Exploring Disability Empowerment and Culture Construct in India: A Trans-deconstructive Study

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Abstract

This article explores the studies concerning marginalized individuals, focusing specifically on people with disabilities in India. Over the past two decades, the attention given to this demographic has increased. The question of their identity within a rigid societal framework, especially in India, reveals a history of neglect and numerous hurdles. This article emphasizes the perspective of women with disabilities, who often find themselves unable to fulfill household responsibilities according to the expectations of family members, thereby undermining their roles in marriage and motherhood. This neglect renders them significantly undervalued in all sectors of society.

People with disabilities are frequently overlooked in various fields, though they are not completely excluded. This societal ignorance discourages them, leading to a dependence on family and government support while fostering feelings of worthlessness compared to their able-bodied counterparts. Individuals with disabilities seek inclusion, equality, and fair treatment within mainstream society.

Keywords: *Marginalized, Indian Tradition, Marriage, Livelihood*

Introduction

The term "disability" has been part of the English language since the sixteenth century. It carries connotations of "inabilities" or "incapacities," signifying the inability to perform tasks as efficiently as normal individuals. Historically, the term has roots in classical language, where it was associated with "deformity" and, during the early modern period, with "monstrosity," implying a lack of physical attractiveness.

While disabled individuals work in various sectors, they often do not receive the same respect as their able-bodied peers and are subjected to inhumane treatment. Consequently, many hide their talents and skills, aspiring only for basic living conditions. Disabled individuals in India experience significant financial challenges, often struggling to afford essentials, while social support from friends and family is lacking.

Numerous prominent writers in India have addressed issues such as poverty, caste, employment, dowry, foeticide, and sexual oppression. However, the plight of disabled individuals is rarely included in these discussions, as their population is relatively small. Some disabled writers argue that the Indian education system is supposedly inclusive; however, this often leads to feelings of shame and isolation, preventing disabled students from seeking education in mainstream institutions. The Persons with Disabilities Act mandates education for disabled students up to the age of 18, including a 3% reservation in educational institutions.

The largest proportion of employed disabled individuals works in the software sector, where they can improve their living standards. However, many face discrimination from employers and find themselves in lower-paying jobs, such as bag making and embroidery.

Family support is crucial for disabled individuals, yet often their parents and distant relatives fail to provide the necessary attention. Many disabled individuals confront societal stigma and are often met with questions regarding their educational achievements. Such societal attitudes foster feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness.

Disabled women, in particular, face "double discrimination" due to societal gender norms and their disabilities. They often endure violence in relationships and face societal pressure to conform to traditional roles, which many cannot fulfill. The prevalence of abusive relationships further complicates their situation, with some women being forced to live as spinsters or facing abuse from family members.

Access to healthcare for disabled individuals is often inadequate, with medical assistance typically sought only in extreme cases. Family members frequently control their lives, dictating their choices regarding food, clothing, and mobility. Many public spaces in India are not designed to be user-friendly for disabled individuals, further isolating them from societal participation.

To improve the situation, the government needs to implement better infrastructure and support systems for disabled individuals, including accessible public spaces and trained personnel to assist them.

Conclusion

Disability studies represent an interdisciplinary field that sheds light on the conditions faced by disabled individuals and the social barriers they encounter. This study aims to provoke societal reflection on the lives of disabled individuals and initiate cultural change in India. By examining the intersections of race, class, and gender, this research highlights the marginalization faced by disabled individuals and advocates for positive societal change.

The academic foundation of disability studies provides valuable insights for policymakers in both governmental and non-governmental sectors. There is hope for legal reforms in education, healthcare, employment, and social practices, empowering individuals with disabilities. The research calls attention to more developed countries where disabled individuals live with dignity and access modern facilities, promoting a vision for a more inclusive society.

References

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Endnotes

For a comprehensive understanding of the evolving perceptions of disability in India, see Ghai (2018).

Mitra (2006) discusses the limitations of the current education system in accommodating disabled individuals.

The Trans-Deconstruction Theory on Monism (TTM), as presented in Pawar (2021), emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual experiences and societal constructs, providing a framework to analyze how cultural narratives shape perceptions of disability.

The Theory of Interpretations (TI) articulated by Pawar (2024) allows for a nuanced examination of texts and societal norms, facilitating deeper insights into the representation of disabled individuals within Indian culture.

Shakespeare (2013) emphasizes the importance of rights-based approaches to disability in the context of societal norms.

Nussbaum (2006) presents a philosophical framework for understanding justice as it relates to marginalized groups, including those with disabilities.

Acknowledgments