of poetics.

About the Reviewer

Amrita Sharma is presently working as the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant at the University of Notre Dame, United States of America. She has recently submitted her PhD Research to the University of Lucknow, India. Her works have previously been published in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *The Quiver Review*, *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *Café Dissensus Everyday*, *AWS E-zine*, *Literary Yard*, *Trouvaille Review*, *Confluence: South Asian Perspectives*, *Borderless Journal*, *Muse India*, *Dialogue*, *The Criterion*, *Episteme* and *Ashvamegh*.



Cuckoo in Crisis: An Anthology of Poems



Name of the Book: Cuckoo in Crisis: An Anthology of Poems

Editors: Charu Sheel Singh and Binod Mishra

Publisher: Akhand Publishing House

Year of Publication: 2021

Price: ₹470

Pages: 320

ISBN: 978-9390870127

It goes without saying, that history has been neglectful toward the narratives of women. It is then imperative to realise that simply considering the question of being as an interrogation and more so as an analysis of subjectivities will not be enough. An understanding of moods, experiences, and apprehension brought to the fore by poetry can well enough be the starting and the middle points. And *Cuckoo in Crisis: An Anthology of Poems* seeks to do the very same. As is suggestive from the title, it addresses the unceasing crisis of women in the face of hegemonic masculinities and systematic deprivation. Prof. Binod Mishra writes in his introduction to the anthology: “History is witness to the fact that marginalisation of women has been a long cry. Women have been in crisis for a long time, not only in undeveloped and developing countries: their position is no different in developed countries as well.” This anthology then, consequently, becomes a crucial step in ruffling up the dust around women’s movement that seeks to ameliorate this crisis.

Cuckoo in Crisis, published by Akhand Publishing House in January 2021, brings together twenty-five established and powerful women writers from different corners of India and abroad. Their writing is assertive and defiant. They are inclusive and powerful. They talk of old hate and new discrimination. They rouse uneasiness whilst they teach. They set off heart-engulfing sorrow by telling the ways of how society has failed women time and again. But most importantly, they give hope. The foreword of the book, written by Prof. Charu Sheel Singh, aptly captures the essence of the anthology, when he pens down: “The truth is that the narrative itself is a woman and this woman has forgotten how to die and come back to life again.”

The collection has a total number of 320 pages and indulges in various feminist perspectives touching upon desire(s), bodily autonomy, rape, motherhood, domestic duties, gendered violence, rebellion and much more. The poems draw upon the ancestral legacy of women protestors like Draupadi, Meera, Sita and many others; whilst beautifully capturing the complexity and the diversity of contemporary womanhood. As a result, this anthology offers more than just a comprehensive view that reflects the change in the sensibilities, idioms, desires, and tones of women, across times. But what comes off as the extraordinarily noteworthy thing about this anthology is that it is not a blind extraction of powerful voices from the past.

This collection anthologises with the understanding that even the so called “powerful women” have been often times narrativised problematically. Nandini Sahu in her poem “Sita” urges women to challenge the manipulated narratives of cultural texts and deconstruct the monolithic voices that only translate to keep the patriarchal hegemony intact:

“Women! When the society asks you to be
like Sita’, and decides your future by
virtue of public morality, forces you be chaste
and submissive, please redefine your lives.”

The powerful feminist voices metamorphosed into poetry in this collection, not only speak to their kind but to anyone who is ready to emerge in the ethos of poetry and feministic sensibility. One of the major themes that mark several poems in this anthology is desire. In the light of desire being monopolised as the prerogative of men and having gone through phases of oedapalised interpretations, especially in academia, this anthology then triggers difficult questions that have no easy answers. Usha Akella’s poem “Lotus Feet” addresses the overbearing tendency of patriarchal set-up to render female desire invisible and treat women as objects and never as subjects:

“Beauty is in the eye of the
masculine beholder whose gaze says make her
small, small, smaller till she cannot
stand so perfect so beautiful so dainty,
imagine moonbeams for feet
and lotuses for footprints. A mere four inches -and
the male ego
erects
in desire.”

Not only this, the recurrent motif of desire also attempts to rework the power network that overwhelms the paradigm of romantic love and sexuality. Seema Jain in her poem titled “The Duchess to the Duke” seeks to deconstruct and acknowledge the entanglement that desire has with power, politics, and tradition:

“I tied the wedding knot

With you My Lord
And entered into my new life
But little did I know then
I wasn't marrying the love of my life
But a nine hundred year old family name of yours.”

In reading of these poems, one then becomes consciously aware that desire is always political. The poems in this anthology critically deal with a number of cultural barriers that are created by gender/sexual taboos that are imported into the everyday experiential lives of women.

The intimate act of reading and writing poetry is heightened through the autobiographical tone running through several of the poems in this anthology. The crisis then can be witnessed through the first person narratives that many poems find their expressions in. Unlike the popular notion that ‘modern’ voices are insignia of unconventionality and revolt, the poems in this anthology address the suspended feminine voices that get trapped between the constructs of marriage, duty, inheritance, and responsibility on one hand and the notional “modernity” and the contemporary politics of difference on the other. Sreeja Mohandas in her poem “The Penthouse in my Head” emphatically captures this suspension when she writes about the expectations that hang about the everyday activities of a woman:

“Smile, stay sexy,
But never give up without a fight.
You have a huge responsibility, you know,
You ought to know what is right.”

The poetry moves uninhibited, exploring several themes that not only concern women but impact the whole society. As a reader and more so as a woman reader, one experiences the undulated emotions that uncontrollably take over the ethos of the poems in this anthology. But the poems do far more than providing a catharsis; they linger and resonate and make sure one doesn't forget to hope and fight. Ranu Uniyal's poem “I cannot Answer” best captures this indelible fight for hope when she writes,

“I still do not know. I cannot
answer. Why? In times such as these with heart cut into shreds and hands tired, hunger
docile, I still cling to
life.”

Cuckoo in Crisis, thus, first and foremost, is a needful and important piece of literature. It is imperative that poetry such as this is published and read because it gives a rightful voice to the people that should have been given a chance and claim a long time ago.

About the Reviewer

Yashvi Srivastava is a Research Scholar currently pursuing her PhD in English from the University of Lucknow. Her areas of interest include queer theory, gender studies and Indian Fiction.



Witness: The Red River Book of Poetry of Dissent



Name of the Book: Witness: The Red River Book of Poetry of Dissent

Editor: Nabina Das

Publisher: Red River

Year of Publication: 2021

Price: ₹499

Pages: 466

ISBN: 978-8194816478

Dissent refers to holding or expressing opinions that are at variance with those commonly or officially held. This anthology becomes a ‘witness’ to the dissatisfaction and disagreement with a view that is supported by the majority or ones who hold authority. *Witness: The Red River Book of Poetry of Dissent* has gathered and showcased such voices from across the country that are unheard, unprecedented and overlooked.

This collection of poetry is edited by Nabina Das, a 2017 Sahapedia UNESCO fellow, a 2012 Charles Wallace Creative Writing alumna (Stirling University), and a 2016 Commonwealth Writers Organisation feature correspondent. She has authored five books of poetry and fiction. In the Editor’s note, she writes how in bringing the book to fruition they, “...realized that we were not able to reach out to a vast number of poets. Poets that are old, and new, and famous, and unsung, and emerging, and even permanent fixtures - what a wealth we had.” There are 250 poets who have contributed to this anthology and each come from various nooks and corners of the country, adding a distinct theme and tone to this poetic palette.

Nirupama Datt, an Indian poet, journalist and translator writes in the Introduction how the poems in this anthology portray “a rare rage, urgency, indignation, and angst” as poets try to capture and become witness to the dissent that engulfs the sub-continent.” Poems are penned in different languages, and cover a wide range of subjects. There is resistance shown against the dominant ideologies and hence a display of rage, outburst, annoyance, disturbance, attack and frenzy against the so-called “normal”. Subject ranges from themes as mundane as wifi connection to as serious as rape victims. Poets in this collection have come together to write about, “religion, gender, caste, creed, mental health, diversity as well as pride and prejudice of all kinds.”

In a society where ‘rape’ and ‘porn’ are considered a taboo and nobody dares to speak about it, there are several poets in the anthology who write from the point of view of rape victims and talk about porn. “Rules for a Rape Republic”, a poem by Basudhara Roy discusses how burning women in India, especially rape victims, “is neither unprecedented nor inexplicable”. This poem that goes on to state the ‘rules’ given by society for rape victims and rape survivors states,

“Don’t scream. The chances are
That to a sadist spine every scream
Is wine. Blindfold yourself, open wide,
Play dead. Jump up the moment
It’s done. Gather your stuff. Leave.”

This subject is taken up by other poems as well, like “A Misogynistic Handbook for Rape Survivors” by Nalini Priyadarshni and “Every Girl is Dinner” by Sumana Roy. These poems are groundbreaking in the sense that they are among the very first narratives to be written on such a provocative topic.

There are various poems which showcase the political turmoil that the country has gone through recently by taking up the subject of CAA and NRC bills as well as the student protests surrounding them. “Write Me Down, I am an Indian” by Ajmal Khan captures the angst of the people who are asked to prove that they belong to this country though they lost their forefathers in the fight against the British. “The University ” by Gauhar Raza talks about how universities have been a target of oppressors since ancient times as they never want anyone to question their supremacy. It goes,

“Assaults on universities are nothing new
Assaults on books are nothing new
Assaults on questioning nothing new
Assaults on thinking nothing new.”

There are poems that lay bare the disillusionment and displacement experienced by an individual in the modern world by questioning the fancy subjects taken up by writers. “A Poem Without” by Biswamit Dwibedy addresses poets who write in the line of romantic thinking about Ganges, monsoon, jasmine, peacock, ghats, etc. and asks,

“...Write me a poem
About Information Technology.
About online shopping. Or having Burger King
Delivered to your home, way past midnight.”

While “At Falaknuma” by Ranu Uniyal circles around the nostalgia for the past and disenchantment with the present; “Dualities” by Nabanita Sengupta highlights the dual life a woman lives as she tries to keep up with her wishes and society’s conventions. The poem tells of a woman who wears jeans and top when she goes out but while at home, she maintains ‘convention’ by wearing “grandma’s ghomta” and it goes,

“Back home
I hang feminism
On the clothesline
And air it to

Smell fresh

The next day.”

A remarkable work that comments on the right and left wing politics is “In These Dark, Beastly Times” by Durga Prasad Panda. The poem captures the ideological structure prevalent in contemporary times when it comments on how everything on left is overpowered by the right,

“all roads have been

Stripped of their left sides.

Vehicles at crossings, people

And animals walking in the lanes

Must turn only to their right.”

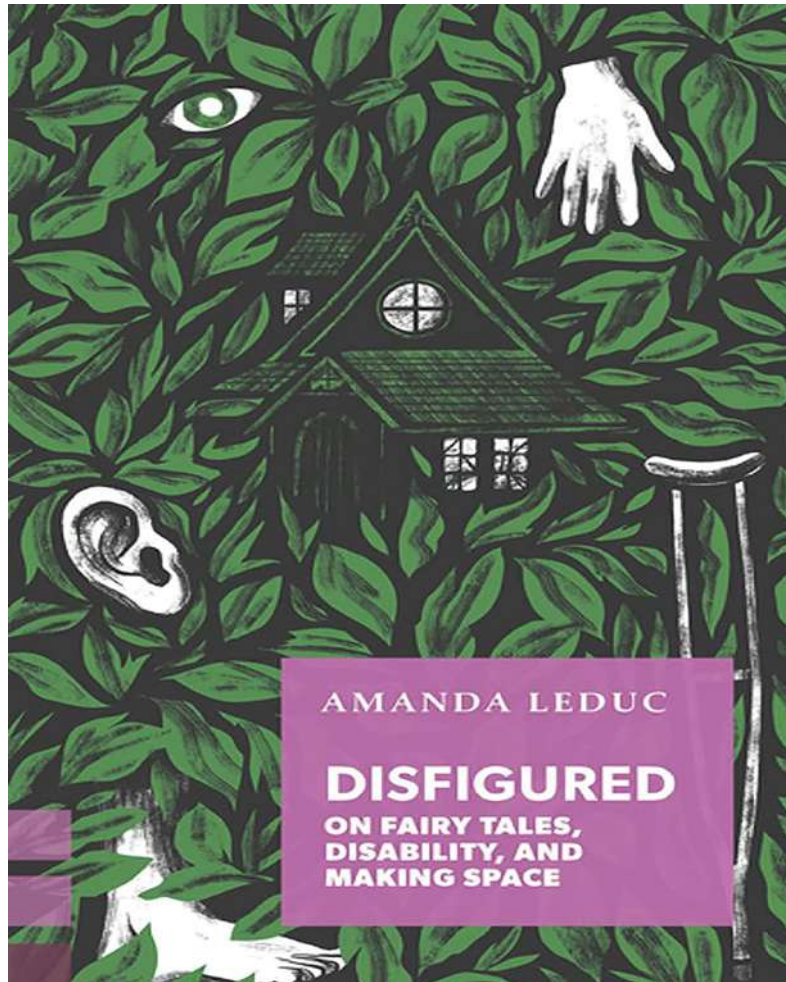
This anthology is a treasure for those who want to find poetic answers to the questions they face in this modern and despondent world. One would surely find a voice for his/her buried emotions as they would definitely feel connected with these poets.

About the Reviewer

Tabinda Sadiq is a Research Scholar currently pursuing her PhD in English from the University of Lucknow. Her areas of interest include Cultural Studies, Comparative Literature and Urdu Literature.



Disfigured: On Fairy Tales, Disability, and Making Space



Name of the Book: Disfigured: On Fairy Tales, Disability, and Making Space

Author: Amanda Leduc

Publisher: Coach House Books

Year of Publication: 2020

Price: ₹1140

Pages: 160

ISBN: 978-1552453957

Disfigured: On Fairy Tales, Disability, and Making Space by Amanda Leduc categorised under the genre of literary criticism combines personal memoir, fairy tale analysis, and disability theory into a brief but captivating book on the relationship between old and new fairy tales (in various formats) and the emerging attitudes towards disability. This is her first work of non-fiction. Leduc devotes a considerable portion of the book to memoir, which is integrated throughout. She speaks candidly of the medical, physical and especially the emotional impact of growing up with cerebral palsy. Her pain is palpable as she details the constant bullying she endured as a child and how that trauma built up into depression as an adult. It contains 160 pages and is divided into fifteen sections. Fairy tales and fairy tale archetypes as examined by Leduc include the traditional ones such as those by the Brothers Grimm, Disney adaptations, some comics and even some modern ones by Angela Carter.

Disfigured is one of the most provocative books on disability and there were connections one never thought about in the same light as Amanda. Extremely eye-opening and sure to spark a lively discussion, this book has part literary and cultural connotations and part autobiographical. It is fascinating, engaging and will certainly make readers think. Her focus is fairy tales, those make-believe stories gathered hundreds of years ago in the forests of France and Germany, pruned to suit Victorian sensibilities, and polished to perfection. She writes about how these ancient stories do more than just entertain; they teach, influence and shape the way a reader looks at the world. It is an influence that does not end with the story but has real world implications for those with disabilities. The book is a storehouse of relevant information on Disability Rights Movement, the Disability community as a whole and personal experiences of many differently-abled people.

Leduc's book examines how negative views of disability are pervasive in the fairy tales at the foundation of western culture. She makes a strong case for new fairy tales and new adaptations of old ones to help us recognize the magic inherent in all bodies whether abled or disabled. The author raises some of the most important questions, for instance, why does goodness lead to magical cures for disabled characters in fairy tales? Why is happily ever after equated to beauty and able-bodied? Consider *Beauty and the Beast* or *The Little Mermaid*. Why are villains so often disfigured or disabled? And how do the disabled children feel, to never see themselves represented in the stories and films they consume, or to only see themselves as villains or noble yet pitiable characters? When do we get a princess in a wheelchair?

The essential premise of Leduc's argument is that fairy tales portray authentic historical and social contexts and should not be considered 'just stories'. She advocates for a social model approach

to disability. These aren't weak arguments in and of themselves, but her data is minimal and her analysis is non-existent.

Though her fairy tale criticism generally strikes as solid, her discussion of Disney films seems convoluted and unappealing. She talked about *The Lion King*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *The Beauty and the Beast* in great depth but completely overlooked the not so popular characters (for eg, Hook when discussing characters who are identified only by their disability).

Disability, according to Leduc, is an impairment that is both a social and a physical phenomena (35-6). She then misconstrues ugliness, disability, and disfigurement. While there is overlap between disfigurement and disability, they are not synonyms, but Leduc treats them as such.

But the biggest issue that bothers with this vein of criticism is the “disabilities shouldn't be healed in fantasy” argument, which Leduc endorses. Certainly, there are issues with stories implying that only people with perfect bodies can be happy, or that if you have a disability, you must deserve it (or you aren't working hard enough to “overcome” it). That being said, it is observed that Leduc goes much too far in claiming to speak for people with disabilities generally and then arguing that they don't want their disabilities cured, they just want greater accessibility.

Many of the author's points of view are disagreeable, but this type of work serves as an eye-opening platform for debate. It will probably be most useful to those who have a deep personal involvement in such issues or who have never engaged in disability activism or thought about disability representation in media before, but even if one doesn't fit into either of these categories, he/she would still find the memoir sections endearing and the book as an excellent food for thought.

Everyone should read this book and think deeply about how the stories we tell shape the realities of both disabled and able-bodied children, and how we can strive to make the world a more inclusive and accessible place for all.

About the Reviewer

Jyoti Kushwaha is a PhD Research Scholar at Bundelkhand University, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh and is presently working as an Assistant Professor at Baikunthi Devi Kanya Mahavidhyalay, Agra. Her areas of interest include Children's Literature and she aspires to be a part of the world of the fascinating authors of Children's Literature.



photography

**"A picture is a
secret about a
secret, the more it
tells you the less
you know."**

- Diane Arbus



Glimpses &
Moments at
'PYSSUM'





REGISTRATION FORM

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

UNIVERSITY OF LUCKNOW

Full Name : _____

Year of Passing : _____

E-mail ID : _____

Mailing Address : _____

Contact No. : _____

Current Affiliation : _____

Occupation : _____ (Govt./Pvt./NGO)

Signature : _____

The Department extends an invitation to all of its alumni students to become an active part of 'Department of English and Modern European Languages Alumni Association' by sending in the duly filled registration form enclosed with this invitation. We look forward to your active response and enthusiastic participation in this initiative.

Alumni can submit either a hardcopy or a softcopy along with a passport size photograph. It can be mailed to departmentofenglishlu@gmail.com

Youtube Link : <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjJ3fNDYQO-gA5nwBKGNDcA>

Facebook Page Link : www.facebook.com/groups/departmentofenglishandmel.lu/



RHETORICA QUARTERLY

Call for submissions

As the intermediary stage of human life, youth defines the balance between energy and experience. Youth is more than a phase of life. It represents potential and offers different meanings and perspectives. Youth anticipates a bright future full of promises and encapsulates the enigma of innumerable possibilities.

Rhetorica, the literary society of the Department of English and Modern European Languages, calls for submissions on this theme for the Winter Edition of Rhetorica Quarterly Vol. II No. 3, 2022.

THEME- YOUTH

CATEGORIES-

FICTION (UPTO 1500 WORDS)

NON-FICTION (500-800 WORDS)

BOOK REVIEW (800 WORDS)

POETRY (3-5 EACH)

PHOTOGRAPHY (2-5 EACH)

Deadline : 30th January, 2022

Note:

- Submissions should strictly abide by the theme.
- They should be mailed as either .doc (non-fiction, fiction and poetry) or .jpeg (for photography) files only.
- Submissions should not exceed the word limit.
- They should be original and should not have been published anywhere previously.
- They should be free of plagiarism. A Declaration regarding the same should be attached with the submissions.
- Contributors should mail a high resolution photograph and a bio-note of not more than 100 words along with their submissions.
- All the submissions may be mailed at rhetoricaquarterly@gmail.com

A brief History:

per aspera ad astra

The Department of English and Modern European Languages was established in 1921, “aiming for blanket extensive knowledge to the researchers, post-graduates and under-graduates.” Headed with hard work and a zeal “to seek, to find and not to yield.” It has its mark till date. The courses are revised and updated every three years.

Over 200 research scholars have received their Doctorate degrees from the Department. The Department endeavours to enrich literary and language studies by teaching and guiding research in areas as British Literature, English Language Teaching, Stylistics and Discourse Analysis, American Literature, Contemporary Literature, New Literatures in English, Literature and Films, Australian Literature, Canadian Literature, Colonial and Post-Colonial Literature, Indian Writing in English, Literatures in Translation, Comparative Literature, Drama, Theatre Studies, Translation Studies, Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Disability Studies and Creative Writing. Innovative courses to enhance student employability. Courses for general users of English have been developed as add-on courses in collaboration with others.

The Department also offers Advanced Diploma, Diploma and Proficiency courses in Russian, German and French. In the 1960s the study of Linguistics with special reference to English was introduced in the M.A. English Course and the first Language Lab with four booths was set up, including American Literature as its part too.

In 2020, the old English Literary Society of the Department of English and Modern European Languages has been revived and named ‘Rhetorica’ - a literary platform for students to participate in Dramatics, Debates, Creative Writing, and other academic activities. The year 2020, will also be celebrated as the Centennial Year by the University.

Prof. Ranu Uniyal is the current Head of the Department.

