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Disability: A Social Greenness in Day of the Butterfly

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Abstract:

It has become essential today to study thoroughly the 'Disability Literature' to establish a rapport with the other sub-branches of literature and philosophy. Although it has not neglected as a whole since its perception in late 1960s as a specific study group. Different social representations have been operating various strategies to empower the disabled persons worldwide. It has observed that a little attention has been paid on the social, economical and psychological level of the hamstrung and paralyzed individuals in any way. 'The Day of the Butterfly' is a fine presentation of such disability issues.

Key Words: empower, paralyzed, curse, disability studies, lower-middle class, sympathetic, reclamation awareness

Introduction:

Although various writings and films on disability literature have been emerged during the last two decades including the physical and mental aspects, the present paper explores the additional disability matters such as negative social approach towards the paralyzed persons, the monetary deficiency as a curse, lack of normal bondage as a human being etc. those were reverberated in Day of the Butterfly, a short story by Alice Munro.

Disability: It's Implication through Writings

The study on 'disability' has come in vogue since 1960s like the other themes of literature such as, feminism, racial discrimination, gender studies etc. The number of differently able individuals exists globally. "The Disability Studies originated in the West in the late twentieth century as a result of the success of the disability rights movement, the seminal work of a few scholars like Erving Goffman and Michel Foucault." (Mambrol) The disabled activists gave a vociferous cry against not allowing them to their freedom and basic rights in United States and United Kingdom. They consciously built on the civil rights movement. Consequently, the long protest made America to pass the first disability civil rights law. Mambrol points out, "Several influential scholars working in the 1960s and 1970s provided intellectual groundwork for the field, even if they did not write solely about disability or offer a vision of liberation for disabled people." The succeeding era witnessed the depiction of the aforementioned subject matter through literature and films, they are- *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in Night Time* (2012), *The Secret Garden* (2012), etc and *Bollywood movies like Koshish* (1972), *Sparsh* (1980), *Black* (2005), *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) etc. The characters in these works generally belong to the lower-middles class strata.

The Day of the Butterfly: An Overview

The short story, *The Day of the Butterfly* is a creation by Alice Munro a Canadian writer. It is taken from her

short story collection 'Dance of the Happy Shades' (1968). Her short stories mostly deal with feminine concerns. The present story carries the theme of isolation and commitment. The events and incidents of the story are unfolded by Helen. It opens with the first person narration, and the readers do acquaint with the characters such as Myra Sayla, a girl in the sixth grade having a shabby look, her brother Jimmy, studying in Grade One. He is disabled. During the next course, remaining characters like Miss Darling, a teacher, Gladys Healey and other students appear.

Myra is seen always taking care of Jimmy who is not able to go to bathroom by himself. Myra would look after all such things. She belongs to the lower-middle class family. She has to help in running the small fruit store of her father. Simultaneously, she has to complete her education too. Actually she is good at Art and Arithmetic as we know it from Helen.

Jimmy sometimes wet himself and Myra has to come out of the classroom seeking with the permission of the teacher. At this, her fellow students would laugh and tease at her. They avoid Myra's company due to her dirty, smelling clothes and her shabby appearance. The class-teacher, Miss Darling is quiet sympathetic towards Myra and always has a helping hand. She urges other girls of the class to mix up with Myra and allow her to play with them. On the contrary, the girls stay reluctant. Further, the teacher appeal to the students to visit Myra in the hospital where she has admitted due to disease of leukemia. Miss Darling also make a plan of celebrating Myra's birthday in advance on 20th March, four months before of her actual birthday. The teacher might know the threats and the consequences of the disease.

Helen is presented a true friend of Myra comparing to the other classmates, and there are ample illustrations of it. Helen's friendship and the later developed closeness is striking example of the humanitarian principal. The colourful butterfly brooch is a gift Myra receives from Helen. It is symbolic to a ray of hope in the life of Myra. It

also provide her a kind of vigour after her hospitalization.

The concluding part of the story set in the hospital room where Myra has admitted. She is seen delighted and overwhelmed with the attachment shown by her (friends). Lastly, everyone turns back by bidding a farewell. Helen also says a goodbye to Myra, for Myra has to shift to a London hospital for further medical treatment. It is symbolic too. What would have happen to Myra, her disabled brother Jimmy? Everything remains unresolved.

Disability: A Curse on Myra and Jimmy

The disability of Jimmy can be regarded as a curse on the sibling. He needs an attendant while doing the natural processes of a person. Myra would take him downstairs of the classroom. Failing to which make himself wet. As Helen states, "Quite often he would not get to Myra in time and there would be a big dark stain on his little button-on cotton pants." (Explorations: 59) Myra's classmates would tease and laugh at her when she asks for the permission to go outdoors. It is also inhuman when the other boys chase Jimmy, corner him against the back fence and thrash him with tree branches. Jimmy is not involved in the dialogues directly, but his minor role is vital in the course of action in the story. Although Jimmy is paralyzed; but Myra also suffer having no fault of her own. She has to face the raillery of others. She could not attend the class regularly. Is it a sin of her previous birth? As it regarded in various mythologies and now she has to pay the cost of it. Both were made to ostracize. Helen rightly observe, "So Myra and Jimmy spent every recess standing in the little back porch ... Whenever you happen to look at them their heads were slightly bent, their narrow bodies hunched in, quite still" (Explorations: 60) Even the teachers except Miss Daring were not bother with them.

Financial Inadequacy and Social Greenness:

The story, The Day of the Butterfly, actually is a pathetic tale of a poor Myra. Jimmy is physically disabled and Myra's financial inadequacy can also be regarded as a disability. She is shouldering many responsibilities at a time. She looks after Jimmy, she contributes to run a fruit

store, and she is acquiring her education too. It indicates that her family is not well-settled. She is deprived of daily needs and households. She could not maintain the hygiene. As a result, the students avoid the company of Myra. The lines, "What do you Wash your hair in. ... but it was a rotten-sweetish smell as of bad fruit." (Explorations: 61) At two occasions, Helen's fingers touch with Myra's hand and she pulls it back. All these are the instances of the class-distinction. Society, not as a whole; but is responsible for the predicament of the disabled in any way. In fact, the social mentality is paralyzed. There is a feeling of alienation, and the disabled have a particular identity.

Reclamation of Disability Issues:

The helping nature, sympathetic attitude and moral support to the disabled individuals is expected. It shouldn't be at the cost of anyone's life. The practice should be followed as implemented by Miss Darling. The friendship of Helen and Myra is memorable and it should be continued with other Jimmy and Myra in the world. The literature and films are the medium of spreading awareness and knowledge of such social issues, so instead of presenting the helplessness of disabled person, efforts should be done in the direction of reformation of the society again.

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