Abstract: Societal attitudes towards persons with disability have changed from time to time. Various factors contribute to these changing attitudes. Gender, education, religion, occupation, income, nationality have a significant impact on the level of disability consciousness. The present research paper will investigate the level of consciousness of different types of people towards disability in the selected Indian English fiction which deals with the theme of disability to understand the various psychological and sociological dialectics that take place in the life of a person with some kind of disability. The approach is interdisciplinary as it aims at assimilating the psychological and sociological aspects in analyzing the fiction of disabled people. It will also try to problematize the various linguistic construct applied to people with disability.

Keywords: Disability, postcolonial writing, feminism, community, fundamental values

Disability Studies is an inventive area with sound intellectual and professional foundation in social sciences, humanities and rehabilitation sciences. Disability can be defined as 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. The present paper begins with a brief introduction about the field of disability and its relationship with like Feminism, Postcolonial etc. and to show the portrayal of different types of disability i.e. visually impaired, physically handicapped, psychological/mental disability etc. in Indian English Fiction with special reference to Trying to Grow by Firdaus, Clear Light of the Day by Anita Desai, Family Matters by Rohinton Mistry, Sunny’s Story by Pramila Balasundaram and Shame by Salman Rushdie. Disabilities are not to be viewed as conditions needing to be cured or healed, but rather as differences to be accommodated and accepted. Disabled and abnormal individuals
have historically received positions of alienation. A minority status has always been placed in opposition of a prescribed, majority-based notion of what it means to be able. If one is perceived as unable, he or she is pulled out of the community and kept away. The actual experience of disability and how able-bodied people look on disabled people as ‘Other’ as different from them and not as an individual. The disabled people are always treated in different way, either people go out of the way in being nasty towards the people with disability or go out of the way to be nice to them. The portrayal of disabilities in Literature undergirds the exclusionary environment and the discrimination that disabled human being faces and warrants the flight from disability. Disability Studies seeks to challenge our collective stories – our cultural representations – about disabled human beings. The WHO definition of this concept summarizes the most common understanding of the social model: Disability is not an attribute of an individual, but rather a complex collection of conditions, many of which are created by the social environment. Hence the management of the problem requires social action, and it is the collective responsibility of society at large to make the changes necessary for full participation of people with disabilities in all areas of social life. (WHO 2001, 28)

Clare Barker in *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability* (2012) explores the politics and aesthetics of disability in postcolonial literature. While the fictional lives of disabled child characters are frequently intertwined with postcolonial histories, providing potent metaphors for national 'damage' and vulnerability, Barker argues that postcolonial writers are equally concerned with the complexity of disability as lived experience. It focuses on constructions of normality, the politics of medicine and healthcare, and questions of citizenship and belonging in order to demonstrate how progressive health and disability politics often emerge organically from writers’ postcolonial concerns. In reframing disability as a mode of exceptionality, the book assesses the cultural and political insights that derive from portrayals of disability, showing how postcolonial writing can contribute conceptually towards building more inclusive futures for disabled people worldwide. In her influential *Introduction to Disability Studies* (1998), Simi Linton makes an extended argument for “setting off disability studies as a socio-political-cultural examination of disability from the interventionist approaches that characterize the dominant traditions in the study of disability” (132).

The essential basis of Disability Studies is that disability is a culturally fabricated narrative of the body, a system that produces subjects by differentiating and marking bodies. This comparison of bodies legitimates the distribution of resources, status, and power within
a biased social and architectural environment. As such, disability has four aspects: first, it is a system for interpreting bodily variations; second, it is a relationship between bodies and their environments; third, it is a set of practices that produce both the able-bodied and the disabled; and fourth, it is a way of describing the inherent instability of the embodied self. 

Culture directs and gratifies individual needs very differently in different societies due to their particular values and thereby not only affect emotions, perceptions, feelings and thoughts of the individual, but also characterize a different way of life. The characteristics of consciousness emerging out of a culture may differ in degree but not in kind. Cultural pressures are among the dominant factors that influence the basic personality pattern, feelings towards parents, the siblings, the peer groups and the other socio-economic and political groups, feelings and attitudes towards the same and the opposite sex and the sense of guilt, emotions and hostility connected therewith, etc. These fundamental values of a culture, to which a child belongs, lend a pattern to his basic consciousness, a pattern that gets injected in the individual-self in interaction with the primary and secondary groups of that culture. 

Culture is powerful and pervasive, changing the character of our biological drives, affecting our thinking, our emotions and our perceptions. At the same time religion also plays a vital role in the lives of people worldwide. Most of the people identifies as adherents of one of the major/minor world religious traditions. Like others in societies around the world, people with a disability/ deformity/ impairment have been directly or indirectly influenced by religion throughout history. Literature on the impact of religious beliefs and practices on people with a disability, however, is sparingly disseminated across the fields of studies in religion, health, ageing, and disability.

Disability and gender are representations that historians can chart over time, interpretations that philosophers can query, images that religious scholars can trace, concepts that geographers can probe, traditions that rhetoricians can contest, and fictions that literary critics can reveal. These narratives shape the material world, inform human relations, and mould our sense of who we are. Many cultural stories simplify disability’s complexities, limit the lives and govern the bodies of disabled women. Indeed, these stories ultimately undergird the exclusionary environment and the employment discrimination that disabled women face and warrant the flight from disability so characteristic of our cultural moment. Feminist Disability Studies seeks to challenge our collective stories – our cultural representations – about disabled women. The most fundamental goal is to re-imagine women and people with disabilities. All the tools of critical theory are being recruited to show that gender and
disability are discourses to be charted over time, aesthetic motifs to be probed, rhetorical traditions to be contested, metaphors to be deconstructed, performances to be analyzed, and fictions to be revealed. “Feminist disability theory engages several of the fundamental premises of critical theory: (1) that representation structures reality, (2) that the margins define the center, (3) that gender (or disability) is a way of signifying relationships of power, (4) that human identity is multiple and unstable, and (5) that all analysis and evaluation has political implications” (Kim Q. Hall 20). Exclusion and marginalization reduce the opportunities for the disabled to contribute productively to the household and the community, and increase the risk of falling into poverty. Attitudinal barriers as well as physical barriers such as lack of adequate or appropriate transportation, physical inaccessibility, and lack of learning opportunities can affect access to education and employment opportunities, reducing the opportunities for income enhancement as well as social participation.

As Literature informs and informed, it also includes the sites of people who suffer any kind of imperfectness and how this imperfectness is treated as disability. The so called society that uses the term ‘special’ for the people with the imperfectness at one hand, assume their role in society as a waste on the other. It’s not the imperfectness of the people that create problems to them in adopting the world as their own or to the world that belongs to them but the society that snatches its hand of help when they are needed for a disable person. People are impaired, society disables: “Disability culture is the difference between being alone, isolated, and individuated with a physical, cognitive, emotional or sensory difference that in our society invites discrimination and reinforces that isolation – the difference between all that and being in community. Naming oneself part of a larger group, a social movement or a subject position in modernity can help to focus energy, and to understand that solidarity can be found – precariously, in improvisation, always on the verge of collapse.” (Petra Kuppers 109). The analysis of the literary texts will draw out the tension and indifference that is constantly at play in the Indian context between modern ways of knowing disability that are audible in the rights discourse or visible in the form of ramps and wheelchairs in public spaces, as well as the “non-modern” or “cultural” ways of knowing corporeality. The textual analysis also inspects the role of narrative prop that disability plays in the literary texts and recommend a more context sensitive as well as critical application of disability studies theory that frequently tends to further itself with a universalistic claim.
Firdaus Kanga’s novel, *Trying to Grow* (1991) is the story of a young man named Daryus Kotwal, who grew up in more ways than one, and did not allow his disabilitating disease to overcome him. Set in an endearing idiosyncratic Parsi family, the story recreates his struggle with life. Its first-person protagonist is born with Osteogenesis imperfect, a Latin euphemism for brittle bones. Before he has turned five, Brit (short for 'brittle' and 'British') has cracked his legs as many as eleven times. But Brit's spine compensates for his breakable bones - it neither bends nor cracks. Slowly, through his fractured years, Brit grows into what only a callous world can see as deformed; his more sensitive friends and family, instead, help him flower into what the world is not - caring, sensitive, imaginative and quietly heroic. It effectively dramatises this process of an unusually painful self-development. It is a portrait of the handicapped man as an artist. The vitality of the story comes from startlingly vivid characterizations. There is also this extraordinary fluency in the description of relationships and heartbreaks. Autobiographical in nature, it brings a whole new and refreshing perspective to the world of human disability, eliminating any kind of ‘mush’. There is a lot of honesty and energy in the way the story has been told. There is a vein of humor through out giving it a surprisingly upbeat tone. It is an exhilarating book which celebrates life more than anything else. Brit Kotwal, so called because he suffers from a brittle bone condition, lives near Bombay in India. He feels that sometimes it is fun being different, drinking powdered pearls in his milk or having almond oil rubbed into his legs. He thinks he knows the answer to how he can grow. Kanga’s fluid writing style and sense of humour bring to life a rich cast of characters, beginning with the family Kotwal, who are never less than believable, multidimensional people even as they live up to every endearing Parsee stereotype (such as the ability to talk – or holler – unselfconsciously about things that would be taboo in most Indian households; Brit and his sister Dolly address their parents by their first names, use the occasional cuss word in front of them and discuss sex openly). Enragement and warmth shove for space in Brit’s relationships with Dolly and with his parents Sam and Sera. From his part-time teacher Madame Manekshaw he learns the valuable lesson that it’s what you learn that counts, not what you study and also that precious thing is brittle. Later, his friendship with the smart Cyrus and with Cyrus’s girlfriend Amy puts him on the road to understanding what it means to grow up.

It’s an understanding that doesn’t come easily. Though the novel unfolds as a series of episodes in Brit's life – roughly between the age of eight and his early twenties – the chapters don’t have convenient headings that establish the time period in which they are set: it's only
through close reading and extrapolation that one discovers how old he is at any given point. This is appropriate, for a major theme here is lack of development, the overall effect that of a lengthy sequence of events blurring into each other while the protagonist at their centre remains frozen in time: Brit in his wheelchair, motionless, while all around him his family and friends grow up, marry, move elsewhere, get exciting jobs, travel the world, grow old, die. Consequently the process of growing is more complex for Brit – and the yardsticks much less defined – than for ‘normal’ people whose bodies undergo obvious changes with time and whose lives precede in orderly stages from school to college to office and so on. On the book’s opening page someone mistakes Brit for a child of four when he is really eight, and this sort of thing continues for most of his life, even though he is in many senses more developed mentally than most others of his age. This complicates his relationships too. The novel ends in a note of affirmation, at a point where Brit comes to a definite decision, to become a creative writer, on his own. Brit’s conscious shift from the plane of self-absorption to one of self-actualization is a vivid illustration of his “growth”. His realization of his creative potential becomes the culminating point of process of his initiation. When considering the work of post-colonial scholars, it becomes apparent that missing from the list of the oppressed and marginalized are those who are doubly colonized with physical and mental disabilities. If, as Frantz Fanon has argued, Othering occurs on the basis of physical and verbal difference, then that colonized subject who is Other in terms of body and voice is made doubly Other by means of her disability.

Anita Desai’s various novels, such as *Voices in the City* (1965), *Clear Light of Day* (1980) and *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), address female psychological trauma at the sites of colonial and postcolonial clashes. Her preoccupation is with the modern Indian woman’s psyche, and the isolation of the physically ill and the psychiatrically othered through social structures and customs. However, scholarly work on her writings has disregarded disability studies perspectives as viable interpretive tools for analysis. Instead, there are endless conflations of psychiatric disabilities as symbolic of national fissures, cultural crises, states of corruption, internal strife, and ethnic violence. The social framing and ideological work of disabled characters in *Clear Light of Day* and inclusion of a disability perspective in post-colonial and feminist critiques can enrich our understanding of the dialectic between colonizers and colonized and refigure our consideration of hybridity. Main protagonist Baba is autistic. Though Desai resist simple answers to the question of how gender intersects with disability in post-colonial worlds, she offers provocative instances of the transgressive
potential of different bodies. The novel explores the ambivalent role of characters with disabilities, both as sites of transgression and as repositories for cultural tensions in a postcolonial world. She uses the family as microcosm for larger national concerns, as she does in many of her fictional explorations of postcolonial themes. Bharati Mukherjee’s *Wife* (1975) and Anjana Appachana’s *Incantations* (1991) address the contradictions that undergird the seemingly “success” stories of contemporary urban, middle class Indian and Indian diasporic lives by illuminating the locations of gender, mental trauma, and sexual violence and the borderlines of the normal and the abnormal. These literary depictions span the range of disability conceptions and misconceptions, as much as reinscribe as well as reimagine the figures of disability as reflections of individual loss, as shaped and undermined by social construction, and as agents of change.

In Mistry’s award-winning novel *Family Matters* (2002), Nariman Vakreel, an aging professor living in Bombay, becomes the object of both pity and derision by his family when he becomes bedridden following a fall. With his recovery time significantly prolonged as a result of Parkinson’s and osteoporosis, Nariman becomes a source of contention to his children who argue intensely over who should assume care giving responsibilities. He sympathizes with their reluctance to take on these duties, asking ‘can caring and concern be made compulsory?’ At the same time, when Nariman temporarily moves in with his daughter and her family, he contributes to the well-being of his grandchildren by providing them with love and support when their parents quarrel, teaching them about their Parsi heritage, and encouraging family harmony in general. Mistry aptly puts the frustration of such people: Like trapped animals struggling to break free. What a curse was sickness in old age. This damned Parkinson’s, cruel as torture (357). After thirty years running an education and resource centre in a poor area of Delhi for children with mental retardation and their families, and participating in national and international advocacy in this field, Pramila Balasundaram has crafted a novel *Sunny’s Story* (2005) based on real events, precipitated by the disappearance of one family’s son. The husband and wife wait late at night, with mounting panic, and the mother recalls the time 20 years earlier when she first heard that her baby has Down’s syndrome. What has become of Sunny, of the sunny temperament and trusting nature, in a world where the weak and simple are often brutally oppressed and abused? The story unfolds with a mixture of reconstruction and imagination, from fragments that Sunny could tell later of his life with the ‘platform people’ at Jullundur railway station, and at the docks at Calcutta, mingled with the family’s recollection of incidents from his life with them. Somehow, on his
long and haphazard travels, Sunny’s simplicity had sent a signal to the kind of people who could respond in a gruffly protective way, despite common sense telling them to ignore him as just another among a million destitute wanderers. Sunny stood out as one of the innocents who might be “a gift from the Gods” (116), sent to remind people of the need to open their hearts toward their unknown little brother.

Salman Rushdie’s *Shame* (1983) tells the story of the development of two families, the Harappas and the Hyders, and also the development of a recently independent country, which stands for Pakistan, but that the narrator says, is not really Pakistan. The Harappas are constituted of Iskander Harappa, at some point the president of the country, his wife Rani and their daughter Arjumand Harappa who never married and wanted to dedicate her life to continuing her father’s political project for the nation. On the Hyders side, there are Bilquis and her husband Raza Hyder, who overthrows Iskander in a military coup and become the president. Their daughters are mentally challenged Sufiya Zinobia and her younger sister, Naveed. The former together with Omar Khayyam Shakil are the main characters, concentrating both political and family narratives in their marriage. Last, but not least, there are the other characters, such as Haroun Harappa, the only man Arjumand loved but who declined her love, Talver Ulhaq, Naveed’s husband, and the mysterious three sisters who give birth to Omar. Next to the family drama, there is the social turmoil that unfolds as the family narrative is told. Sufiya is a feeble, brain damaged child of the Hyder’s and Omar is named by the narrator as the peripheral hero of the story. Omar is a doctor and many years older than Sufiya, but he eventually marries her in order to gain control over her shame which has manifested as a dangerous and deadly fury. Rushdie uses magical realism in his text to show the embodiment of shame within Sufiya. This technique inserts magical situations into a setting which is otherwise quite normal. Sufiya evolves into a sacrificial character who takes the shame of society upon herself. The shame is then transformed into a deadly magical power. Although Sufiya is physically incapable of harming anyone, her rage results in many deaths and torments her family and community. Sufiya remains oblivious to the crimes that she has committed. Omar’s marriage to Sufiya appears to be out of goodwill but is actually an assertion of control and power over her. Omar attempts to remove the evidence of Sufiya's shame in the same manner that he has removed it from his own life, by ignoring it, but shame triumphs over Omar in the end.
Literary study of disabilities has contemporary relevance as it helps physically or mentally impaired people to come into the mainstream society and to establish their equality and enhance their self-esteem. It will be therefore worth pursuing for further research to have a better understanding of the lives of people with disability and generating not sympathy but empathy for the people with disability. The visibility of the authorial role in the text is one of the primary layers to be considered. It demands an exploration of the social and political hierarchies which serve as controlling forces in the author's creation. This vision of authorship is similar to that of Michel Foucault who claims that: “The ‘author-function’ is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not appear in any uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy” (24).
Works Cited


