

Understanding the Quest for Identity of the Women with Disabilities in Post-independence India: A Study of the Selected Women Life Narratives

Triparna Mukherjee

Assistant Professor
Department of English, South Calcutta Girls' College, Kolkata, West Bengal

Abstract

“Nothing about us, without us”- is the mantra of disability discourse which reminds us that disability studies is inseparable from life and embodied experience. 21st century witnessed emergence of disability life narratives which has its own way of expressing one's societal pressures and particular struggles characterised by trials and triumphs, medical and cerebral recuperation, part of assistive technologies and connections in life. Malini Chib, Preeti Monga, Naseema Hurzuk, Shivani Gupta laid bare their hearts in the memoirs which exposed their rigours in life due to disability, gender struggles in their life, restrictions at home in attaining education which also represents the wretched condition of women with disabilities in post-independence India. I intend to explore how Malini Chib and Naseema Hurzuk raised their voices against the stereotyped ableist ideology which was already existed among Hindus and Muslims. This paper will discuss how these authors positioned herself in relation to hegemonic notion of normalcy. In post-independence India, women with disabilities are doubly marginalized and sometimes triply marginalized if they belong to any minority family. This paper will examine how these authors tried to empower the disabled and questions the socially constructed definition of 'normalcy'. This paper will also analyse how these memoirs served as the counter narrative to the dominant discourses to destabilise any claim to the normative fixed center.

Keywords: disability studies, post-independence India, ideology, hegemony, marginalized, normalcy

“Nothing about us, without us”- is the mantra of disability discourse which reminds us that disability studies is inseparable from life and embodied experience. 21st century witnessed emergence of disability life narratives which has its own way of expressing one's societal pressures and particular struggles characterised by trials and triumphs, medical and cerebral recuperation, part of assistive technologies and connections in life. Malini Chib, Preeti Monga, Naseema Hurzuk, Shivani Gupta laid bare their hearts in the memoirs which exposed their rigours in life due to disability, gender struggles in their life, restrictions at home in attaining education which also represents the wretched condition of women with disabilities in post-independence India.

In India's context, disability has been neglected as an identity category, while the concerns of other marginalized groups have been more conscientiously attended to. As a routine of writing on disability many of us initiate the discussions by giving the number of people who are disabled. Perhaps the significance is that numbers do not give an indication of identity or a collective group. Theoretically these are the reason that disabled people should be included in the democratic processes of India and discuss the future of identity politics. Within the Indian Milieu disabilities are not often thought of as a single group although the disabilities are too different from each other. Disability sadly reflect the tragic boundaries of 'normal' knowledge, thereby comprehending disabled people as 'abnormal', 'deviant', 'people with special needs', separation in mainstream education, isolation and absence from the labour market in employment, impenetrability in public transportation, become markers of a disabled identity. Disability is not really a fixed category most clearly signified by the white cane user or a crutch user. Rather it denotes a fluid and shifting set of conditions. (Ghai 262-263)

Family as microcosmic representation of society exists as an identity and as an ideological apparatus. As a propelling force it instilled the aspiration for establishing their own identity in the society into the psyche of the disabled people. Naseema Hurzuk's life narrative *Naseema: An Incredible Story* traces the trajectory of trauma of a PT leader in college to a paraplegic women. From her childhood, Naseema was anxious about her own identity. She questioned herself- "Did I really belong to the family? How could I be so different from the rest of my family in nature and appearance?" (Naseema 3)

Family plays a pivotal role for the existence of a disabled person. Naseema feels fortunate having a supportive family. Her parent, brothers and sisters always tried their best to convert her distress into delight. Naseema's elder sister Rehana was very helpful. She had to manage the regular household chores including taking care of Naseema. Rehana's broad-mindedness towards her sister was clearly evident from Naseema's words - "Nachchu (Naseema) if it were possible to share your disability we could have it in turns." (Naseema 3)

Naseemana kedly exposed the conservatism in Muslim community towards women. In despair, she shared her experience of facing primary prohibitions to learn classical dance which was prohibited in Muslim community. Pursuing higher education for women is also prohibited in her community. The patriarchal rulers of the society propagated that no groom will be available for a highly educated woman. But Naseema's parents always stood against these stereotypical attitudes of the society by allowing Naseema to perform classical dance and by admitting Naseema and her sister Rehana to college for higher studies.

Post-independence India witnessed isolation of persons with disabilities and their nearest and dearest ones as well as isolation of persons with disabilities by their so-called nearest and dearest ones. Naseema narrates the story of hapless Sanjivani. Fatal accident on her way to in-laws' house left her paraplegic. Her in-laws and husband abandoned her. Being an orphan and disabled woman she had to struggle as a triply marginalised position in the society. In her life narrative *One Little Finger*, Malini Chib also blatantly disclosed that even after 20 years of India's getting independence, the concept of a handicapped

was new to the society. In the chapter “Birth of a Movement”, she nakedly exposed the stereotypical attitude which prevailed even among the doctors in India. Malini wrote in despair- “Seven years ago, the doctors had said that I would be a vegetable and that situation of ignorance still continued” (Chib 5).

Her mother had to go through a period of depression. Malini from her childhood stage, easily understood how societal attitudes towards these differently-abled children isolate them completely. ‘Normate’ people never try to feel the emotions of a special child and thus they exclude them from all the enjoyments of life. Their avoidance left the special child in utter distress from the very beginning of their journey in life. Malini did not conceal her despair- “I think the worst thing that can happen to a child with a disability is to leave them alone and not even talk to them” (Chib 6).

Malini’s despair exposed the flaws in Medical model of disability which posits a ‘better dead than disabled’ approach and reinforces the stereotype that the disabled cannot be happy or enjoy an adequate quality of life. “Consequently, disabled people are subjected to many disabling expectations by the able-bodied society. For it is mandatory for them to be ‘independent’, ‘normal’, and to ‘adjust’ and ‘accept’ their situation” (Ghai 228).

Malini questions the ignorance of the so called ‘normate’ people who were ignorant about their approach to people with disabilities. The wretched conditions of medical system in India even after 75 years of getting independence is nakedly exposed by Malini’s traumatic experience. The lack of empathy among the medical staff stuck the readers-

To begin with, I went to a leading Children’s Hospital for my treatment. They spoke about me in front of me, often not directly addressing me. They poked and examined me as if I did not feel any pain. Well, I was just a patient and not a human being. ‘Does she need a collar to hold her head up?’ ‘I think homeopathy will help her... why don’t you try that?’ ‘Oh, she cannot hold a pencil, she cannot tie her shoe laces, and she cannot undress or dress independently and cannot feed herself.’ The paramedical staff treated me as if I did not have ears or could not understand. To them, I was a non-thinking person who needed fixing and fitting into the mould of being normal. (Chib 16)

This traumatic experience leads Malini to compare the treatment she received in India and London in the past. Malini stated what a sensitive, friendly treatment she got in London-“They had treated me as a child first, not a handicapped child” (Chib 17).

Malini’s assertion declares her resentment against the hegemony of normalcy which is deeply rooted in Indian psyche. In her life narrative, the author expressed how she was brutally oppressed by the rough treatment of those domineering medical professionals who firmly believed in hierarchy and tried their best to prove themselves as superior professionals.

Family plays a pivotal role in growing up of a special child. Malini feels blessed to have a family where she is always treated as normal child and they developed her with love and “shut out the hostile and unfriendly world” (Chib 31) to protect her from the stereotypical attitudes of the Indian society. Malini asserted that she was never taught to value her disability. She criticizes great expectations of Indian society from special children. She raised her voice- “If one was disabled it was expected of him or her to

overcome their disability and fit into the able world. This is an oppression that continues till today” (Chib38).

Disabled women occupy a multifarious and marginalized position in Indian society, based on their disability and also on socio-cultural identities that separate them into categories constructed according to such properties as caste, class and residential position. Disabled women who can have plural identity markers make their daily experience perplexing and difficult. For women as well as disabled women, the rise of neoliberal states has deepened already severe oppression and exclusion on the basis of bodily ability and gender. (Chouinard 27)

The role of the parents of a differently-abled child is very important. They should be empathetic, open-minded and democratic as their decisions are responsible for the social, mental, physical and intellectual growth of that budding child. Malini's parents as well as her whole family were very supportive. Her mother believe that disabled people must have freedom in all sphere of their life even allowing or encouraging them to carry out the everyday activities solely by themselves would strengthen them. Malini in her mature stage of life also believed that if a disabled person is constantly with a person and taken care of, she or he will never get all round development in their life. Malini felt lucky having a family who treated her as equal with the 'normate' family members and her opinion was asked for many issues.

Malini's mother was terribly affected by the traumatic experience of rearing a disabled child. She went through acute depression. Inspired by the inclusiveness of special education in England, in 1970, Malini's mother decided to establish 'The Centre for Special Education' in Bombay which was the first school for special children. Malini's mother plays a pivotal role in continuing her higher education. She argued valiantly with the authority for accepting certain demands of students with multiple disabilities. Bharat Shah, Farhan Contractor, Andrea Row and Malini Chib were the first students with multiple disabilities to enroll at a mainstream college in India. They created history by making the concept of inclusive education in higher education, a reality in India for the first time.

Employment is the emblem of empowerment, emblem of one's 'achieved' identity. The role of education and employability to establish the identity of the disabled people is geometrically progressed.

To work is to exert effort in order to make something, to achieve something, to produce a desired effect. For human beings, 'to be able to do something' means to make it visible that 'I', as the subject, is active in the world, that 'I' exist. As many scholars working in the field of disability note that it is exclusion from work that put disabled people at the periphery. (Ghai 129)

The only way to bring disabled people into the mainstream was possible through empowerment. To become an empowered woman is the dream of Naseema. She dreamt of attending college in wheelchair, participating in dance and sports competition and win prizes there, getting appreciation from others for her cooking, and getting a job which will bring smile in her lower middle class family. Wheelchair is the symbol of freedom for bedridden Naseema. She thought that now she could roam about as she wishes like normal people. She would not feel herself as 'a sack of potatoes'.

Babu Kaka Diwan who was a successful physically challenged businessman was an inspiration for Naseema. He advised her to complete her higher studies, to take part in sports competitions for persons with disabilities, and to extend a helping hand for other physically challenged people after being an empowered woman. Being an in-charge of the vocational training centre in Kolhapur, Naseema started her journey of empowerment. In the chapter, 'I Get Employed', Malini shared her experience of professional life. She got a job of Senior Events' Manager at the Oxford Book store in Mumbai. After several failure in getting job in London it was surprising for her to get a job in India, the country she undermined due to severe problem of inaccessibility everywhere for person with disabilities. She also emphasized on the importance of an assistant for the disabled people who can perform the job to their fullest potential with the help of them.

In the beginning of the civilization, food, dress and habitat were the only essential requirements for human being. The next essential requirement of human being is education. In ancient education system, education for all the disabled child was prohibited. After several trials and tribulations from the ancient era, getting education is now considered as the birth-right for every citizen including the disabled who belong to the most marginalised strata of the society. According to "PL: 94-142(1975) - the education for all Handicapped Children Act", every nation is responsible for providing the education and rehabilitation for every disabled child.

In practical terms, education or welfare systems that operate on the premise of normality and the reduction of difference will always leave some people out. It is a part of their logic a rather well-accepted fact that education in today's world is the critical variable that can teach human beings about the intricacies of life and give it a direction (Robertson 122). Indeed it would not be misnomer to say that it is education is closely related to personhood. Though education is important for every human being, disabled people however have always existed at the precincts of the society. They have been excluded socially, politically, economically and, what is more critical, educationally. In fact educational issues of disabled children have sparked debates in almost every country. In post-independence India education for person with disabilities was really in deplorable condition. The educational discourse in India and in other countries begins with the process of 'othering' the disabled student by segregating them from a more caring interactive context both with fellow students as well as teachers. (Ghai 112)

To get proper education was really difficult for them as there were no schools for these differently abled persons. Malini shared her experience in Centre for Special Education where there is no particular syllabus, students were treated as Guinea-pigs as educating children with multiple disabilities were completely new to them. In their innovative experience, all students were considered brilliant students. This unsystematic style of education seriously hampered the intellectual growth of the students. Malini resents education system in India which "teaches students to be like sausage machines rather than thinkers of the future" (Chib 61).

In the educational discourse, inclusive education has been a buzzword. The philosophy behind inclusive schools is that all children have the right to be educated with their peers in regular classrooms in neighbourhood schools. The

concept of 'inclusive education' advocates an intrinsic respect for difference, thereby celebrating diversity rather than creating labels that delimit human potential. (Ghai 118)

Malini questions the social construction of disability discourse which propagate the view that children with severe disability should not be exposed to the 'normal' world. Malini de-constructs this so-called concept of 'normalcy' by asserting her own childhood experience, how her education suffered being trapped in a special school. In her opinion, if exposure to the outside world is restricted to the special child, her intelligence and social networking skills would not develop. Instead of exclusion, 'inclusion' should be the mantra of our society. Malini reveals the drastic reality- "Inclusive education was a concept which had not yet developed and my mother did not even consider asking this elite school to admit me" (Chib 28).

Educated elite intellectuals of India could not come out of their stereotypical understanding of normalcy. They considered persons with disabilities as useless even in this 20th century. Malini unravelled the hollowness of educated elites while narrating her experience in Bombay University. Malini wrote,

Why did these students want to give this exam was the response of the Vice Chancellor of Bombay University, to a request by mother and Pam that the University make available the option of extra time for disabled students. 'Sitting in these exams are a waste of time they are useless and this would be better kept at home' she said. (Chib 49)

Naseema Hurzuk in her life narrative, *Naseema: An Incredible Story* also raised her voice against the lack of disability awareness in the Indian universities. In response to Rehana's letter seeking permission on her sister's behalf from the university to appear in the BA examination externally, the university informed that "only those who were married, and had jobs or lived outside Maharashtra could appear externally for the exams"(Naseema 68). In post-independence India lack of awareness even among the highly educated people about the use of empathetic language towards disabled persons is another instance of insensitivity towards the human rights and towards the debilitated strata of the society.

To establish their own identity is another mammoth task for person with disabilities. Malini could not pronounce her name in front of the Professor in her very first class in St. Xavier's. When her fellow classmates pronounced her name on behalf of her, she felt that now she has her own identity. She would not be treated as a lump of flesh on a wheelchair. Malini felt left out, alienated and frustrated at not being able to participate and contribute to the conversations like her classmate.

Issue of sexuality never gets importance in the disability discourse in India.

In Russell Shuttleworth's view, historically, the disability rights movement has focused its energy on issues more amenable to social change, such as access to the built environment, education, and employment. By virtually ignoring the sexual issues relevant to disabled people, the disability rights movement thus reinforced the individualized and medicalised view of disability and sexuality that held sway. (Shuttleworth 2)

Malini also pointed out that the social construction of masculinity makes it difficult for a woman with disabilities to get a suitor because it is going against their 'macho' image. She blatantly exposed the harsh reality. "For the typical boy it is not acceptable to be seen with a disabled girlfriend. They wanted a 'normal girlfriend' on their arm" (Chib 59).

Being left out from the dance floor in Prom Night, Malini brooded over her future conjugal life - "I wondered if there would even be a man in my life. Would a man see beyond my body?" (Chib 65)

Harlan Hahn argued that the disabled people, need to reclaim/reconstruct an aesthetic tradition by deconstructing images of the body as a gestalt or whole body image. Instead of the whole, separate and discreet parts of the body need to be emphasized. In place of a gestalt we need to 'cultivate a heightened aesthetic appreciation of anatomical variations'. (Hahn 223)

Susan Peters also asserted 'This view requires that one rejects conformist visions of beauty and assert that disability is beautiful' (Peters 596). But in Indian culture any deviation from a normally accepted archetype is seen as a marked deviation, the impaired body becomes a symbol of imperfection. "The myth of the beautiful/athletic/perfect body defines the impaired body as unacceptable and undesirable" (Ghai 239).

Social construction of the concept of 'normalcy' and 'beauty' in India instilled inferiority complex within the psyche of the physically challenged person due to their ascribed identity. It becomes terrible for women with disabilities who considered doubly marginalized in Indian society to become able-bodied and to be beautiful which are the pre-requisite norms for marriage. Malini expressed her agony, "Would anyone put their arms around me and dance with me? Would anyone kiss me passionately? Would I ever be needed by a man emotionally or would I always be regarded as a burden for someone to take care of? A silent unseen by any human eye trickled-down my face...." (Chib 65)

The cultural devaluation and the extent to which the juxtaposition of sexuality and disability is silenced, makes it all the more difficult for disabled people to have a positive self-identity. The issue is not only that the disabled person must fight to be the author of her/his own sexuality but also must establish sexuality in the first place. What is wrong perception in the society here is that the disabled person in this society has no sexuality at all. (Ghai155)

In a scenario where sexuality is intimately tied to marriage, opportunities for sexual exploration among disabled people in India, particularly women, are very limited. Marriage, which is considered a safe haven for women, is not an easy option for the disabled girls. Thus, for women the reduction in life choices has an impact on her sense of worth, which in turn affects sexuality.

Media has a very important role to play in rethinking about sexuality issues. As disabled people, the invisibility of our lives becomes heightened by the fact that popular advertising implies the belief that 'normal' body is that which is desirable. That there is an ideal weight, ideal size, and ideal colour emphasized by the media time and again. Once these messages become internalized disabled people get trapped in subscribing to the non-disabled 'norms'. Consequently,

comfort and health may be sacrificed, as there is always an attempt to be identified as 'normal'. It is only by challenging prevailing socio-cultural values and the binaries of normal and abnormal, that disabled people can resist normative constructions of them as dependent, asexual or deformed, and begins to forge new identities. (Ghai159)

While travelling to Kolhapur by bus, her first encounter with the common people after being disabled, introduced Naseema with the stereotypical attitude of the society towards person with disabilities. She was considered as a curse to the family. Disability was seen as the result of her sins in previous birth. People did not have any understanding of the epic suffering of disabled persons. They thoughtlessly occupied the seat of the physically challenged people and even physically hurt them when they wanted to sit in their reserved seats. This inhuman behaviour leads Naseema to take the 'resolution' not to 'travel' anymore. People never try to understand that disabled people have the feelings and tension just like so-called normal people. Even an educated person like an invigilator of the college examination asked personal questions regarding Naseema's disability during the examination which disturbed her badly. She had to reply irritatingly - "please, is it okay if I told you my entire tale after the paper?" (Naseema 39)

In India social constructions of disability have set the parameters for responding to disabled people's identity, status and services directed towards them, which is of being treated them as the 'other'. Disabled people's history in India is largely a history of silence. Disabled people have not only been constructed as 'other', but frequently as 'the other' of 'the other'. People with disability are marginalized even by those who are considered to be marginal in social contexts such as those concerning caste and women's issues. (Ghai 298)

Indian society is not very much concerned towards person with disabilities. In the social gatherings, physically challenged persons feel isolated as it is difficult for them to adjust themselves to buffet system. They feel dejected and alienated. Malini does not hide her distress- "People did not really want my company. They were oblivious to my needs and could not see my physical difficulties with eating" (Chib 67). Malini expressed her anger against male chauvinists who would stand and stare at them instead of extending their hands to help the differently abled women. She avoids to attend the social events as it was impossible for her to tolerate the feeling that she was unwanted there.

The Social Model of disability which challenges the ideological hegemony of the medical model has endowed a significant and empowering political agenda in allowing the contested notion of disability to become a significant and powerful force in social structuring (Oliver 40). It is a right-based approach gradually predominant over old medical model of disability. It ushered new ideologies that inaccessibility of the disabled people to offices, libraries, restaurant and various other places should not be treated as their inability but it should be the lack of awareness in society which never think of the faulty architectural design. This model of disability breaks the stereotypical old belief that a differently abled person had to be fixed, seated and cured. Malini raised her voice against the social construction of disability. Their slogan was - "Nothing for the disabled without disabled people" (Chib 108).

In this chapter 'Entre - void to Adulthood', the author compared between accessibility in post-independence India and United States while narrating her experience in Berkeley.

Malini shared her experience in the life narrative that unlike India every place in Berkeley is accessible to physically challenged persons- be it a library, museum, restaurant, shop, school, public toilet or theater and besides mobility, this accessibility facilitated independence which is the most important weapon to establish one's own identity.

Malini visited Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, USA in 1988. There were several organizations dealing with disabled students that trained them on how to manage their lives, empower themselves and fight for the rights of the disabled people. In order to break the social hegemony disabled people in Berkeley argued that no person in this world is completely independent. In their opinion, just as a normal person would need a carpenter, a plumber or an electrician, the disabled, too, are dependent on getting help to enable independent living, so that they can function more efficiently and are able to take up employment. Inspired by them, Malini too raised her voice against stereotypical projection of the differently-abled people in Indian society where physically challenged person are treated as second class citizen, sometimes not even as a human being. Malini shares heart experience in *One Little Finger*- "The person within the disabled person is always unnoticed because their physical demands are so immense and often glaring" (Chib 85).

Malini has her own notion of disabilities. She felt that the social interaction between the disabled people and the so-called normal people is a need of the hour. All have to share their own problems with each other. In her view, no one is completely perfect, in some way or the other, everyone is disabled because they have to depend on others to live their livelihood. Malini wrote- "Our disability is more visible; others have what I like to call, an 'invisible disability'" (Chib 103).

In *One Little Finger*, Malini raised her voice against the society's lack of concern for accessibilities for the person with disabilities. Be it in India or in London she faced this problem more or less. She faced the problem of accessing the third floor classroom lectures in St Xavier's College in Mumbai. She faced problem in the publishing department in Oxford, in the canteen of the office of 'Times' in Bombay during tea break or lunch break. In her office in 'Times', Malini felt isolated as she could not join her colleagues due to inaccessibility of the canteen. Accessibility problem for physically challenged people is severe in India. Even the toilets are not accessible. Once Malini was badly injured in the toilet and she had to leave her job. Pavements and roads in India are also not disability-friendly. Malini expressed her despair that she had to leave job because of accessibility and attitudinal barriers.

England was her favorite country as she was easily accepted there. England is much more disability-friendly than India. In England there was no problem of toilets and even the buses had ramps. Job prospects for the persons with disabilities would be much better. Malini also compares attitude of the Indians and the British towards disabled people in their everyday encounter. People in the supermarkets, the chemist and the book shops all came forward to help her. She had rarely experienced this in India. People in England were very empathetic towards differently-abled persons. They never ask rude questions or stare at them as Malini faced in India. She had a good community experience in England. Even her friend Fiona is eager to spend summer holiday with her in France. Malini who was overwhelmed by her broad mindedness- "I could not possibly

imagine anyone wanting to take on the challenge of taking me, as well as, the wheelchair for a holiday" (Chib 124).

Stereotypical attitude of the society to treat disabled persons as 'mental' who do not know their minds is an unbearable pain for the victims. Malini had to undergo such a traumatic experience when she went to 'University College of London' (UCL) for lunch. Malini also hammered on another stereotypical attitude of the society to seeing disabled people being accompanied by their attendants by narrating her confrontation with a lady in the lift of 'Institute of Education'. Gregg consoled her by articulating the fact that people did not know what to do with an unaccompanied woman with disability like Malini who needed their help.

'Feminism' establishes the concept that from our everyday experiences, we have to understand the oppression of women including women with disabilities. Being independent in living and learning, being accepted by the so-called normal people Malini got the confidence that she can be included in the mainstream of society, despite her disability. Four years' Masters Programme made her intellectually confident and emotionally stable. She vehemently in search of her own identity by questioning herself who she was? Then for the first time Malini was able to accept her own identity as a 'disabled woman' and was proud of being one. Malini could make a long-lasting relationship with her friends in 'Institute of Education' (IOE) because they first treated her as a woman and then as a woman with disability.

Disabled people live lives blemished by discrimination and exclusion. Disability activists in India have evolved a human rights agenda, which flows from the social model, which argues the environment, must be adapted, so that disabled person's needs are prioritized. It is important that the right to be included in schools, job establishments, the right to access to public buildings, public transports, recreation and health facilities and sexual gratification which should not be projected as the concessions given by the able-bodied society. (Ghai 234-235)

In the 21st century, the question of human rights of persons with disabilities has taken the centre stage all over the world. Believing in the mantra, 'Nothing about us, without us', (Chib 185) Malini has initiated the attitudinal changes in her group named 'ADAPT' ('Able Disabled All People Together').

Social stigmas still pervade the minds of the parents of the paraplegic women. Importance of Rehabilitation for disabled person seems hibru to them. Naseema has talked of two paraplegic women, Anita Rane and Susheela whose parents did not give permission to bring them to Kolhapur for rehabilitation though they lived animal-like life in their home, isolated from other family members.

Naseema has exposed how in post-independence India, government officials, conductors of public vehicles often take advantage of the ignorance of the hapless disabled people by demanding 'special luggage charges' for the wheelchair. During her train journey to Mumbai, Naseema raised her voice against this illegal demand by showing the circular issued by the Railway Department regarding the exemption of wheelchairs from any charges.

In the forward of “Naseema: An Incredible Story”, Javed Abidi who was the convenor of the ‘Disabled Rights Group’, New Delhi hammered on the negligence of the Government of India for the distress of the person with disabilities. Failed to establish themselves as a strong vote bank like other religious, regional, social or professional minorities, the differently-abled persons are always neglected in terms of human rights. He also questioned the scarcity of disability books in India which reflects the wretched condition due to ignorance suffered by these marginalised strata of the society. He raised his voice against the lack of education, scarcity of jobs, inaccessibility in the roads and different places including university and colleges as University Grant Commission did not pay heed to that earlier. Non-availability of proper and regular medical checkup, poor quality of 'Made in India' aids for the disabled made their life hellish. While trying to trace the trajectory of the deplorable condition of the disabled, he lamented - “To be born disabled in India becomes a curse... we the disabled people of India? Our leadership? Where are they? What are day after in the fifties sixties seventies and even in the 1980s?” (Abidi xi). Abidi has a wistful thinking for ‘Yellow Revolution’ as yellow is the colour of disability. He hopes that as ‘Green Revolution’ and ‘White Revolution’ brought self-sufficiency to our country in food and milk, ‘Yellow Revolution’ will create a disabled-friendly India.

To conclude, it can be said that as the most democratic, inclusive, and accessible literary genre, life narrative is a particularly valuable and liberating medium for the representation of disability. Malini and Naseema's life narratives trace the trajectory of their life-long struggles to establish their own identity as well as those of the ‘other’ disabled persons through ‘ADAPT’ and the ‘Helpers of the Handicapped’ by fighting against the societal exclusion perpetrated by their ‘ascribed’ identity. In post-independence India where the lack of opportunity crippled the ‘crippled’, these life narratives serve as a counter-narrative to the dominant discourses to destabilize any claim to the normative fixed center.

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