

**DISABILITY IN MYTH: LOCATING IDENTITY IN THE
SELECT WORKS OF DEVDUTT PATTANAİK**

A Thesis

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award of the degree of

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“What you make me know, that alone I know
What you make me see, that alone I see”



(Loveleen Kaur)

Table of contents

SR. NO.	TITLE	PAGE NO.
1.	Introduction	1-9
2.	Chapter I: Disability and Myth: A Theoretical Framework	10-44
3.	Chapter II: Devdutt Pattanaik: His Life and Achievements	45-60
4.	Chapter III: Curse as a Trope of Disability in Mythology: An Analytical Study of Devdutt Pattanaik's Select Works	61-92
5.	Chapter IV: Delineating Physical and Mental Disabilities in the Select Works of Devdutt Pattanaik	93-119
6.	Chapter V: Gendered View of 'Bodies in Commotion': Locating Social Disabilities in the Select Works of Devdutt Pattanaik	120-149
7.	Chapter VI: Valuing the Devalued: Locating Enablers of Disability in the Select Works of Devdutt Pattanaik	150-172
8.	Conclusion	173-182
9.	Bibliography	183-197

Introduction

As per our ancient texts and scriptures, since the times immemorial disability has been a part of human society. History has been a witness that the term disability is socially and culturally rooted in the Indian psyche for ages. The perceived meanings attached to the term disability vary substantially, such as maimed, crippled, handicapped, disabled, *Viklanng* etc. and to top of it all the latest one *Divyang*. The seen or unseen presence of disability has shaped up the future of the next generations of *Bharata*. It is always present in the very essence of Hinduism and evoked either pity or remains detriment to the one who was affected by it. It always remained a difference either taken as a position of fear and placed on a high pedestal of *deva* or put to the liminal space attributing it to be a manifestation of incompleteness.

All the four categories of a social system (the Indian varna system) in Hinduism evoked different responses for disability. It gets widely diversified based on gender, ranks and appearances, etc. Even the origin of these four castes is the dismemberment and eventual disability of *Purusha*. Rig Veda narrates that *Purusha* was dismembered into four parts, namely Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra. Social status, dharma and aptitude all come in consonance to form the caste structure or the Varna system in India. Indian wisdom rests on the premise that each caste has specific roles, and eventually, each individual has a certain fixed task for the lifetime, which must culminate in *moksha*. This doesn't exclude the person with disabilities.

When we look towards the mythological world of India, we find *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* as the mythic source. *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are not only the sacred Indian epics, but they are also considered the part of '*Itihasa*.' To outline the ubiquitous prevalence and presence of disability in myth, we find that both these epics are highly laden with the visible and invisible presence of disability. These epics have marked their presence for ages in all the Indian households as equivalent to scriptures or treatise on *dharma* to be followed and emulated

in life. Numerous retellings of these epics, as per the temper of every age has added new glories and insights into the minds of all the stakeholders. The present thesis appraises the plight of the disabled in the modern retellings of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* by Devdutt Pattanaik.

The present thesis endeavours to identify the disabled characters in Devdutt's Retellings. It evaluates the numerous characters and instances to outline the facts of the treatment with disabled ones in the Indian annals of history. The focus of this thesis is to see the lived experiences of the disabled and understand whether disability was marginalised in antiquity or in the wake of the joint families and the religio-scriptural expectations the people with disabilities were taken in the embrace of Indian society. Disability has always had a close association with diseases, curses, dependence on other members of the family and is always considered in the Indian psyche to be the penance for the bad karmas. We are going to evaluate the impacts and effects of the discrimination, stigmatization, dehumanization and demoralization of the people against the person with disabilities. We are going to view that the karmic theory of cause and effect percolates a sort of reluctance among the people with disabilities or generates a motivation.

Further, the thesis is going to explore whether the disabled has borne the discrimination and stigma resorting to the socio-religious responses, or they strive to fight out the stigma in society. It views if disabled were allowed to question the norms or simply comply with the demands of the society. The next insight we wish to probe is if disability gets manifested as an attribute of fate or do the people with disabilities strive to fight out their situations and want to come out of the labels that are put upon them.

We are aware that in the Indian cultural milieu, religion has been the strongest pillar that has united the social, economic and particularly the political aspects of the society. The ulterior secret behind the social perception of people with disabilities has its roots in Hinduism. It is indeed imperative to understand the prevalent ideologies, philosophies and attitudes

towards the disabled. The significant concept of *karma* and *dharma* has specifically impacted the beliefs of the people. In Hinduism, the soul is said to be the eternal self-connected with God or Brahman but simply has forgotten due to ignorance or desire.

Indians have a stringent belief that those who lead a life doing evil acts are reborn as animals, trees, disabled beings, which is quite different from the western view. The fundamental existential worldview of the west is different from Indian knowledge and understanding. Western Philosophy envisions that 'I' the body have a soul. In contrast, an Indian world view is diagonally opposite, and it tells that I the soul gets various bodies as per the settlements of karmic accounts. These different considerations of the association of impairment to limitations of the disability, which are often designated as disparate models: the social model, medical model, charity model, culture model, provisional model, ethical model and philosophical studies model as per the western philosophy hence doesn't suit the Indian thought, philosophy and socio-cultural milieu. So, the present thesis calls for the Indian model of disability.

Historically, the teaching of Hinduism has impacted the mindset of people towards disabilities in India. The concept of disability was frequently explained in Hinduism. As it is evident that human beings are endowed with the spirit of adventure and curiosity, man has always pondered upon his status in the divine scheme of god. The outer forces of nature have always astonished him, but he was awestruck after thinking about his physical body. The inner consciousness has always inspired the man to find out his level of existence as compared to other animals and plants. The various doctrines and philosophies have categorised the human bodies into multiple levels: the physical body, the astral body, the mental body and the spiritual body, the etheric body, the cosmic body and the nirvanic body. It looks a view of the body from a subtle level to physical levels. It talks of sensual features and ends up to the consciousness enlightened *Brahman* origins of the body that is light and sound and can travel outside the

physical form throughout the universe. The soul being immortal gets a body, as per the wishes and desires one had in previous births. The person bearing the grunt of his good and bad karmas finds himself in the vicious cycle of birth and rebirth. It is only after following the truthful path, right *karmas* and *yogic* practices; one returns to be a *brahman*, the stage of *moksha*.

We have tried to understand the interstices of disability and myth in the first chapter of the thesis which is entitled as “Disability and Myth: A Theoretical Framework”. It gives a theoretical foundation and unravels the various paradigms of the disability theory and its impact and influence onto the world of myth. We will explore how humans, animals, gandharvas, demons, kings, queens and servants are exposed to disability. Further, what exactly is the magnitude of the influence of the disability in the lives of the above-said stakeholders? It explains the perception of society towards the disabled. It explores whether people with disabilities deserve the treatment of segregation, injustice and humiliation which they receive from society. It highlights how discrimination stigmatises people with disabilities. Although disability studies have been comparatively a late starter, not until the 19th century in India, the field floods with the study of diverse conditions. It includes congenital disabilities or the lack of limb from birth or psychiatric disorders, which are followed by stigmatisation and exclusion. It traces out the history of disability studies in India and envisions the common ground of disability and myth.

Historically, the Hindu culture emphasises that the theory of reincarnation and karmic beliefs have stressed that disability is the result of sins done in the previous birth. Karma is defined as the law of action and reaction, and it governs life and determines the future. Hinduism believes that the soul is immortal. The body dies, but the soul does not. The ultimate aim of a Hindu’s life is to get out of the gyre of life and death and hence get liberation, i.e., *Moksha*. The study of the myth also heightens the theory of karma and disability. Myth emerges as a living embodiment of insights. It modifies and represents the mentality that operates under

the law of participation rather than contradiction. Myth mixes up both the fiction and fact. The ancient Indian Literature Rigveda, Upanishads and Buddhism emphasises that there is some divine force present in all. The whole universe is assimilated in *Brahma*; no one is segregated, not even the disabled.

The second chapter, “Devdutt Pattanaik: His Life and Achievements”, introduces us to the author. Devdutt has put his passionate learning to display in his retellings, and the vignettes added towards the end of each narrative brings forth the post-modern zeal of pursuing metanarratives. Like textbooks, he has tried to build up his records in a logical sequence. He has tried to reason out every happening as a consequence of some prior happening. This way, he has introduced us to the essential Indian worldview of cyclicity of life that never ends with death. Disabled characters in his retellings too changed the destinies of their kingdoms. Devdutt has remarkably let the past come forth into the serving bowl of the present.

The third chapter “Curse as a Trope of Disability in Mythology: An Analytic Study of Devdutt Pattanaik’s Select Works”, tries to reveal the profound relationship between curse and disability. A curse is a sort of warning. It is an expression of the desire to inflict the enemy with adversity. The assistance of supernatural powers like a magic spell or mantra and prayers can then be used to invoke curses. The basis for all curses is truthfulness. The one who curses can be an ascetic, a sage, a god, or a mother. Only an *adhikari* can curse. Once the curse is inflicted, it can't be taken back even by the person who spelled it. The authority of the curser determines the power of the curse. A curse is like an arrow from the bow, which tries to create order out of the chaos. Once pondered upon the ulterior secret behind the curse, it is revealed that the curse is essentially an utterance. It is the lord's *sankalpa* or the will. Therefore, even the most potent ascetics cannot take back their curse as it is the lord's will not his. The curse upon Ambika and Ambalika by sage Vyasa became the ultimate cause of *Mahabharata*. The curse inflicted by Brigu on Vishnu that he would be born several times so that he could suffer the

pain of worldly life, eventually leading Vishnu to take many avatars on earth like Ram and Krishna. Even the most powerful kings, women and unborn could not escape the net of curses. A curse is the outcome of the bad karma, which results in adverse reactions. Curses, being so powerful, can transform gods, nymphs, demigods as humans, animals, birds, or inanimate entities. A curse is a weapon in the hand of the sages and as potent enough to destroy the power of penance utterly. Curse disables the one who is cursed from a state of ability to disability.

Chapter fourth entitled, “Delineating Physical and Mental Disabilities in the Select Works of Devdutt Pattanaik”, explicitly states that, since ancient times, physical disabilities have led to the marginalisation of the disabled, reflecting an attitude that they are unhealthy, defective and deviant. This has stereotyped the prevailing attitude that such individuals were incapable of participating or contributing the society. Physical disabilities are always treated with neglect because of the ignorance and superstitions surrounding them. This becomes a cause of isolation of the person with disabilities. Physical Disabilities lead to 'Othering' of the disabled from the mainstream, paving the way of exploitation owing its origin in social discrimination. There is a gap between the physical potential of a non-disabled person and a physically disabled person. This gap is visible in the Indian epic, which is rich in disability imagery outlining physical disabilities. Both in *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, one can have a glimpse of the disabled's marginalisation, which in turn has influenced the lives of the related people up to a great extent. If *Dhritarashtra* had not been blind, there would have been no Mahabharat, or it would have been there with a different worldview. The disabled persons are portrayed negatively in Hindu epics. Shakuni who was hit by his father and became limp and is illustrated in the epic as one of the reasons behind Mahabharat. His limp devalued him of his positivity and added a stereotype in the minds of people that the disabled are physically as well as mentally crooked. Manthara, who was a hunchback, is also responsible for the negative portrayal of the disabled. Apart from physical disabilities, there has been a mention of mental

disabilities in our ancient epics. It is assumed that Kumbakarna, who, as per modern science, suffered Hypothalamic Obesity, which was a significant reason for *Nidra*. Lakshman also suffered from Insomnia when the sleeping goddess blessed him that he can overpower her. So, Lakshman did not sleep for fourteen years, and Urmila slept her husband's sleep, which can be identified as a Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome in the modern world. Yayati complex can be explained in terms of the Anti-Oedipal complex. It has merged as Reverse Oedipal Complex by son sacrificing and giving up his youth for father's sexual gratification. This chapter delineates the physical and mental disabilities of the various characters in the epic and puts forward the treatment accorded to them in the Indian antiquity.

Chapter fifth is entitled as, “Gendered View of ‘Bodies in Commotion’: Locating Social Disabilities in the Select Works of Devdutt Pattanaik”. It explores the experiences of the social exclusion of the disabled. The meaning of disability has shifted with changes in the perception of the people towards it. Although disability is a term that can be more specifically explained in the medical and physiological terminology, they are extraneous social factors leading to the social isolation of the disabled. The available empirical pieces of evidence-primarily heighten the fact that the experience of disability is embedded in culture and social relations of culture. The instances from history have proved that the disabled have met with a variety of responses from the society as well as embarrassments to being the butt of jokes, laughter and compassion. They are seen as monsters, bad omens, punishments, and objects of pity, leading to isolation of the disabled. The typical attitude of the people towards them is curiosity, compassion and aloofness.

In the Indian culture, disability suggests a deficiency or a weakness leading to a dependency of the disabled. Moreover, disability does not include only physical impairment, but it is seen in the broader horizon, including gender, race, class and sexuality. Customs, beliefs and values embedded in Hinduism are based on the assumption that all living things

have a soul and one have to bear the fruits of his karmas in the next birth. So, disability is directly related to divine retribution for the sins of incest, bestiality or adultery indirectly associating disability with deceit and evil. Disabled people are pitied for their condition and are helped by the non-disabled to gain '*Punya*' for the next life. A gendered view of disability is a significant aspect that demands attention and consideration. A person is born with a sex, but culture presents a gender to it. Female members of society are considered to be the disabled versions of the male and being accepted as a female with physical impairment is regarded as a divine curse that deprives them of their fundamental right to get married and beget children. Indian culture has accentuated the patriarchal concept of disability, evidently controlling the sexuality of women portrayed in the religious scriptures. Feminine desire is considered to be the non-acceptable behaviour according to the patriarchal norms. Expression of passion leads to disability; that is why Lakshman brutally mutilated Surpanakha. Since the birth of the girl child, she is taught to adhere to the social norms prescribed by men. When Sita crosses Lakshman Rekha, she becomes a victim of the jungle law, ultimately abandoning dharma, which led to drastic consequences. It deprived her of the social status because of the socially disabling barriers. In our historical traditions, it has been obligatory for a woman to produce an heir. Barrenness is more vicious as a social disability than a physical deformity. The barren women are excluded from the mainstream societal tasks and are sometimes deprived of their fundamental rights and duties because of barrenness. They bear the wrath of the society along with the stigma. She is denied the status of respect and reverence in society.

Chapter sixth, "Valuing the Devalued: Locating Enablers of Disability in the Select works of Devdutt Pattanaik", highlights the fact that although disabled are marginalised, feelings of guilt and shame are borne not by the associated person but also by the whole family. We perceive several examples where boons and blessings came as divine interference to change the plight of disability into ability. Disabled are not only enabled but also empowered. We have

witnessed that *yagna* is used as a tool to please gods and force them to act according to the need and will of *yajamana*. The host of gods, with all their shortcomings and inabilities, have the power to change the destinies of the disabled. These enablers act as a trail to blaze the path of the disabled and take them towards enablement.

The conclusion of the thesis will bring us to the unveiling of the various myths of disability and presents the logical perception of the typical Indian Hindu worldview. We have transversed the journey of the thesis from delineating the causes of disability to studying how it gets manifested and further exploring the social reactions and roles. It culminates with the efforts to make the disabled abled ones. The mythological world has numerous examples signifying the detrimental effects of the societal attitude towards the disabled. It disables them from gaining their excellent and righteous place in society. The most significant idea underlying here is how to blur the distinction between the able-bodied and disabled ones. The pivotal issue is to understand and highlight their strengths to help them become powerful and empowered. The need of the hour is to provide equal access and opportunities to these people so that they may be known as Dis/Abled ones. Understanding mythology is a part of being human as it helps in seeking meaning, value and purpose in life. Indian mythology portrays a worldview different from the west as it accommodates diversity and motivates a person to work for the good of humanity by introspecting the limitations. It speaks in terms of eternity and infinity and is outrightly wisdom driven. Out of this pot of understanding comes the inclusive attitude towards disability too.

Chapter I

Disability and Myth: A Theoretical Framework

The modern scientific and technologically advanced age embarks upon historical milestones like 'Sophia', a robotic first cyber citizen of the universe; cyborgs, the hybrids of human and technology inhabiting this universe, human cloning, human genome project and the availability of prenatal diagnostic tests par excellence. In the wake of this rapid progression, human beings aim to free themselves from illness, pain, suffering, and disability. Disability studies are gaining more importance and momentum in such a world which still finds itself grappling with issues wherein tools can forecast liminal identities. Humans are fragile beings who have to confront natural disasters, accidents, disease, old age, death, illness, disfigurement, injuries, sickness, war etc. while living. Modern disability discourses differentiate human beings into two categories i.e. P.W.D. (Person with Disabilities) and T.A.B's (Temporarily Able bodied). It is a firm belief of the current disability discourses that one has to suffer a certain amount of disability in one's life at one or other point of time. "Having a disability places, you in the world's largest minority group. Currently around 10% of the world's population, or roughly 650 million people, live with a disability" (*Disabled World*).

Disability is broadly considered to be a state which incapacitates and the person is not considered capable enough to perform both physical and mental activities which are considered in the range of normal human beings. Davis considers that "the word disability hints at something missing either fiscally, physically, mentally or legally" (J.Davis xiii). Disability by virtue of being a difference has got a marginalized social status and is often seen either as a personal tragedy or an individual burden. Disability encompasses all the anthropological divisions of age, gender, race, caste, creed, culture and nationality. Though ubiquitous, disability is treated as invisible and if seen; it is given sarcastic and derisive glares. Disabled

are then doubly victimised; one at the hands of destiny for the lack and other at the hands of society for their cruel gazes and unkind attitudes. It marks its presence by the factors like poverty, illiteracy, stigma and marginalisation. Whatever may be the form of disability; human ego does not accept it and represent it as 'Other'. Davis analyses Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* in introduction to *The Disability Studies Reader* and states that Charles Bovary performs surgery to remove club foot of Hippolyte "to bring him back to human To have a disability is to be an animal, to be a part of the Other" (8). Though being the valuable treasure of society, the persons with Disabilities are discriminated, decapacitated, abused, marginalised and are let to suffer undue hardships. So poignant is the role of society that the disability of one is considered to be the disability of the entire family, the basic social unit. The member who accompanies a disabled is also viewed as worthy of sympathy and eventually the family also feels crippled and somehow gets ostracized.

Since the dawn of civilization, disability has been a phenomenon that has agitated the mindset of people. A plethora of studies and researches are undertaken on the multitudinous aspects of disability but yet it has been a grey area in the socio-cultural milieu. Disability is always looked at and frowned at by people across countries for centuries with either disdain or pity. David M. Turner in *Social Histories of Disability* states that anomalous bodies like deformed and disabled are considered to be omens, the visitations of sin, and freaks. They are treated with curiosity and are often made fun. They may either be sympathized or may be viewed with disdain. They are always treated as a different and valued negatively. Disability implies a failure to match the set norm and hence it is viewed as a relational concept.

Disability Studies has emerged as an interdisciplinary capacious category ranging from physical to mental, social to psychological, and cognitive conditions. The term disability summarises a number of limitations. It can be transitory or permanent in nature. It is not a mere physical or mental incongruity but a minority identity. Disability is also present in the

minds of so called able bodied and not only in the body of an individual who is impaired. Tony Siebers in her book *Disability Theory* argues that disability is “an elastic social category both subject to social control and capable of effecting social change... The presence of disability creates a different picture of identity-one less stable than identities associated with gender, race, sexuality, nation and class and therefore presenting the opportunity to rethink how human identity works” (Siebers 5).

Disability studies recognise disability to be a cultural construction and has no inherent meaning. Though medicalisation of disability has cast it as a deviance from the norm rather it is “unorthodox made flesh that refuses to be normalized, homogenized and neutralized” (Siebers 56). Disability studies include sick, deformed, abnormal, crazy, ugly, old, feeble minded, maimed, afflicted, mad, debilitated, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, visual and hearing impairment, certain types of cancer and heart conditions all of which are disadvantageous positions wherein the bodies are devalued and do not conform to the cultural standards. Disabled people are labelled as cripple, vegetable, dumb, deformed, retarded. In the wake of the evolving disability rights, these people are categorized as Special people or physically challenged or handicapped or abled/disabled binary is used. With the coming of the disability studies academicians have tried to place the marginalised at the axial position hence narrating and voicing the plight of ones who were dormant and dying unnoticed. It has also tried to unravel the triumphant overcoming of the dependencies and so creating a new pavement for generations to emulate.

Academicians, disability scholars have tried to view disability from different perspectives and how its implications challenge the prevailing world order and its development. They have given us various models of disability studies. When we look at the medicalised aspect of disability, we perceive disability to be a physical condition.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) recognises that ‘disability is an evolving concept’ ‘Persons 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. (Rohwerder 4)

It considers disability to be an intrinsic condition of the individual that places it at a disadvantageous position hence hampering his life and conditions. It is something that can be cured of or can be overpowered. It is never seen as a condition to be lived well.

In 1990's, Americans with Disabilities Act defines disability with respect to an individual as:

- a. A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual.
- b. A record of such an impairment.
- c. Being regarded as having such an impairment. (Feldblum 11)

Though disability was always there since the inception of the living beings, yet it got acknowledged in 1960's. Erving Goffman's *Stigma: Notes on Management of a Spoiled Identity (1963)* shares the space of the founding texts in disability studies along with Lennard Davis' *The Disability Studies Reader*. Disabilities Studies was dominated by social science perspectives for almost two decades from 1970's onwards. However late 80's and 90's gave boost to cultural studies. President Michael Berube at the 2012 Modern Language Association Conference declared Disability studies as an interdisciplinary distinctive field emerged. “Disability Studies: A Field Emerged”, came as a claim:

The field emerged in the 1980s, part of a cluster of politicized identity-based interdisciplinary fields of study that arose from rights-based, social-

justice-influenced knowledge building and disseminating initiatives...Characteristic of burgeoning identity studies fields, this first wave of disability studies focused on recuperation and revelation. Historians revealed that disabled people, a group newly constituted through disability rights, had a history; literary critics brought forward previously unrecognized patterns of representation; social scientists theorized the social constructions of ability and disability. In all this work, disability appeared as a concept, set of practices, and a material phenomenon that shaped our shared world and understandings of ourselves. calling that the field is “theorised as well as actualised greater inclusion and equality in academy. (Garland-Thomson 916)

The first wave of disability studies focussed on negative devaluation of person with disabilities and exposed discrimination and damaging stereotypical socio- cultural representations. 1980s and 1990s started witnessing the acceptance by the academia both as an academic field of study and enquiry as well as a fertile area of political activity. This celebrated disability as a positive minority identity. The quest for equal rights, opportunities and access was the hallmark of first wave of disability. It wanted inclusion in the mainstream and the task somehow remained unfinished. They may either be sympathized or may be viewed with disdain. The first wave marks a search for equality and access in the mainstream. It evaluates the opportunities being provided to the disabled. Social acceptance and social assimilation were yearned by the activists. The solution was searched in curing or treating so that the stigma of invalidation could be removed. “Disability historian Paul Longmore understands the history of disability studies in terms of Waves, the first wave of activism, a struggle for civil rights culminating in the 1990 Americans with Disability Act” (Hall 25).

The second Wave in which Longmore locates his own work, witnessed the growth of disability as an academic growth that remained closely linked to collective identity and disability culture campaigns.

Pattern of academic field development in which established scholars apply newly discovered critical disability studies to their disciplines is representative of much second-wave disability studies scholarship....the characteristic quality of second-wave critical disability studies display not just how disability pervades everything but also its counterintuitive wondrousness: ... the startling fact that disability engaged, productive, and immensely meaningful. (Garland-Thomson 917)

In the words of Professor Simi Linton, Disability is that prism which helps us to gain broader understanding of society and human experience. Longmore quotes her further to attribute the second wave as

Disability Studies reframes the study of disability by focusing on it as asocial phenomenon, social construct, metaphor and culture, utilizing a minority group model. It examines ideas related to disability in all forms of cultural representation throughout history, and examined the policies and practices of all societies to understand the social, rather than physical and psychological, determinants of the experience of disability. (Longmore 250)

Since then Rosemarie Garland- Thomson, Lennard Davis, Brenda Brueggemann, David. T. Mitchell and Susan.L. Snyder have put literature at the critical examination of disability studies. Disability has emerged as a theory. "Disability Studies does not treat disease or disability, hoping to cure or avoid them; it studies the social meanings, symbols, and stigmas attached to, intersectional approaches disability identity and asks how they relate to enforced system of exclusion and expression" (Seibers *Disability Theory* 4). Rather than being a

pathology to cure or an inherent inferiority or weakness, researchers of disability studies view it from social, political, moral, civil, religious, economic and legal angles as it is complex, varied, dynamic and multidimensional.

More recently scholars have suggested that the disability theory is entering a third, overlapping wave or phase in which the field has begun to fissure around certain key debates. The third wave is marked by self-determinism and self-advocacy. Scholars like Mark Osteen, Hughes and Paterson notice Neo Cartesian duality of disability as it segregates social i.e. disability from physical which has strangely led to disembodied notion of disability ignoring the physical realities faced by people with disabilities. “The social constructionist view positions disabled bodies as, to use Foucault’s language, “docile bodies” (Foucault 135); it can be seen to minimise the potential for advocacy, self-representation and resistance through an emphasis on processes of subjection to the overarching powers of the state” (Hall 26). These critics explored archetypal disability narrative recurring stereotypes that are fixed and continually perpetuates in the memory a misrepresentation of disability as an identity. These narratives support the ableist viewpoint of disability where the disabled is either absent or is merely used to define and modify the non-disabled. Disability theory points out divergence as well as convergence and therefore rethinks human identity. It probes the peripheral so as to view the whole in a fresh way. Instead of the linear progression, disability studies experience the overlapping of waves bringing forth the diversity of the field in terms of its scope, approach and range. Disability is such a fluid category that it initiates intertwining of discourse with regard to gender and feminist theories, queer theory, postcolonial and critical race theories. The ever-evolving canon of disability studies sometimes find it problematic to sustain as a practical and methodological discipline with all its intersectional and interdisciplinary approaches. This discipline definitely has the potential of universalising the basic values of inclusion and participation. “Nirmala Erevelles’ “complex cultural priorities” include the range of disability

conditions (e.g., neurological, psychological, physical, cognitive) that the field of disability studies purports to represent in addition to the diversity of the disabled community around the axes of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (Kafer 212). Davidson considers the “porous, historicised, culturally specific understanding of disability that takes into account economics, politics and poverty.... A malleable definition of disability is necessary in order to account for the fact that what might be perceived as disability in one culture or time period, may not be identified as disability in another” (Hall 8).

Alice Hall states that “Disability demands a story” (Hall 1). People perceive the narrative behind the limp, scar or prosthesis. Without even uttering a single word, the impairment cries out the decapacitation and current devaluation. People invest themselves to it to understand this indecisive, ambivalent category which presents erraticism of bodies as a literary tale wherein the desire to conform to the order is challenged. The changing bodies project a vulnerability that demands rationality which otherwise is considered as a primary impetus and views social and individual downfall by presenting it as a metaphor. Disability acts as a metaphor for the individual and social failure and changeable category of cultural as well as literary activity, disability sparks the creativity and thus opens up a narrative. Lennard Davis considers that talk about disability is, “a part of chronotype, a time sequenced narrative”. (Davis “Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness and the Body” 3-4)

Considering the various Western Models of Disability brings forth the progression of the waves in a more vivid manner. Medical model doesn't distinguish between impairment and disability. Disabled person is seen as a defective person and should be treated with pity, charity and differently by the others. This model is also named as Function Limitation Model or Biological Inferiority Model. This model views disability as a ‘problem’ that is the personal issue of the disabled individual. A medical diagnosis of the concerned person establishes him as disabled. The disability may be because of a health issue, a disease or a result of a trauma

that requires care by the professional. The individual stands at a disadvantageous position as it deteriorates the quality of the individual's life. This model is aimed at 'cure' of all those who live in the horizons of denial. Geetanjali in her PhD thesis quote Bandyopadhaya & Rao's definition "The Medical Model of disability identifies people with disabilities as ill, different from their non-disabled peers and unable to take charge of their own lives. Moreover, the diagnostic parameters of a medical definition do not take note of the imperfections and deficiencies in the basic social structures and processes that fail to accommodate the difference on account of disabilities" (Debi 5).

In 1983, the disability scholar Mike Oliver coined the term 'The Social Model of disability' in concern to the ideological developments. This model emerged as a reaction to the medical model and so identifies negative attitudes and systematic barriers that exclude and define disabled in society. It puts the responsibility on society and not on an individual. It establishes disability to be a confluence of physical or mental impairment and the surroundings. The social model is based on the distinction between impairment, disability and handicap which is proposed by World Health Organisation in 1980. The Geneva Conference Manual of WHO defines:

Impairment to be concerned with the abnormalities of the body structure and appearance and with organ or system function resulting from any cause; in principle, impairments represent disturbances at the organ level.

Disabilities reflecting the consequences of the impairments in terms of functional performance and activities by the individual, disabilities thus disturbances at the level of the person.

Handicap is concerned with the disadvantages experienced by the individual as a result of impairments and disabilities; handicaps thus reflect

interaction with and adaptation to the individual surrounding. (*International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps* 14)

Disability surpasses the conventional knowledge of ages and takes disability from the individual position to a societal construct thus establishing disability as a form of societal oppression. This model sees an individual beyond his impairment and tries to seek solutions to the disabling issues of the society. It empowers the disabled and tries to put them on equal podium with that of disabled. Disability is considered as a socially constructed identity which is a sort of embodiment that intermingles with the material and social environments. Disability is though a stigmatised attribute but still finds itself as concurrently central and peripheral to the abled world. This model establishes disability as an image of a social and individual fallout. Disability is perceived to be a position of disadvantage in society and a person with disability disqualifies to have a normal and position of a provider in a society He is the one who requires charity. As these people are not in a position to perform all bodily functions so they must be treated as Special ones. They must be provided with special circumstances and facilities as they are living a tragic life because of their deficit. They thus fit in the tragedy model of disability. They must be sent to special homes, schools and institutions with special provisions for them. But this model gives a sense of low self- esteem to the disabled person as he is viewed as a person who is dependent on the sympathy of others. This model operates on the so-called voluntary help. A number of charities are growing each day to provide care and support to the people with particular impairment. These charities are mostly owned by non disabled people who marginalise the disabled ones with their pity.

A by- product of Medical and Charity Model, the administrative model is proposed by Frances Blackwell. This model gives voice to the disabled who define their impairments to get benefits and receive education. National Institute of Medical research UK in 2006-07 proposes Scientific model of disability that views science to be an elixir, a panacea for all cures and

admits that with the help of scientific researches all disabled will be cured of their disabilities sooner or later. Scientists primarily establish normal body as the focus and wish to generate the same from disability. Normal people are the important ones in this model and so the tests are done on disabled people rather than on the healthy ones. Its major belief is to view disability as a minority and to establish scientists as all powerful who can purge one of this experience.

The history of disability is littered with shocking details and horrendous incidents of exclusion. In the backdrop of human rights that propound right to equal opportunities and participation, disability seemingly denies right to health, education and employment. Equality, Empowerment Accountability, Transparency, non –discrimination and participation are the important tenets of right based models of disability. This model is built on the insights of the social model. This model is all inclusive and claims that disabled people are active subject and they have all the legal claims to participate where non disabled people do. This socio-political construct has shifted the focus from dependent to independent and has given a political voice that challenges the disabling attributes. New strategies of identity politics are adopted by disability activists in order to address issues of social justice and discrimination. This model strives to filter negativity out of the disabling.

Model of Human Capacity has at least three sub models: Public Health, Psychological and Educational. It deals with knowing how individuals acquire various capacities. Disability Policy depends on a significant contribution of physical medicine and psychiatry. This policy has catered to the individualised needs of apposite services with desired secrecy and confidentiality for the prevention and augmentation of inventions like psycho-pharmacy, shock treatment. Now-a-days the patient autonomy is of paramount importance rather than doctor knows best. Applied behavioural analysis comes under the preview of psychological sub-model. Educational sub-model is based on the concept that no one is ineducable and everyone of any age must have access right to attend the school. In this sub-model due importance is

given to the teaching techniques that are personalized according to the needs and requirements of the disabled student.

Model of public studies is based on the relationship between government and individuals subsume various disciplines. It mirrors 20th century thinking of United States towards disability and engages the core concepts like empowerment, integration, liberty, autonomy, participatory decision making etc. It has six sub-models that are law, political science, philosophy, political economy, demographics, public administration and social welfare and these sub-models overlap richly. The law sub-model aims to take disability out of the clutches of denial by its remedying and tries to enforce rules. Political science sub-model studies work of the government and role to address disability as a human condition. It focusses upon providing majoritarian democratic processes positively to the persons with disabilities. Liberty, autonomy and privacy are its main concepts. In political economics, the interaction of economy with the government politics come to the fore. It tries to allocate maximum resources in the public and private sectors. It also addresses efficiency, effectiveness and choice. Demographics studies the incidence and prevalence of disability. It also ventures into tracing patterns of where people of disabilities move and what are the factors behind the shift. Public administration addresses the administration, authorization and implementation of the governmental policies. Social welfare model proceeds from caring to empowering and thus enriching and enhancing the development of an individual and a group. But all these models are not directive, they are explanatory.

The model of cultural studies how different cultures understand disability. It focusses on knowing how disability is conceptualised, displayed and portrayed in varied cultures. It highlights the cultural responses towards disability. "Disability as a topic of inquiry merges the profoundly cultural with the material, as the human variations that cultures have designated as disability have helped shape, built and social environments (just as those environments have,

in turn, shaped bodies)”(Thomson 915).It exposes the meanings a society gives to the impaired and disabled. It presents the society’s attitude towards disability. Cultural anthropology, sociology, literature, performing arts and history are its various sub-models. Disabled people are represented by culture as objects, the genderless entities. Disability is not viewed as a natural fact but a difference which is naturalized by the given culture. Culture always focusses upon the mainstream and the marginals lie dormant and neglected. The cultural model strives to bring Dis/Ability studies as a focus area of study.

People with disabilities and their families live in a constructed environment in the world. The model of Technology Studies aims to build the individual’s capacity through individualised services so that he can be an integrated and a productive member of the society. This model has three sub-models that include Architecture, Industrial Engineering and Ergonomics. With the concept of antidiscrimination, this model provides access to the structures which can enable a disabled to perform and function productively. It uses assistive technology as well as computer technology to bring a comfort and independence.

The Provisional Model of Disability is adhered by those who consider that if you provide provisions to the disabled, you purge them of disability e.g. provision of sign language speaker to a deaf person. The Culture-Linguistic Model of Disability- only deaf families and deaf communities relate to this model which is diametrically opposed to the medical model. Deafness is not a disability but a cultural identity. Religious or moral model is the primogenital model and lacks prevalence. It is based on religious and cultural beliefs of the society. Disability finds its emergence as the guilt and sin. The afflictions of disability are punitive and are for the wrong endeavours of the individual or anyone in the family. So, the entire family gets stigmatised by anybody’s disability. It marginalises and excludes the individual who cannot conform to his family either. Disability is believed to be the impact of evil spirits. Being a model of deprivation, it creates fear and ignorance.

Ethical and Philosophical studies model is shaped into Ethical and Philosophical as it forms one's consideration of existential or metaphysical meaning of life. It envisions the moral standards of the society by discussing the concerns of right or wrong. It delves into debates about the wrongful life and wrongful births and so establishes the sanctity of life. e.g. it elaborates upon the rightfulness and wrongfulness of aborting a foetus.

In the rehabilitation model, an over active provider of the service i.e. the fixer prescribes and tries to act for a passive client i.e. the fixie. This model is an offshoot of the Medical Model but the professional has an upper edge over the client so this model depicts inequality and hence limits collaboration. It undervalues the client's dignity as the professional takes his simplest decisions even those of his everyday activities. This model determines that care and support is required by the disabled but fails to acknowledge the permanence of disability.

Empowering or Customer Model allows the disabled to decide their treatment and the services they wish to have. It empowers the individual as the other becomes the service provider. Biopsychosocial model is proposed by George Engels in 1970's/early1980. Physical, emotional and environmental factors add to create a bio psychosocial approach. This model takes into account the medical support to keep a disabled alive but the psychological and social support enables the concerned individual to live. It coherently acknowledges health, biological, social and individual factors. It is a scientific model with the aim to treat the concerned individual as a human being. These different models conceptualise disability in a different manner and enlist various ways in which we think about it. These models reflect how we as society identify disability, and assert our claims as a response to disability. These models are the useful framework to define it and to view the societal perspectives. But all these are western models of disability. Shipaa Anand contends the efficacy of these models in the Indian paradigm and argues that

Models approach intrinsically affirms a progressive historiography; the progression is from a moral or religious model to a medical model and then to a social -contextual model ...is inadequate ...in the Indian context It is time to recognize the limitations of DS models approach and Develop theoretical and methodological tools that are context sensitive.... A new model that is more sensitive to cultural contexts be formulated. (Anand 23-37)

In the words of Ghai,

The meaning of disability in India is embedded in this basic struggle for survival. The predominantly elite, educated (and therefore privileged) group of disabled activists within the disability movement does not inquire into the subtle conceptual and cultural nuances that influence the nature of this survival. Most of the times, an agenda borrowed from Western counterparts lacks the reflexivity to analyze the Indian context in which disability is not a singular marker. (Ghai, "Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism" 51)

Disability is used to identify its representation as deviant, bizarre, socially maladroit and physically marked who find themselves dislocated in normal social, aesthetic and work. Tracing the history of disability discourse in India, Nilika Mehrotra states

The late 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of large numbers of organisations termed as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), centring on livelihood and development issues and women's groups focusing on violence against women. In addition, women's studies programmes and courses on development studies were floated in universities focusing on a wide variety of issues right from economic and political issues to health to right to equal and dignified life. Dalit concerns, on the other hand, emerging in the late 1980s

became rather powerful in the 1990s.... Disability rights activism emerged in this context where the voices of persons with disabilities (PWD) that were muted till the early 1990s began to find collective expression. (Mehrotra, “Disability Rights Movements in India: Politics and Practice” 66)

A feature by Martand outlines the

Indian timeline of Disability studies stating that voices began demanding the rights of people suffering from disabilities in the early 1970s; it was, however, nowhere close to being a movement at that point... the 1980s witnessed the consolidation of demands from various groups and their organization under a cross-disability umbrella, representing the interests of the disabled. 1995 became a benchmark year for the DRM, which stands for the beginning of a new era altogether, in which people suffering from disability found visibility in educational institutions and government services (Jha).

Though India celebrates unity in diversity yet the Indians have put the person with disability at the periphery of public discourse. Disability is still considered to be a homogenous experience inflicting a few. C. Raghavan Reddy, considers

Challenges to the researchers of disability in India are varied and complex. Configuring Disability Studies in the Indian context where a web of social, economic, political and scientific (medical) factors has bearings on marking the body is one such challenge. The specificities of disability in India are overwhelmingly varied from that of the West. If, for the disabled in the West, the matters of identity, dignity, access, and inclusion are of critical importance, then in India, the matters of survival, poverty, exclusion and despair become critical. (C. R. Reddy 304)

There is an emergent need to place historical enquiry at the axial position particularly after the Foucault's concept of power has captured the human fancy. Social hierarchies always favour who are fit and attractive. Ugly, deformed and helpless symbolise the mere vulnerabilities and exude more power to the ones who have the capacity to protect the weak and lesser ones. The present thesis is putting an emphasis on tracing the history of disabilities in myth and how the disabled in myth sharpen our experiences and creates stereotyping of the disabled as vice, uncouth and uncivilised. Disability is never a new thing to look for, but the shift in the focus is to establish a new way to look at history. The complex transverses of the intermingling complexities of the invisibility and oppression that makes it marginalised are to be viewed as the centripetal forces of its presence and existence. Contextualising the American History, Douglas says in *The Disability Studies Reader* that

Disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories we write. When historians do take note of disability, they usually treat it merely as personal tragedy or an insult to be deplored and a label to be denied, rather than as a cultural construct to be questioned and explored. Those of us who specialize in the history of disability, like the early historians of other minority groups, have concentrated on writing histories of disabled people and the institutions and laws associated with disability. Disability, however, more than an identity, is a fundamental element in cultural signification and indispensable for any historian seeking to make sense of the past. It may well be that all social hierarchies have drawn on culturally constructed and socially sanctioned notions of disability. If this is so, then there is much work to do. It is time to bring disability from the margins to the centre of historical inquiry (Baynton 31).

Disability in Myth can be perceived to be emerging panoply of the past societal realities, cultures, traditions and above all the metaphor of ability rather than dis/ability. Myths are as old as the human civilization and it provides meaning to the evolution and establishment of human societies. Myths provide foundation to the most clandestine elements of human culture and also provide them the appropriate expression eventually acting as an outlet. It is an exaggerated or inverted replica of the real life and culture. Encyclopaedia Britannica considers

Myth, a symbolic narrative, usually of unknown origin and at least partly traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events and that is especially associated with religious belief. It is distinguished from symbolic behaviour (cult, ritual) and symbolic places or objects (temples, icons). Myths are specific accounts of gods or superhuman beings involved in extraordinary events or circumstances in a time that is unspecified but which is understood as existing apart from ordinary human experience. The term *mythology* denotes both the study of myth and the body of myths belonging to a particular religious tradition. (Bolte)

The word myth is derived from the Greek word ‘Mythos’ which originally meant “utterance” or speech. Mythos aims to narrate stories, to describe things that could not be explained otherwise. Oxford Dictionary defines myth as a “traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon and typically involving supernatural being or phenomenon” (Myth). Myth makes human beings civil by giving them a civic foundation. Myths while providing a distinctive identity give order to reality and are sources of inspiration to individuals and cultures.

The importance of myth, and its value, lies not in its superficial truth or falsity, but in the cultural understandings that it represents and the effectiveness with which it represents them. The simple fact that something is a myth-that it does not reflect a historically accurate or objectively verifiable

reality-is not a sufficient reason to reject it. Nor is a demonstration of the myth's historical or cultural contingency an adequate refutation of its cultural content. Myth, with all its incongruity and contingency, is the stuff of which culture is made. Myth is a tremendous tool. We must use that tool to its fullest, beginning with a historical explanation of the sources and uses of the myth, but also going on to explore the cultural information the myth represents and the insight it may offer into our own imaginations (Williams 159).

In retelling the mythic narratives, the author develops the contemporary understanding of myth on one hand and a fantasy genre on another hand. In reframing myth, construction of the new ways and beliefs is done by fantasizing it. Myths to the contemporary people are the living fossils who used them as the survival techniques. The modern reader loves to read the myth and praises the vivid imagination of the primitives. He also suffers for losing faith in those enriching traditions. Retellings allow us to reclaim the past by reconnecting it to the modern readership and somehow helps to redefine a nation.

Myth is being used as a universal literary solvent and so it is being reread, retold and reduced. Most retellings of myths find themselves void of context as the original voices, gestures and other social affectations of the original remain unheard. By retellings the original Myth is re-contextualised and so it gets recreated either as distortion or an elaboration. Modern variants of the mythic tale emerge as not only a review of history but as a satire on contemporary socio-politico-economic institutions. Fantasy re-establishes and redefines the relation of the contemporary reader with that of the classic that would have otherwise become redundant and monotonous and so a waste.

Myths are diverse in their content, setting and form. Though the characters are gods or godlike creature but they are as hapless as mortals and they are fallible too. A myth might take place in heavens or an ordinary hearthside. Myth hails the idea of timelessness and universality.

Modernists are using fantasy prolifically to create seamless narratives. The mythic stories told and retold time and again introduces new characters, changed perspective and so events. Myths tend to be localised and modernise in the modern world with the help of retellings and so they are made relevant for the contemporary times.

The past few years have witnessed a renaissance of modern reinterpretations and retellings of the classics. Popularity of these retellings have brought an explosion of the reimagined pasts. Readers of today have an unquenching thirst and appetite to know their roots. We as readers are grappling to re-establish our faith and innocence in the face of modern loss of values and so try to justify our engrossing in vices and everlasting quest for money. Retellings refract the present concerns and serve the old wine in new bottles so that they resonate with the realities of our times. Every retelling bridges the gap between the profoundly rich classic and the readership of today. Since there isn't a strictly laid out version of the epic, the creators and audience both put forward an experimented envision of theirs that is novel.

All the customary practices find their relevance in myth and it too deals with the interface of human, environment and nature. Freud also considers myths to be the products of the first era in human culture which had been dominated by the animalistic picture of the world. Myth acts as a unifying device that explains natural phenomenon. It justifies the authority and power. It has a history of its own. Myth is mediated and opaque because of its recurrent forms. It has the unifying force. Malinovsky enlists the functions of myth, as to expresses, enhances and codifies belief. It is explanatory in nature and channels faith and human emotions in various cultural processes. Myth instructs and guides by offering the ideal role models. They are moral and didactic and establish the causation of the way things are. Myth offers a sustenance to past historical events by reconciling them with varied sets of rules. It does not aim to justify culture, and so it is not scientifically substantiated.

Myth is the collective cultural phenomenon that originates in multiplicity and it also involves all mental abilities. Being the foundation and the formal expression of all cultural concepts, myth virtually becomes a synonym of the symbolic itself. It is a social instrument wielding the wisdom of interrelationship. It is wholesome and abundant. It originates from the innate human derive for meaning. Human beings wish to identify, understand and generalise the apparently unpredictable relationship that they come across in the world. It is not something that is liberally invented rather it emerges as a necessity. Myth is a means of expressing feelings and beliefs which controls human consciousness and stay forever in the passage of history. A myth is the society's dream on which civilizations are grounded.

The study of myth began in ancient history and it is first attested in 1830. For Frazer, myth needs literal reading and it must be treated as an explanation of certain phenomenon. He states that "myth changes while custom remains constant; men continue to do what their fathers did before them, though the reasons on which their fathers acted have been long forgotten. The history is a long attempt to reconcile old custom with new reason, to find a sound theory for an absurd practice" (Frazer 477). Myths are definitely the tales that have passed from generation to generation and has become a tradition. Gods, demons, spirits are the denizens of the mythic world. They can reside in heaven, earth or the nether world. Myth has a creative as well as formative element that renews life to impart stability and durability. The events of the myth happen beyond the real time limits. The time may be beyond historical or primordial time or even the eschaton. What is still good about mythic time is that it fixes beginning and the end of all that happens. It expresses the yearning for perpetual, durative and so it is cyclic in nature. It relates the remote past to the everlasting and so explains the things. Myth presents a continuous victory and triumph of the 'order' upon the Chaos wherein the predestined cosmic struggle represents entire mythic world. Wallace A. Douglas in "The meanings of Myth in the modern criticism" states that, "the word is protean and the fate is procrustean. It is a dogmatized

expression of values and conventions both social and class inclusive as the togetherness of the community mind” (A.Douglas 232).

Myths are the outcome of deep passions which are crystallized to particular forms and create profound plausibility and conviction about the culture. It emerges as a living embodiment of insights. It represents prelogical mentality that operates under the law of participation rather than contradiction. It is an archetype that manifests the collective unconsciousness of mankind. It further modifies and represents untestable non-empirical truths which are non-demonstrable too. Myth outlines the man’s understanding of his inhabited world. Myth exploits multiple layered meaning as an attribute of the language. The words and sentences in a mythic discourse bear a variety of meanings. Myth manifests the doubly intentional symbols. Levi Strauss considering structuralist view of myth says it to be a quest for the invariant elements among superficial differences and adds that all of us are the creators of the myth.

Myth blends both fiction and fact. It exists in complementary relation to truth. It is as if the same tale is viewed from inward and outward. Myth gives an account of how reality appears in human minds and so they present the subjective understanding of the psychological truth. Being subjective, it cannot be classed as true or false. We cannot offer logic to myth being what it is. It just manifests itself as a pang which captures human fancy in the midst of things. Bidney quotes Cassirer that “Myth has a truth of its own distinct from that of other cultural forms since the mythical mind is creative and gives expression to its own form of objective reality” (“Myth, Symbolism, and Truth” 383). Myth has an anthropological value as they contain significant historical records about the cyclical evolution of the thoughts of humankind. It is definitely a necessary requisite to express faith and beliefs that seizes human beings’ mind and consciousness throughout the ages. “As we explore the world of myth, we should remember that we are journeying not through a maze of falsehood but through a world

of metaphor that breathes life into the essential story: the story of the relationship between the known and the unknown, both around and within us, the story of the search for identity in the context of the universal struggle between order and chaos” (Leeming 8) .

A culture comes together around Myth. It is a sort of religious experience. Myth is shared by all the members of the community as a fantasy that strengthens the relations of the varied members of the community. It sees the individual in consonance to its culture. Anthropologist William Bascom says “Myths are the prose narratives which in the society in which they are told are considered to be thoughtful accounts of what happened in the remote past which outlining the uses of myth” (Bascom 4). These are various types of myths like Theogenic Myths, Cosmogenic Myths, Anthropogenic Myths, Transformational Myths, Flood Myths, Sociological Myths, Eschatological Myths. It uses language in a unique manner to express truths about human condition in metaphoric and symbolic language. Myths are the oldest elements of human heritage as they belong to pre-literature and prehistorical era. Myth bears a metaphysics of absence which is implicit in every sign. It is invisible and ever present behind every action. Claude Levi Strauss focuses that myth is a figure of universal quest for identity and individuals and by studying myth we are simultaneously studying differences and commonalities. Myths offer the multiplicity of meaning inherent in our lives. The meaning of myth lies within them and it comes out as the implication of the incidents.

Myth originates from the innate desire of human beings to explore the value of their existence by looking for meanings tracing the interrelationships of man and universe. Rieger calls myth as a palimpsest. It is an independent form of consciousness that cannot be reduced to a rational thought or to a prescientific interpretation of nature or history. Myth has become a species of implicit knowledge which bears the special properties of cognitive system. Myth puts human fears, hopes and fancies into actualization and categorisation and changes them into obstinate and robust works. It is a spontaneous manifestation of emotions and feelings. It

provides unity with nature and promotes the belief in life and living. It stands as a symbol of spiritual potentiality in humans. It is a channel for eternity to pour itself into the world. Myth is a response to human quest. It is based on the stages of realization and considers transition from childhood to maturity and eventual death. It inspires the understanding of the prospective perfection. Otto Rank considers that myths are the impulsive exhibition of the conscious and are suggestive of the cultural neurosis. Rank along with Sachs suggested myth to be the contribution of generation towards human motive and so tried to locate collective unconscious.

Freud views myths as the records of the past. He believes that universal traits of the psyche of human can be exposed through myth. C. Jung considered myths to be nothing but the mental life of the primeval people and myths were the allegories. Joseph Campbell thinks that “Myth helps you to put your mind in touch with this experience of being alive. The Myths are metaphorical of spiritual potentiality of human being and the same power that animate our life, animate the life of the world. Myths are intimately bound to the culture, time and place that they are to be kept alive by constant recreations” (*The Power of Myth* 40). Anthropologist like Franz Boas, Alfred L. Kroeber, Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred R. Redcliff Brown beginning from 1890’s started at fieldwork. Malinowski gave his myth ritualistic theory, elaborating upon the function of Myths. He views myth to be an active faith reflected in the behavioural patterns. It is a statement of bigger reality still partially alive. Its moral still rules the social life of the natives.

Lawrence tells that Mircea Eliade states “Myth is typically a traditional story of anonymous authorship and archetypal or universal significance which is recounted in a certain community and is often linked with a ritual, that it tells of the deeds of superhuman beings such as gods, demi gods, heroes, spirits or ghosts that is set outside historical time in primal or eschatological time or in the supernatural world and the world of human history” (Coupe, *Myth* 6). Burke considers, myth and considers it to be perennial. He defines myth to be “a narrative

that effects identification within the community that takes it seriously endorsing shared interest and confirming the given notion of order while at the same time gesturing towards a more comprehensive identification – that among humanity, the earth and the universe” (Coupe, 181). Rene Girard, “Myth are not precise account of historical occurrences but the distorted representations of these events. Central characters in myth are frequently exceptional humans, monstrous, outright deities. Myths have undergone a process of mythic crystallization. Myth is regarded as representing metaphorically a world picture and insight” (Golsan 61).

In terms of 20th century experience, it can be stated that all society create myths and believe incredibly in those myths. Myths are exceptionally convincing and people arduously pursue and follow these considering them as logical conclusions. Each culture will make and esteem its own fantasies, not have the option to recognize truth and deception but since their capacity is to keep up and safeguard a culture against disturbance and devastation. They serve to prop men up against rout, dissatisfaction, frustration and they safeguard establishments and institutional procedures. It is cyclical in nature in contrast to history which is linear. It is not poetic, not symbolic, not explanatory. It is faith and emotion channelled to specific cultural purposes. Chaos is fated to be beaten and order is to be triumphant. It is living embodiment of insights and a prelogical mentality that perceives truth. It is a process not an object. Myth validates cultural beliefs and practices. It enhances and promotes belief in the solidarity of life. It is an autonomous cultural form.

Myth creates a world of its own. It is the direct ancestor of what we call as literature. Digital era realises mythology to be a fascinating, inspiring and delighted pursuit to delve in. Myth is highly coded ideological and evaluation stance. Myth blends, blurs and transfers across other disciplines. Myth connects past and future both casually and thematically. Myth is always sparked with the presence of transcendent and immanent. Myth represents scientifically implausible reference to supernatural fantastical creatures and cosmic events that represent the

humanity's desire. Tracing Disability in Myth can be perceived to be an emerging panoply of the past societal realities, cultures, traditions and above all the metaphor of ability rather than dis/ability. The myth is rich in disabled imagery and calls for more in-depth understanding of disability. Indian mythology believes in the plurality of deities and observe human beings as a cog in the macrocosm of the universe. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita have explained the role of myths in Indian life

For in India, mythology is not a mere subject of antiquarian research and disquisition; here it still permeates the whole life of the people as a controlling influence. And it is the living mythology which, passing through the stages of representation of successive cosmic process and assuming definite shape thereafter, has become a powerful factor in the everyday life of the people. (4)

Indian Mythology heralds the faith and experiences of its disciples and followers. It is a treasure house of adventure and wisdom. Indians share the collective fantasies and mythology for them strives to present solutions to intricate socio -psychological conflicts. Indian culture has an undwindling faith upon mythology resting on the varied rituals and folk traditions. "India's recorded civilization is one of the longest in the course of world history and its mythology spans the whole of that time and more" (Ions 11). Different fanciful stories have been passed on from age to age either by the informal exchange or through circumspectly incorporated sacred texts. The narratives of the sacred writings like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas are intended to pass on extraordinary philosophical certainties, inconspicuous actualities, rules and adages to manage our day by day life. Indian History merits our consideration due to a particular kind of social framework. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* give a volume of historical proof of public activity, monetary conditions, political circumstances and numerous other matters of antiquated India. The epic gives us numerous subtleties of the Aryans' life. They were warlike and were continually framing

collusions and taking up arms. Chasing, drinking, betting and battling were the most loved occupations of the lords. The origin of the doctrine of Karma goes back to Rig Veda's concept of 'rta' or sacrifice. Radhakrishnan views 'rta' to be the anticipator of Karma and Dasgupta finds its association with the belief that one who performs bad deeds suffers in another world and the one with good deeds enjoy the pleasures and luxuries of highest order.

Karma is derived from the Sanskrit root 'kr' which means to do. The etymological meaning is derived from the Sanskrit word Karman suggesting 'to act' 'to make' or to perform. Karma thus bears the Philosophical potential of action that results morally into consequences either good or bad. Karmas are categorized as mental (i.e. the ones pertaining to desiring, thinking or willing), vocal (i.e. pertaining to walking and talking) and bodily (i.e. breathing, heaving and seeing). The doer of Karma gets appropriate consequences for his actions. The doer may suffer or enjoy as per the casual consequences of his past actions. Karma determine the life as well as the character of the individual. These Karmas end up in two directional way, one by creating Karmaphala and the other is Samskara i.e. tendency to repeat the deeds in a cyclic form.

Indian mythology is a repository of heavenly gods and goddess of paramount importance. It comprises mesmerizing events of spectacular royalty getting influenced by ravishing apsaras and eventually ending up in distress. It finds the presence of devils and Gandharvas, it enlists the fierce Rakshasas who cunningly strive to overpower elite sages. It narrates breathtaking incidents of magical presence of nymphs, melodious hymns of Yajna, vibrations of holy rivers and soulful presence of asceticism, lushgreen forests displaying nature at its best. Here all the manifestations of nature interact with human kind making him the top of creation. All the creatures, customs, cultures, things end up as the endless presence of 'Prakriti'. The life moves on in consonance with the presence of *deva* and *danava*. It expresses the eternal struggle and eventual triumph of goodness over evil. The central axis of their entire

universe is the doctrine of karma. The theory of karmas permeated in the very fabric of Hindu Philosophy, its art as well as literature. Though the version of heterodox as well as orthodox classical Indian Schools of thought regarding karma is different. The prevalence of the concept of karma in the very fabric of India is expounded as:

Almost all schools of Indian thought, orthodox and heterodox, theistic and atheistic, adhere to the philosophy of *karman*. It is expounded at great length in Jainism and Buddhism, in the Nyaya-Vaisesika, in the Samkhya-Yoga, and in the two schools of Mimamsa. In some schools of Indian thought the accumulated potency of actions is believed to operate with such transcendental efficacy that there is no place for the concept of the overruling majesty of God. *Karmavada* enjoys almost universal philosophical adherence. It has also powerfully influenced the popular mind of India-and the conduct of the people generally. (V.P.Varma)

Indian Philosophical Schools namely Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta has stringent belief in the philosophy of Karmas. Though they provide sharp difference of opinions as well as interpretations yet the common thread that binds them all together is the belief that Karmas can reap pleasure as well as pains in the present or in the future lives. Only enlightened as well as non-attached are potent to overpower the karmic accounts. This though is integrally woven into the social, cultural, religious, moral, ethical and economic fabric of India. Grounded in the exegesis of the sacred Vedas is the philosophy that you reap the results of your actions. Based on the affinities perceived by these schools, usually they are grouped together. Nyaya and Vaisesika represent the logical and empirical thread of Hindu culture. Samkhya and Yoga share the interest to attain Moksha from the cycle of birth and death by isolating the pure consciousness from the web of matter. Mimamsa and Vedanta present an approach to philosophy fixed in the exegesis of the Veda. It is believed that

sufferings always follow the antecedent events. Though there are sharp differences in various opinions as well as the interpretations of classical Indian System of thoughts, yet they have the common string that karmas can reap pleasures and pains in the present or in the future lives. Karmas are inviolable and entrap all the humans as well as non-humans. It engulfs the entire universe. Only enlightened as well as non-attached are potent to overpower the karmic accounts. Those who act selflessly for the sake of humanity do not gather karmas rather end up as *nishkama karma*. These actions do not bind the body to the cycle of birth and death. It is an axiom that man is what he does. Whatever a person sows, he harvests the same in the form of destiny.

Destiny is the blueprint of Karmas which is going to find an expression in our present life. These are our *Prarabd Karma*; the actions of the past which are going to determine our present as well as future lives. Essentially the soul of man is free and it undergoes the sufferings, pains, pleasures and disabilities under the impact and influence of Karma. Indian classical thought unquestionably propagates the transmigration of the *samskaras* from one birth to another. This doctrine of Karma differentiates Indian Philosophy and value system from that of the western thought.

All the Indian Philosophical schools have formulated a number of arguments in the support of doctrine of Karma. Except for the Carvakas- the materialist school of Indian Philosophical system all other believe that whatever individual undergoes is the antecedent of his own doings. Carvakas do not consider that individuals are reborn to undergo rewards and punishment of their past actions. The allusion of the doctrine is to eat, drink and be merry. "Whatever actions you wish to perform, present is the final for the same. Don't pause and ponder over heaven." Carvakas deny the distinction of Self and Body. They also refuted the ideas of inference (*anumana*) and testimony (*Sabdha*) which are otherwise considered reliable and valid in all the other Philosophical Indian Schools. To them causation is a mere belief.

Influence thus can never be a reliable means of knowledge. Carvakas consider the presence of matter to be everything. They consider consciousness to be a product of matter. So soul is conscious living body. Eventually this consciousness perishes with body.

The classical Indian Philosophy claims the following three attributes.

- Every action has its consequence.
- The consequence is borne by the doer in the present or future lives.
- Whatever the doer deserve only he bears the eventuality alone. No one can destroy or replace Karma.

Karma build up the physical, mental, sociological, physiological, psychological as well as cultural identity of the person who is the doer of Karma. One gets one's character, dispositions, inclinations, instincts, mental faculties as well as tendencies on the basis of his Karmas and 'Samskaras'. These physical, mental or moral traits which the person possess arise from the past actions. His own deeds are getting fruition.

The law of Karma is viewed sometimes as a law of causation and sometimes it is considered to be the law of conservation of moral energy. Every action entitles its doer with a result that may be pleasure or pain each according to what the doer deserves. D. M. Datta says

The souls that lived in the past world and acquired strong attachment for its objects retained their inclination towards objects even in the state of dissolution when they were deprived of their gross bodies and the objects of enjoyment. Besides, these imperfect spirits, fettered to the objective world by their attachment, required also to be free, and freedom could be obtained only by their being associated once more with objects so that they could carefully scrutinize the real nature of the objects and know thereby that the soul is altogether different from objects and therefore does not need the objects at all. ("The Moral Conception of Nature in Indian Philosophy", 226)

This law of Karma is mechanical because it's never changing form i.e. immutability and its being inviolable. Aurobindo considers it to be something more than its antecedent and the consequence for the same thus considering it more than mechanical.

Paradigm of karma establish man to be the master of his own fate by being coherent as well as viable. Karmas put forth reward and punishment before the humans in the form of happiness and pain. Indian Philosophical systems assume God as the divine dispenser of justice despite the scriptures claiming God to be the one who remain aloof and witness his creation. This logic brings us to the thought of granting of free will to the mankind. It also fixes the responsibility of the one who is the Kratar of the action. It heralds the grand Indian belief and hypothesis that human beings express varieties as well as inequalities in their conditions as well as fortunes. Karmic philosophy provides the retributive as well as utilitarian justifications. It brings us to view Karma as a causation. The universal axiom "what you sow so shall you reap". The individual or Jeeva remains accountable for his karmas whether good or bad. Those who have more bad deeds, they live a life of hardships and fears while the virtuous reap benefits of goodness by enjoying luxuries and happiness. Karma is the definite activity that crops up from some definite activity and again end up in definite activity. But surprisingly it is an expression of someone who is beyond activity and inactivity. Tracing causal link is quite like entering into the labyrinth of cause and effect. Every action, event or phenomenon is caused by some other action and leads to another action, event or phenomenon. Karma is thus a never-ending chain of cause and effect. There is no random or accidental occurrence rather an act follows its due which may be the defects and merits, cause and effect are quite relative concepts.

It explains the reason for the individuals to be the ones they are. The delights, agony, joy or enduring, great or malevolence are consequences of his own behavior and musings which additionally shapes his fate and form his character. Karmas are not limited to any spatio-

temporal obstructions. This grandiose activity hints very common transempirical process in which occasions follow their causes. The easygoing connection between the individual's activity and the mischief done is proximal to the risk and obligation of reprisal. Hermann Oldenberg, Paul Deussen, Dasgupta, A.K. Ramanujan and Chales Keyes agree on the essential contributes of Karmic theory are ethnicization, causality and rebirth. Reichenbach distinguishes two kinds of effects; Phalas and Samskara (B.R. Reichenbach, TLOK). Karmic causation results in either immediate effects which are visible and invisible or into the invisible disposition produced in agent that results in action. Samskara are the dormant seeds that can germinate when the right circumstances will come up. Yet this Karmic theory is not a linear development but its developmental structure is quite composite.

Those who indulge in bad deeds with their mind, thought or utterance and hurt others to live their own life comfortably, pay the price of all misdeeds. They never get Moksha out of the yonis cycle. They die as an entity and reborn as a different one. After passing through 84 Lakh Bhoga yoni's they are blessed by God with Karma Yoni i.e. birth as a human being. When they are born their caste (human, animal, bird), age, luxuries, pains hard work gets attributed in their lives as per the demands of their Karmic account. Naturally humans get entangled in this web of Karma that a Jeeva pay gets finished while unfinished Karmas follow the Jeeva as desires. All mortal beings get judged for their actions in front of Yama raja. Karma act as a treasure of the individuals which nobody can take away. Karmas get credited to your account. If one's bad deeds exceed the Jeeva is burnt in eternal fires of hell while Jeeva enters heaven if it has remained virtuous.

This law of karma is mechanical because of its immutability. When we look around to see the differences in human world and natural world everywhere, you are always confronted with the basic query to understand about the various differences and distinctions in the world. We cannot find two people who look exactly like each other with same fingerprints and same

number of hairs. Indian philosophy navigates us towards the presence of super power who knowingly or unknowingly is gearing our lives. It establishes that we are microcosms in the never-ending cycle of births and deaths. This cycle moves from *Satyug*, *Tretayug*, *Dwaparyug* and *Kalyug*. One *yuga* succeeds the other. In different *yugas*, *Karmas* has different scopes. If somebody gets indulged in *Satyug* in the performance of bad deeds, the entire humanity will bear the grunt of the almighty power that controls everyone's life. In *Tretayuga*, the misdemeanor of one cause suffering to all, the entire nation may have to pay the price of an individual's miscreant acts. In *Dwaparyuga*, if a person behaves different to the set norms then the entire family is to pay the price for the same. But in *Kalyuga*, it is assumed that only the individual has to pay the price.

So, the interstices of disability and myth in Indian Paradigm is creating a magical realm. The present thesis is going to unravel the disability experiences- retellings of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The mythological world had encoded a sort of implicit knowledge which is very important to human beings as it is an expression of social reality. When we are searching for the common grounds of myth and disability, we are not moving ahead to censure or ban but we aim to discuss and explain symbolism so that the damaging messages are negated. The myth is richly laden with disability imagery and calls for more in depth understanding of disability – a minority identity. “The experiences of contemporary minority people, once brought to light , resound backward in history, like a reverse echo effect , to comment on the experiences of past minority peoples' while at the same time these past experiences contribute, one hopes , to an accumulation of knowledge about how oppression works” (Siebers 16). This calls forth for looking into the Indian epics which are considered to be the part of '*Itihasa*'. This way the thesis is going to further explore the disability history. A new disability history is coming forward to recognize and understand the varied corporeal human experiences. With the aim to focus on the identity which is marked deviant by the others by putting its impairment as a mere

reminder of contingency. It calls for re-evaluation and decoding of the Indian context of the ‘Other’ and associate it with intersecting and overlapping configuration of caste, gender, class, race and ethnicity. This looking back is a search for Indian perceptions of undoing the cloak of inability as an attitude of disability. Disability is a catalytic phenomenon to pour out the culturally fabricated narrative of the body. Indians view disability not only as a narrative of difference but as a narrative of either abjection or cure. The perception of the literary representations of disability will bring forth the Indian experience of disability and it would provide undergirding authorization to interpret resting on the Indian wisdom of not viewing life in black and white only. Disability is not a mere concept but its lived experience shapes our understandings of the world.

Nielsen historicizes the concept of disability in a conventional historical narrative. Nielsen’s history does not call attention to the access it provides. It feels simple, unobtrusive, and ordinary as it does the work of inclusion, bringing disability from the outer edges of historical knowledge to the very center, just as an accessible built environment conveys disabled people from the edges of the public sphere to its centers. In this way, Nielsen’s study makes disability accessible in both form and content. “Disability,” Nielsen tells us, “is not the story of someone else. It is our story” (Garland-Thomson xiii).

The inclusion of physical aspects of the body in historical study of disability and deformity is a focus for future studies. Disability research, by pushing scholarships to face the embodiment of inequality, pushes science to tackle their own aporias, medicine institutions and social activities. Disabilities are not a universal category but a strategic name that marks different differences. Seibers argues that

Disability studies doesn’t treat disease or disability hoping to cure or avoid them; it studies the social meanings, symbols and stigmas attached to disability identity and asks how they relate to enforced systems of exclusion and

oppression , attacking the widespread belief that having an able body and mind determines whether one is a quality human being.... The central purpose of disability studies is to reverse the negative connotations of disability. (Siebers 4)

To conclude, disability is the marked difference and deviance, which has always been there since the inception of human race. We are standing on the threshold to have a history of disability which brings forth, the voice and expression of the disability. Mythological world puts us across the dire need to have an indigenous model of disability. Disability is all pervading and it touches us all; it influences our choices and daily routines. By viewing disability in Indian antiquity, we are laying a brick in the citadel of Indian Disability discourse which quite surprising this 300-year-old civilization misses upon. The research focuses on to make the concept of disability as a discursive term which can further act as an impetus to the Indian literature on disability. Nandini Ghosh asserts that “Disability can be conceived as embedded in a particular social context and must then be interpreted in terms of oppression keeping in mind other identity markers such as caste, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, etc. (Ghosh *Interrogating Disability in India* 6).

As we are putting forth an indigenous model of disability, we are trying to peep into the fanciful world of myth by considering the above said notions. We are going to locate disability in the mythological world of the retellings of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Disability-based personalities, myths and perceptions have the significance of a hypothesis because they reflect places and modes of representation from which the prevailing philosophies of culture are evident and subject to critique. Identity is better described as an epistemological structure comprising a broad variety of theories about social environments navigating. Identity is not the framework that produces the pure identity or inner nature of a person, but the mechanism by which that person defines and associates with a collection of social constructs,

concepts, beliefs, principles, knowledge, forms of varying authenticity, relevance and verifiability.

We are going to locate the various types and tropes of disability in myth. Definitely, these tropes will act as the lens for the future research in the interstices of disability and myth. It is not only going to bring the axiom of the Disability Studies aiming at Centering Disability in action and bring forth the lens to gaze the cares, concerns and support of disabled characters in Indian mythology from an Indian world view. It takes into account all the good and essential features of the models of Western disability discourse and intunes them to cater the needs and requirements of the Indian mythological disabled beings.

Chapter II

Devdutt Pattanaik: His Life and Achievements

A multi-talented Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik is an author, illustrator, mythologist, columnist, communicator, leadership consultant and a medical practitioner. He is particularly famous for decoding and analysing Indian mythology and becoming a household name by doing so. His works challenge the misinterpretations of Indian scriptures and assert the self-assured pronouncements on story symbols and rituals that had already been churned and ruminated upon. He bears expertise in writing on sacred lore, moral narratives, fables, legends, tales. He has announced the proliferation of myth in present times in the same way Arjun blew *Devdutt* (his conch shell) to declare the war of *dharma* over *adharma*, the battle of Kurukshetra. Quite like his name, he has revolutionised writing.

Devdutt was born on December 11, 1970, to the family of Prafulla Kumar Pattanaik (father) and Sabitri Pattanaik (mother). He is an Odia and was brought up in Mumbai. During his early childhood, he stayed in Chembur, Mumbai. He was a student of Perpetual Succour High School in Chembur. This school initiated the love of reading and listening to the stories of *Ramayana*. He did his graduation in medicine from Grant Medical College Mumbai. Pursuing his passion for mythology, he completed a course on mythology from Mumbai university also adds gleam to his academic learning. He spent 14 years as a medical practitioner working in Pharma and healthcare industry. He worked as a doctor in Sanofi Aventis and Apollo Group of hospitals, respectively. He remained a consultant in Ernst and Young. But he cannot stop himself from the call of his vocation and passion: writing books on mythology and giving orientation to the people by excavating profound truths out of the mythological world. Later his love of learning plunged him to take mythology as a full-time passion.

In 1997, his first book *Shiva: An Introduction* got published. Then he didn't turn his back ever to the enchanting world of gods, goddesses, apsaras, demons, *Gandharvas*, *rakshasas*

and fanciful retreats of imagination. He pioneered as TED X conference speaker in India in November 2009. CNBC -TV 18 and CNBC Awaaz gave Devdutt a further platform by airing his programmes like Business Sutra and Shastrath, respectively. His command over Hindi and English fascinated his listeners who have always loved watching him explain *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in lucid Hindi and English. He occupied the position of Chief Belief Officer of the Future Group with the task of studying and explore fundamental human behaviours. He helped Future Group to emerge as India's largest retailer. He is currently writing columns for Mid- Day, Times of India, Swarajya, daily Q and Scroll.in. He is primarily a storyteller and has a lot of audiences, as is evident with the TRP's of Epic channel wherein he presents his show Devlok. This show foretells the mythical stories.

Indian Television Network Star TV has made him the consultant of their dramas on mythology like *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*, *Mahabharata* and *Siya Ke Ram*, to mention a few. He has challenged certain conventional narrative and narratological perspectives and opened up new vistas of interpretation. With the desire to bring Saraswati out of the closet, Devdutt considers that knowledge should be within reach of everyone. Mythological narratives enlighten the individual and allow him/her to reframe their subjective take. These interpretations allow individuals to have their faith and myths so that they may retain the old values and form new opinions as per the changing demands of contemporary society. What is very peculiar about Devdutt is his enduring appeal of the mythic worldview in modern society. People are readily and willingly accepting his subjective truths and allowing him to present his pursuance along with differentiation from the traditional ideological approach. He opines that "no society can exist without myth as it creates notions of right and wrong, good and bad, heaven and hell, rights and duties" (Sinha).

Devdutt Pattanaik has proudly authored 1000 articles and 50 books on the relevance of mythological stories, rituals and symbols in modern times. The 49 years old author finds

himself at 93rd Indian fame rank in the Forbes India List in the year 2016. He does not believe in measuring life with mechanistic things. Still, he wishes to engross the mind and body to find the subtle boundary of understanding the non-measurable – the *nirguna*. He puts his belief in the pseudo-science of auras and chakras, which stands on faith and cannot be explained scientifically. It also defies logic. He invokes individuals to see, understand and deduct their subjective logics and feel good about their own lives as well as the lives of their dear and near ones.

Devdutt says that

I am addicted to Writing as it clears my thought, refines my ideas, makes me calm and focused. All this enables the voluminous Writing. I have always been interested in ancient stories, whether they are from Indian, Greek or Egyptian mythology. I was intrigued by how different myths explain the different ways in which different cultures think...both ancient and modern. Most people have not realised how much these traditional stories reveal human behaviour. We tend to relegate mythology to the past – when it is relevant through time. (*Meet Devdutt Pattanaik: The Logical Mythologist*).

In mythology, Writing and art, Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik has never been professionally trained. His research shows his passion and a self-driven commitment towards art and mythology. He is a master crafter in dealing with the processing of tales. His stories are subtle and reflect the ease of the mindful handling of his material rather than the technical alleys of myth “I like to use ordinary materials like simple A4 paper and a nice black pen and sometimes two pens-one thick and the other thin. For complex work, I may use a pencil and an eraser 'otherwise I just go for it. I have some concept before I start, but a lot is improvised as the work progresses" (Dasgupta, *Beyond the writer: Devdutt Pattanaik*). He says, “I see my illustrations

as diagrams to illustrate a point I make in my articles” (Dasgupta, *Beyond the writer: Devdutt Pattanaik*).

This is his way of adding human angle in mythology and would use equal number of illustrations to his articles. His sketches support his writings by visually depicting the moments and happenings in the past. It comes like a dramatic presentation of the emotions and occurrences. Devdutt explores a unique Indian worldview, which has both diversity and dynamism. He believes that "For the last 200 years, we have been fed the colonial version of Hindu mythology. This, in turn, has been further modified by Indians who have been embarrassed by Indian thought, so they try very hard to make it seem scientific and end up making it Pseudoscientific" (Dasgupta, *Beyond the writer: Devdutt Pattanaik*).

He is known for his lucid writings and writes in the way the textbooks are written. Ashwin Sanghi, a fiction writer, says, "Devdutt simplifies mythology" (Sanghi). You can read it as a story. His books are, therefore, easy to understand. His books narrate mythological narratives in the way science books teach science. It has lots of illustrations, vignettes, tables. He says, "In most of my books, the use of diagrams, the use of boxes, the use of bullet points, the use of tables all come from the influence of those science textbooks" (*Meet Devdutt Pattanaik: The Logical Mythologist*). He finds poetic expression bit irritant and prefers writing literature keeping in mind the students of science who do not generally read literature. His writings are so logical and poignant.

Devdutt was crowned as the bestselling Indian author in 2014. “Devdutt Pattanaik is a man on a mission. With his prolific writings on mythology – whether from management, children's books, everyday wisdom, or queerness – he hopes to influence the way society perceives myth, and in turn, itself" (Chanda-Vaz).

An overview of his writings takes us across almost fifty books he has written. Devdutt Pattanaik has written a book *SHIVA: An Introduction* in 1997 based on mythology and explored

the various pictorial images of Shiva. It brings forth the Shaivite philosophy. It is marked by a straightforward style of writing. A list of 108 holy names of Shiva with their meanings, a bibliography for those interested in knowing more, more than 150 examples are an added treat. In the year of 1999, he wrote a book named *as VISHNU: An Introduction* based on Mythology. This book aims to understand the importance of worshipping Vishnu in our time. The book recounts familiar stories of Rama and Krishna and narrates Vaishnava ideology in a simple narrative style. He wrote a book, *The Goddess in India: The Five Faces of the Eternal Feminine* in 2000 based on Mythology. This book delves into the myths regarding the Indian goddess for the last 4000 years. It stands as a treatise to the temper of the native Indians with beautiful stories. The book *Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and Fortune: An Introduction* was written by him in 2002 which is based on Mythology. This book presents 200 images from India in different years and a different time. In a different narrative style, the attributes and symbols associated with the goddess are outlined. Devdutt Pattanaik has a book to his credit named as *A Man Who Was A Woman: And Other Queer Tales from Hindu Lore* based on fiction, written in 2002. He explained that within this infinite cyclic universe, the Hindu philosophy finds every action and identity a possibility. Queers, when seen through the patriarchal lens, are tolerated only infringes. The book narrates about such queer tales from the radical point. His book got published under the title, *Indian Mythology: Tales, Symbols and Rituals from the Heart of the Subcontinent* in 2003 based on the theme of Mythology. This book presents an analysis of 99 classic Indian myths from an entirely non-Western perspective, offering a fresh view of the mystical Hindu landscape— and contrasts Indian myths with Bible, Ancient Egypt, Greece, Scandinavia, and Mesopotamia tales. His next book, *Devi, the Mother Goddess: An Introduction* is also on Mythology published in 2003. The book details all age groups with tales of Adi-Maya-Shakti, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Parvati, Kali, Durga. It provides simple pictorial descriptions of various symbols associated with various rituals. *The Book of Kali* got published

in 2004 outlines the evolution of Kali. She has come through the centuries to reflect a whole range of contradictory images — from bloodthirsty ogress to benevolent goddess. She is venerated as Chamunda, a goddess bordering on the macabre and grotesque, in one of her milder forms, Dakshina-Kali, she is also worshipped in household shrines. Another book *Myth = Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology* introduced in 2006 under the category of Mythology. This book introduces us to 330 million gods in Hinduism. Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik has tried to unravel the inherited realities of life, death, nature and culture. He also penned down, *Shiva to Shankara: Decoding the Phallic Symbol* in 2006 under the subject of mythology which explores the sexual symbols associated with Shiva and uncovers the meaning below. We learn how Shiva's image is expressed in the love tale of Shiva. This book is displaying the strange connection between Shiva's metaphysics, rituals, symbols and stories. The book *Hanuman's Ramayana* has been written for children and from the perspective of Hanuman it retells *Ramayana*. The quirky illustrations based on the Mithila folk paintings style are telling their tales. He wrote this book for the children in 2009. He penned down the book *7 Secrets from Hindu Calendar Art* in 2011 under the category of mythology. Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik transforms the language of belief of the people and reveals an ancient Indian truth. The book *7 Secrets of Vishnu* was written by him in 2011. The book narrates stories in a simple language for the understanding, entertainment and learning of ordinary people. He wrote two books under the title of *Fun in Devlok: Gauri and the Talking Cow* and *Fun in Devlok: Shiva Plays Dumb Charades* in 2011. The book *7 Secrets of Hindu Calendar Art* was written in 2012. This book has little gems scattered all over. At one point, it comments on Gods' hierarchy, and at another, it goes on offering logic on why Brahma, the creator, is not worshipped by mass. In the tales, the book is full of stories. The book *7 Secrets of Shiva* was written by him in 2012. Devdutt outlines the varied meanings and understandings trapped in the symbols of Shiva. The god who has smeared ash and resides in the snow-clad mountains only wearing the animal fur

has a peculiar presence in our native narrative fabric. This book tries to unlock seven of these stories. The book *Business Sutra* translated version was written in 2013 under the category of Management. The author has used myths, traditions, and Indian mythology symbols to provide a more analytical approach to management. Using the sutras described in this book, Pattanaik demonstrates the mantra of running small businesses to big business houses. The book *7 Secrets of the Goddess* was written by him in 2014 under the category of mythology. Lakshmi massages the feet of Vishnu. Is that masculine dominance? Kali lies upon the chest of Shiva. Is that female dominance? Shiva is a midwife. Is it the standard of sex? Hindu mythology tales, symbols and practices have something to say about the relationships between the sexes. Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik seeks to uncover the mysteries hidden in the mythic world. The book was penned down by him *Pashu: Animal Tales from Hindu Mythology* for children in 2014. In Hindu mythology, the animals or pashu play a crucial role. Devdutt Pattanaik shares with almost 75 anecdotes the interrelationship of humans and animals. The book *Fun in Devlok Omnibus: By Devdutt* for children was written in 2014. Devdutt features six tales in the Fun series while addressing the fascinating questions in this delightfully illustrated omnibus and expose many secrets of the realm of gods and demons. He also credit a book named *The Great Indian Epics: Retold by Devdutt Pattanaik* in 2014. In 2015 he has written another book named as *My Gita: By Devdutt* which is based on mythology. He explored that to the contemporary reader, the Bhagavad Gita is made accessible with a modern scientific temper and illustrations and sketches. Devdutt illustrates how Krishna encourages Arjuna to consider his relationships rather than to judge them. Under the category of management, he has written a book *The Success Sutra: An Indian Approach To Wealth* in 2015. There are a variety of management books that include theories and strategies on how to become prosperous and successful. All of them advise us to pursue Lakshmi, the goddess of riches, to make her our own. Devdutt discusses the Indian approach to success, and fulfilment. He advises against the pursuit of

goddess and calls for actions that the goddess may herself follow. Again in 2015 another book named as *99 Thoughts on Ganesha* was written by him. The book brings 99 meditations to understand the remover of hurdles- Ganesha better. It helps to focus on how Ganesha assist in worldly tasks and bring prosperity and peace. The book *99 Thoughts on Ganesha* was translated in Malayalam and Gujarati in the year of 2015. *Is He Fresh? Aka Kaula Hai?* book has written by him in 2015. He credits one more book named as *Olympus: An Indian Retelling of the Greek Myths* in 2016 based on fiction. The book narrates Greek myths. It takes us on the itinerary of Olympus, which is the abode of Greek gods. He points out towards similarities of Indian and Greco-roman myths too. In 2016 he has written a book *The Talent Sutra: An Indian Approach to Learning* under the subject of management. Devdutt wants to assist us in monitoring the creativity of those who work for us, preventing the wandering of their minds from functioning. The book helps us to recognize our requirements and allows us to work with talent, build strong relationships and nurture people with faith and patience in every situation. He further outlines the causes of the failure of family businesses. *The Girl Who Chose: A New Way of Narrating the Ramayana* was written in 2016 based on mythology. Devdutt outlines the five choices made by Sita and how it changed not only her destiny but also the destiny of the generations of Indian wives. The book named as *Devlok: With Devdutt Pattanaik* based on Mythology in 2016. The book is based on the first series of his favourite show. He takes us on a sparkling tour of the countless tales, rituals and symbols. Devdutt narrates about gods, goddesses, demigods and demons. This book perfectly introduces you to the constantly mesmerising world of Hindu Philosophy. In 2016 under the category of management he has written a book *The Leadership Sutra: An Indian Approach to Power Sutra* Leadership provides surprising and original insights into the practice of leadership and power. The famous book invents original management and business strategies. He has penned down two books named as *Vishnu: The Protector* (Penguin Petit) and *Devlok Devdutt Pattanaik Ke Sang* in 2016. He has penned down a book for children

named as *The Boys Who Fought: The Mahabharata* for children in 2017. A hundred princes are expected to look after their five orphaned cousins. Instead, their house was burnt, their wife raped and their property robbed. The five did not strike back for revenge but dharma. Devdutt brings for children nicely illustrated retelling of *Mahabharata* for children. In 2017 he has written a book named as *Ramayana Versus Mahabharata: My Playful Comparison* based on mythology. This is a common misconception that, while the *Mahabharata* is rational, the *Ramayana* is idealistic. Devdutt Pattanaik chalks out the similarities and differences between the two. The comparison of two epics proves that the *Mahabharata* is a reaction to the events of *Ramayana*. Ideas are spread on 56 chapters in this novel. Another book named as *My Hanuman Chalisa: By Devdutt* based on mythology was written. Devdutt Pattanaik demystifies to the contemporary reader the Hanuman Chalisa. His innovative approach, coupled with his signature illustrations, makes the ancient hymn available. The book named as *I Am Divine. So Are You is also* based on mythology and was written in 2017. At the intersection of scripture, history, traditions and lived experiences, the spirituality of Karmic religions is unveiled. And so they are diverse. The book named as *Devlok 2: With Devdutt Pattanaik is* based on mythology and was written in 2017. This is based on Devlok's 2nd Season 2. Devdutt responds to his viewer's and readers' questions about Hindu mythology, which he replied to over thirty exciting episodes. Devdutt delves into the thrilling variety of Hindu mythology. The book is both informative and entertaining. The book named *Leader: Insights from Indian Mythology* is based on mythology in 2018. The book draws from sources as varied as the *Mahabharata* and the Bible, the Vikram-Betal myths, the Iliad and Odyssey, Islamic teachings, the tales of rishis and kings and fables from all over the world. The writer tries to understand the needs and necessities of good leadership. In 2018 book named *Culture: 50 Insights from Mythology* is based on mythology. Devdutt Pattanaik breaks down the complex labyrinth of stories, symbols and rituals to examine the way cultures are shaped. He explores how stories shape interpretation

and construct realities, the cultural origins of the notion of evil, and by telling various Indian and Western myths, he shows the need for mythology. By doing so, he demonstrates how myths mimic the society from which they originate, thus reinforcing the source at the same time. In 2018 entitled *Devlok 3: With Devdutt Pattanaik* is based on mythology. Following the tremendous success of EPIC Channel's Devlok's first two seasons with Devdutt Pattanaik is back with a third instalment to answer the questions and more, this time delving deeper into Hinduism and other religions too? Some chapters deal with Buddhism and Jainism and their fascinating history. In 2018 he has penned down another book on children named as *Shyam: An Illustrated Retelling of the Bhagavata*. This book narrates the story of Krishna's lifetime smoothly. It presents his ventures from the pranks with innocent women to the angry fighters of Kurukshetra. The book *How to Become Rich: 12 Lessons I Learnt from Vedic and Puranic Stories* based on managing has penned down by him in 2019. Lakshmi is dressed as a wealth goddess. Her arrival, though her departure is poor and inauspicious, is considered auspicious. How should we drive Lakshmi out of India, rather than lovingly welcoming her into our lives? How to get rich is a clear retelling of the Lakshmi stories found in the Vedas and Puranas. In 2019 another book *Aranyaka: Book of the Forest* based on mythology has been written by him. Aranyaka tells us about forests within us, and outside. It is about health, nourishment and love. Braiding the tales of three spirited rishikas - Katyayani the Brave, Maitreyi the Fig and Gargi the Weaver — it discusses the fears and hunger underpinning all human interactions. He credits one more book in 2019 titled as *Yoga Mythology: 64 Asanas and Their Stories* based on mythology. Devdutt Pattanaik's book on Yoga Mythology (co-written with foreign yoga practitioner Matt Rulli) recounts the fascinating tales of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain mythology that lie behind the yogic yoga poses the public sees so well; in the meantime, he draws attention to an Indic philosophy focused on the ideals of eternity, rebirth, salvation and empathy that have nurtured yoga for millions of years. In 2019 he has also written one more book titled as

Faith: 40 insights into Hinduism in 2019 .The book by Devdutt Pattanaik is a treasure house of knowledge on Hinduism's complex teachings. It is answering main questions on Hindu philosophy and related Indian history in easy, concise, engaging ways, and exploring the often-confusing practices and beliefs that are an integral part of Hindu religion. The book titled *Pilgrim Nation: The Making of Bharatvarsh* based on mythology has been penned down in 2020 by Devdutt Pattanaik. He takes us on an informative journey to thirty-two sacred sites where ancient and contemporary deities uncover the country's complex and nuanced history, geography, and imagination.

The present thesis explores five works, namely *The Pregnant king, Jaya, Sita, The Book of Ram, and Shikhandi And the Other Tales They Don't Tell You* and tries to excavate the lived experiences of disability in antiquity. All these books are either the retellings or tributaries of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The pregnant king is a fiction where the story runs parallel to the *Mahabharata*. It centres on the kingdom of Vallabhai and postulates the conduct required by the specific genders. The text highlights the Indian Patriarchal notion of compartmentalisation of genders and their roles. If the gender is not acting in appropriation to his /her position, it is considered to be disabled one and so inhumanly. The male acts as the leader of the house, society, nation and kingdom, and so he must be virile, physically robust, powerful and aggressive. At the same time, a female embodies fertility, subservience and weakness. The sages in antiquity had the mindset, experience and wisdom to trace the various overlappings of gender. This being a retelling of *Mahabharata* also depicts the foresight of the writers in antiquity who possessed the sensitivity and expansiveness to look beyond the rigidities as disabled are considered genderless, the inanimate; the pregnant king in the similar vein talks of in-betweenness of gender. A man who delivers a baby, mothers a baby, and even lactates; doesn't any more fit in the rigid category of a man. His delivering a baby disables him, and he could no more be the king of Vallabhi, and it disabled the newborn child to take away

his chances of occupying the crown. Devdutt takes us on the itinerary of such a gender discourse that expresses the deviations from the norm. He tells us about Illeshwara, Somvat, Shikhandi, Yuvanashva and Arjuna.

The Pregnant King Devdutt shares the experiences of life within life, both from the perspective of outside as well as inside. He calls for the equality of rights based on gender discourse. He calls forth for equality on the interstices of gender existences. *The Pregnant King* is an inquiry of tracing deviations from the supposed normalcy and thus affirming that the marginal sexualities otherwise in modern India are treated as nonexistence. The human tendencies that violate gender stereotypes are otherwise denied expression and ruthlessly silenced, denying appearance so that they may die out. The fiction explores the binary of male-female as an exploration of the deviance from the registered human behaviour. Society sees gender identity as an inseparable, mutually inclusive integral part of its anatomical constituents, and looks for one to one interaction between one's sex and gender. Sex here is the biological issue, while gender is the cultural construct. What is seen as problematic is that when these categories don't correspond to each other, the male is essentially not masculine, and the female is vice versa not feminine. Yuvanashva plays a pivotal role when he accidentally found himself between fatherhood and motherhood onto the grey area. The novel narrates several other tales in the course of doing so. It explores the deliberate voices of dissent towards socially approved codes of conduct like Arjuna-Brihnala, Somvat-Somvati, Aruni, Ila, and Yuvanashva.

Yuvanashva accidentally drinks the magic potion meant for his wives and conceives a baby in his thigh. When the baby started growing inside him, he witnessed the Physico emotional changes in his persona. Asanga, his doctor, consigns his pregnancy to the unnatural realm, as something completely otherworldly, thereby attributing to it the rank of non-human experience. Shilavati, Yuvanashva's mother, considers his pregnancy censoriously. She also ordered Asanga to kill the monster and Yuvanashva, too, was mistreated by the family

members. He is denied the right to know about the child's birth, and later, he was not given access to the child. The child is kept in all secrecy, strictly confined to the women quarters as per the rigid societal rules and heteronormative codes. Yuvanashva can only secretly nurse the child. When Mandhata grows up to be the age of adorning the crown, Yuvanashva told him that he is his mother. Mandhata outrightly refused to acknowledge this truth. This truth would disable him from becoming the king. A disabled or imperfect cannot be the king. Mandhata becomes a king refusing the truth of this disability by acknowledging it.

Devdutt configures that myths cater to society's needs and requirements, and therefore it is essentially a cultural entity or constructs. Myth brings individuals and nations together this lush and lucrative piece of fiction shows as blurry the distinctions between the sexes. The king, who is known to be an epitome of dharma's manliness and guardian, is seen as anxious to be named by his son as a mother. In India, it is childless persons who are socially disabled and are treated as impaired by society.

Mahabharata has always intrigued us, fascinated us, and captivated us to this day. In his book *Jaya- An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* by Devdutt Pattanaik takes us on the itinerary into the 3000-year old wars and associated challenges. The book is read widely, and it brings out *Mahabharata* beautifully. *Jaya* is well researched with apt illustrations and the story's magical narration. In the book, novel realisations or understanding come after each report with Devdutt's interpretations. This book is pretty much an appetiser. You come across several characters and instances wherein you entertain the lived experiences of the disabled characters. We also witness how disability change the entire spectrum of living and the kingship of the kingdoms. You come across certain stories as to why at those times Krishna did not obey the norms of the work. More beauty has been created by the flavourings of the stories and characters from many national epic and folk versions. The like sense is to gain *Jaya* - a win over himself. *Jaya's* all about lifestyle choices. As a human being, you are born with

knowledge and capacity to understand and obey dharma. The book has 108 chapters and minute details like the names of hundred Kauravas.

Devdutt Pattanaik narrates *Ramayana*, illustrating attention to the many oral and written retellings by various poets of different ages and at different locations, each attempting to crack the puzzle in their specific way. Following each novel, *Sita* is '*Ramayana*' answered by Devdutt's thought-provoking vignette. He unfolded Sita's life quickly and excitingly, and so approached Ram. The book is not a mere retelling of the account of Valmiki, but it took into account all the *Ramayana*'s from the 1st to 19th centuries, including regular versions of Southeast Asia. This retelling is both informative and gripping.

Devdutt Pattanaik recounts *Ramayana*, drawing attention to the many oral, written by various poets in different ages, in different locations, each attempting to crack the puzzle in their specific way. Following each novel, *Sita* is '*Ramayana*' answered by Devdutt's thought-provoking vignette. He unfolded Sita's life quickly and excitingly, and so approached Ram. *Sita: An Illustrated Ramayana Retelling* is an epic tale based on the life of the most revered prince of India - 'Rama' and his beloved 'Sita.' *Ramayana* is a mythological tale, passed down over several centuries. For years, the most stressed character has been that of Rama, who has always been able to hold his promise whatever the conditions might be.

Sita: An Illustrated Ramayana Retelling is an epic tale based on the life of the most revered prince of India - 'Rama' and his beloved 'Sita.' *Ramayana* is a mythological tale, passed down over several centuries. For years, the most stressed character has been that of Rama, who has always been able to hold his promise whatever the conditions might be. In the past, Sita's position has usually been neglected. Sita is, likewise, a pivotal character. She became a single mother who went all alone through several ups and downs. Still, she was often portrayed as a frivolous and meek character.

The Book of Ram tells about Ram is Ekvachni, Ekbani and Ek Patni. He is discussed in the context of modern times and explains the Ramayan narrative taking into account various accounts of the great Indian epic, from standard to Dravidian, from Burmese to Thailand. Devdutt discusses how Maryada Purushottam Ram, the ultimate upholder of the Raghu clan's moral ideals, the gem of the solar dynasty, Vishnu's seventh incarnation, God who maintains order in the earthly life. It's been published with such an outlook that I believe it's what it means to be. It produces both unknown and lesser-known facts about Ram and the people that surround him. The title of Ram's book is about Ram alone. Still, it is about all the people who created Ram including the son of Dashratha, the brother of Lakshman, the adversary of Ravana, the lord of Hanuman, the king of Ayodhya, the embodiment of Vishnu, the spirit of Valmiki, the symbol of Hindutva.

Devdutt ferret out instances where gods and goddesses have chosen to shed their gender/sex in *Shikhandi and the Other Tales They Don't Tell You*. A remarkable cornucopia of riches, it narrates Lord Shiva becoming a midwife, Lord Ram invites hijras. This book highlights gay tales and narrates stories that were mostly deliberately ignored. Devdutt has created a chance to tell gender bender stories so that people can judge for themselves without brainwashing. Devdutt has tried to clear the myopic perception and ignorance of what is wrong and what is correct in a detailed and concise way. Shikhandi becomes a tribute for the marginalised, the unspoken, the disadvantageous, the unseen differences and the tales not spoken about. "Writing was my initiation into professionalism. I grew with every book. I applied the method of medicine to myth, searching for definitions, meaning, looking for sources of pilgrimage and recording festivals. I was a doctor of myth. But right through, there was one thing I looked for – patterns, the search for connections and connectivity" (Visvanathan).

Devdutt has definitely carved a special niche for himself in the annals of mythological writings. He has emerged in academia a name to reckon with. He has become a household name that establishes his marvel as one of the great intellectuals and expert in the world of mythology.

Chapter III

Curse as a Trope of Disability in Mythology: An Analytical Study of Devdutt Pattnaik's Select Works

A curse is the harbinger of sudden changes that shocks the life of the victim and decapitates or deforms the victim. It invokes the images of devaluation, negativity, destruction, pain, metamorphosis, and sometimes death. It is viewed as the volcanic eruption of inflicting evil upon the victim by a perturbed and agitated mind. The curser is annoyed or perturbed by the actions of the victim. The word curse finds its root in Sanskrit word *śapa*, *saśapa* *Abhiśapa* and *śapatha*. It expresses the polarisation of tension and results in the form of venom disabling the one from a position of importance to devaluation:

A curse sometimes called jinx, hex, or dark spell can be verbalised, written, or sometimes cast through an elaborate ritual. The aim is to see harm befall the recipient - lousy luck may dog them, death may take them, or any number of dire (or annoying) fates may plague them. In antiquity, a curse was a significant phenomenon, often viewed as the summoned wrath of gods, or the presence of evil forces. (*The Ancient Art of Magic, Curses and Supernatural Spells*)

A few attributes attached to the curse may come to effect immediately, or it may take some time to come in effect. One who curses uses ascetic power of *tapa* or virtue (chastity, truthfulness) to do harm or cause evil upon the one who has offended him in any way. Julian F. Woods (1983) defines

curse as the phenomenon is characterised by the sudden release of the spiritual power of the speaker (which may or may not be immediately manifested in its effects), triggered by a verbal command, prompted by a desire

for the immediately manifested in its effects), prompted by a desire for the immediate, correction of unresolved tension between two or more persons of unequal spiritual/ascetic/worldly stature or moral/psychological advantage (J. F. Woods, *The Phenomenon of Boon and Curse In Mahabharata* 24).

In mythology, the events take in their toil in unfolding of the divine design. Curses propel the epic forward, bearing a causal relation for every incidence, thus eventually accounting the present exigencies along with the omissions as well as the commissions of past perpetuating into the future needs and requirements of the divine design. Curses thus create order out of the chaos by linking the causal strings and affirming the core philosophy of karma and hence act as a divine tool to project that life is fair. What stands peculiar here is that the disability that one incurs finds its roots in the wrongdoings at any point of time and space in any of the lifetimes of the soul. Disability is viewed as a metaphor of punishment for the sins of the previous lives, “whether humanly orchestrated such as barbaric mutilation of the body, or with the teratologies that dwelt in the imaginations of the civilised world” (Vlahogiannis 20). There is no denying the fact that the disabled are less able than the so called normate and eventually represent misfortune. They are considered as the foci of blame and are always played down upon and are persecuted. These images are chiseled in the mythic memories of the generations and gets represented on the semiological system of our societies.

Quite like disability the curses represent *paap* – the bad karma, which results in bad reactions. These narrative tools are used to decipher that whatever happens is the result of something. If we gauge the intensity of the curse's influence, the curses given by elders and seniors are the most harmful. Curses provide moral superiority and justice to the one who has borne misappropriation. Curses shape up the ones who fall in its sphere and either foreshadow or prescience the events. The curse creates a sort of negative ambience and an ill will as these are the spats of anger or wickedness of malevolent. The curser brings about censure or downfall

of the cursed, thus invoking images of devaluation, negativity, destruction and pain. Curses transform gods, nymphs, demigods as humans, animals, birds, or inanimate entities, i.e., it causes metamorphosis and leads to metempsychosis. The imprecation of curse can reduce a king to the level of a serpent, e.g., when sage Agastya cursed Nahusha, he had a terrible fall from the throne of Indra to acquire the body of a serpent. It is, in a way, a big blow to the otherwise executive authority of the king who can inflict punishment on guilty. The power and ascetic lustre of the sages thus overpower the kings in the mythological world. Kings used to fear sages but for their curses. Dashratha was in no mood to send any of his sons with Vishwamitra, but for fear of the curse, he allowed his favourite Ram to go along with Vishwamitra. Curse thus is a weapon in the hands of sages, seers and gods. They could harm their enemies with their curses or could avoid the malefic intentions of others, thus driving away from the calamities and diseases. "break of penance, breach of vows, violation of an order, breach of promise, breach of modesty, loss of the kingdom, loss of wealth, childlessness, killing, death of dear ones, destruction, burning, insult, loss of position, non-performance of duty, falsehood, desire for a woman, obstruction in cherished desires, etc. are the causes for which curse is pronounced" (Woods).

A curse may be the outcome of an instantaneous impulse that may find its origin in '*raga*' (attachment to worldly pleasures), '*diveśha*' (aversion towards certain things) or '*moha*' (delusion regarding certain things). As per the Indian philosophy, human beings are chained to the karmic actions because of the bindings of *raga, diveśha and moha*. Curses thus spring from these actions and act as a mythological motif in the divine scheme of things. Otherwise pure-hearted and righteous person i.e. sages find an imbalance in three *gunas*, i.e., *Satvik, Rajas* and *Tamas* and thus in the agitated state of mind wherein mental perversion is caused by the angry sage or shamans by performing magical rites. Generally, water is used as a device to invoke a curse upon the guilty. Blood, food and physical touch are the other influential media. Water is

considered to be the divine witness. It is a symbol of purification but is used for malefic intention while cursing. Man chooses munificence of God by compelling him with the prayers which express intense desires and penances to stimulate the curse. Oblations in the fire and incantations are used as a rejuvenating force while cursing. Curses can only be nullified with the power of penance. Sages can behold the three worlds with the help of penance. It cherishes the *sattvik guna*, thus putting *tamas* into a restraint. However, here, the thesis wishes to reaffirm that the curses are potent enough to destroy the power of penance utterly. The force behind these curses is the power the sages have regained by the correct pronunciation of mantras. The will of a person gets invigorated with the force of mantras. A curse is a spoken utterance and so is inflicted by priests.

The curse states the agitated state of mind of the curser. It enlists the breach of promise or violation of the order and even modesty by the one who is cursed and thus invoke punishment. Whosoever utters curse is not a person of ordinary disposition. It is an axiom that cows do not die with the curses of crow. Only the Adhikari (worthy employer) who has the power vested in him can curse, the weak cannot curse. He has certain merits to his account. He is capable of summoning results because of his higher/ascetic spiritual powers or the power of extraordinary virtue and control over the mind. As Durvasa was a renowned ascetic, the fear of curse by Durvasa instigates Satyavati to beget an illegitimate child Vyasa with him. Vyasa though, played a pivotal role in the narrative of *Mahabharata* in the latter years. The right person with the robust will powers; through the power of articulation can utter curse and bring it to fruition. Except for these attributes, the same thing uttered will just be the wish or desire of somebody, but it would not get manifested as a curse. Curses are meant to be the actions that must bring forth the devaluation of its stakeholder. One who curses also gets demerit by losing his penance. The one who is cursed becomes a victim or a sufferer who gets immediately

disabled. Fearing the demerits to their account, sages refrain from cursing. All the curses except the ones delivered by the mothers could be mollified.

No trifling cause can invoke curse if it is somehow not going to be an addendum to the divine scheme of things. Under the angry stupefaction that leads to oblivion, curses accrue the contamination of the intelligence of the worthy ones. This violent affliction of their minds veils their sense of loss for incurring the curse. Human beings, with their unlimited desires and longings, are indeed very limited in capacity. Sorcery curses, i.e. curses that are delivered with blind faith in magical worthwhile, religious or conditional curses aim at the improvement of the accursed one. Even the accuser of curses feels affection for the one who is accursed. A curse is never false, and it bears fruition in the form of negative influences and trepidations. It is called a curse as it never fails and thus can never be false. In the case of conditional curses, the consequences are seldom immediate but spread over some time. The one who is cursed has no choice but to refuse the curse, eventually making all the curses the accepted ones. Curses are thus unsolicited, and it turns out to be an unthoughtful action. It is impulsive in nature.

The result of the curse is directly proportional to the power of the one who curses. A curse has the potential to humble the rude, to weaken the strong and to humble the mighty. In the very instant, a man may get converted into a frog or lizard or woman under the influence of curse. In the Indian Kaleidoscopic extravaganza of Myth that sustains at various planes of existence, curses cannot be done away even by the gods. God Dharma even took rebirth in the form of Vidhura under the impact of the curse hurled by Mandavya on his gross misappropriation of justice. An annoyed Mandavya pronounced a curse upon Yama, "Be born, therefore, as a mortal in the world" (C.Rajagopalachari 35). "Mandavya cursed Yama that he would take birth as a man and suffer the fate of never being a king despite having all the qualities of a perfect ruler. And so was born Vidhura" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 40). Based on their articulation, the curses are divided into two types. The

pronounced curses and the other is unpronounced. Gods are disposed of towards granting boons rather than inflicting curses.

In the conferment of curses, the fireworks of the artistic design are on the spectacular display. Curses come in all shapes and forms, thus invoking serious thoughts, pleasure and edification. Curses are not uttered as a routine exercise by the ones who perform all sorts of austerities to invoke godly powers. They are uttered in a fit of rage or disharmony of mind and consequently invoke the debit in the power they have collected with tapas and other penances. Curses lessen their virtues and also mar their replenished credits of divine blessings. Curses bring to the fore that seers and gods can commit mistakes and put the order of their worlds into chaos. The lives of those upon whom the curse is uttered is put into jeopardy, and it goes down the line of inheritance.

Curses have a provocative cause. Curses are delivered by Brahmans or sages to punish the offenders who otherwise bear no executive authority to punish anybody. Only the kings and kshatriyas are the ones who had the power to punish the evil doings. They were considered the rulers who are ordained by the almighty to provide justice. Brahmans perform penance, severe austerities and *tapa* and thus, they are bestowed with the powers. Andrew Lang, the famous anthropologist, says, "On the man's side is faith, munificence, a compelling force of prayer and intensesness of will, the sacrifice invigorates the gods to do the will of the sacrifice" (Lang 9). When the Brahmans curse, they use this ascetic power and also earn a demerit. It is quite like spending from one's pocket. Curse changes the entire course of the lives of the victim but also the lives of all the succeeding generations. The curse upon Ambika and Ambalika by Vyasa for the lack of virtue reshaped the entire worldview to end up in Kurukshetra. "Vyasa has to inform the impatient Satyawati that her daughter-in-law's lack of virtue has condemned the would-be heir to be born blind, effectively disqualifying him from carrying out the royal sacrifices and other functions normally expected of a king" (Woods 28). The lives of the

widowed mother and the entire nation's lives and generations to come changed because of this curse. Though the eldest son of Satyawati; *Dhritarashtra* was denied kingship, "*Dhritarashtra* was born blind; he was forbidden from sitting on the throne...Dhritarashtra, who is blind is bypassed, and the younger brother Pandu is made King" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 43,45). It is not the individual alone who suffers for one's actions, but the accountability is paid by the individual, his family and his nation. Curses are delivered in all the cosmic cycles (Yuga). As Ram told Sita that "As Vishnu, in defence of Indra's Swarga, I beheaded the wife of Bhrigu and the mother of Shukra... I was cursed to be born on earth as Ram... Just as I denied Bhrigu the company of his wife, I was cursed that I would be denied the pleasure of mine" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 99).

Curses conferred upon human beings by gods and seers bring forth their fallibility, thus presenting a strong premise before the mortal beings to remain concerned and vigilant towards their social and moral predicament. Evil must always end up in aetiologically evil consequences; which lays an explanation for disability in the myths. Disabilities—destruction of limbs through paralysis or injury, loss of the use of senses, personal appearance, sanity, impotence-became intertwined with punishment for violations of divine and moral order” (Vlahogiannis 29). It shoulders the responsibility of putting human beings on a constant guard against losing their care, concern and presence of mind towards their elders. By dint of our strength of character and faith, we please gods, and we could displease them by our actions and thus can credit only unhappiness. The dexterous handling of curses accords this phenomenon a prominent and significant eminence on considering that whose curse harms the most. A hierarchy of age, along with the combined power of rank as well as relatedness, plays a vital role. It is assumed that the curses of the elders and seniors are vicious, yet the confines of harm reach the relations by blood and marriage; that is, it engulfs consanguine and affinal relations. Curses humiliate the enemy and somehow restore the respect of the one who has borne any

misappropriation. Curses effectively assert the moral superiority of justice. This illocutionary act has the power to fruition into desired results. Curses can, therefore, shape or alter the predicament of the ones who would come into the sphere of these. Thus, curses are not mere the angry rants wherein people are letting loose their frustrations. Curses rather herald the foreshadowing and prescience of the events. These are not the projections of ill-nature or wickedness or malevolence or misanthropy, yet the circumstantial existence creates negativity and ill will.

Indian culture invigorates the idea that it is not the individual alone who suffers for his actions, but the accountability is paid by the individual, his family and his nation. During the reign of Ram, Shambuka - a *shudra* started performing spiritual austerities and penances to gain the divine favours and release from the cycle of birth and death. This led to the altering of the fates of individual and so an old man and his wife presented themselves before Ram stating that young have started dying before the old. Something wrong is being done, and so *dharma* is not by the side of Ram's Rajya. It was stated that the whole nation pays the wrong being done by Shambuka. Chaos has started creeping in the lives of the inhabitants of the nation. Curses change the entire narrative as *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are considered to be the *itihasa*, so it would not be wrong to say that curses in *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* changed the entire course of the living and lifestyles of its inhabitants.

Devdutt Pattanaik has rewritten *Mahabharata* with a modern scientific temper, but it is also laced with curses changing the destinies of its characters. At the outset, *Jaya* tells us about Parikshit, the king of Hastinapuri, scion of Kurus, grandson of Arjuna, who went on a hunt. He felt very thirsty. He saw a rishi meditating under a tree. He sought water from the rishi, but his request remained unnoticed and unanswered as the rishi was engrossed in deep meditation. The royal got annoyed, and in retaliation, he placed a dead snake around the rishi's neck. The rishi's

student saw king embarrassing his teacher and hurled a curse at Parikshit that he would die of the snake bite within the next seven days.

It may galvanise the entire spectrum of a variety of activities. The most provocative thing to say a curse is disobedience. e.g., A Surya Vamsi, king Kaushika started severe penances by performing *tapasya*. Such was the extent of his determination that Indra got afraid of his would-be power as no man or God would be equal to him because of his power of celibacy. Indra requested Menaka, an *apsara*, to distract the king. She remained successful and disarmed Kaushika from all his powers. Menaka, the damsel, delivered a baby girl and abandoned her under the wings of a flock of Shakun birds. A Rishi, namely Kanva, found her and raised her as his own daughter. One day Dushyanta, descendent of Pururava, reached Kanva's hermitage. He was on his hunting expedition and wanted to pay his reverence and respect towards the sage. Unfortunately, Kanava was away on pilgrimage and Dushyanta was not left with any choice except for waiting in his hermitage. On seeing Shakuntala, Dushyanta immediately fell in love with her. Dushyanta equally smote Shakuntala, and they married each other in the Gandharva manner wherein trees were their witness. Dushyanta spent a few days waiting for Kanva, and when he could wait for no longer, Dushyanta left promising Shakuntala to come soon to fetch her. Shakuntala became pregnant, and when his father came to know of it, he took her to Dushyanta. Kalidasa wrote in his Sanskrit play that under the curse of a rishi, Dushyanta forgot Shakuntala. Shakuntala was said to be sitting under a tree so much engrossed in the love of her lover. A rishi came, and she did not notice him. She unknowingly treated her guest misappropriately and hence was cursed by the rishi that the one who has made you forget the world will forget you. Dushyanta failed to recognise Shakuntala due "to rishi's curse Dushyanta is unable to recollect her" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 17-19). Later on, the sky admonished Dushyanta, and he declared Shakuntala as his queen and Bharata as his son. Curse leads to forgetfulness, which is a mental disability. In the modern

tech-savvy world, memory loss is known as Amnesic syndrome, which falls under the cognitive disabilities.

The offense of the one who may be cursed offers him afflictions like blindness, poverty, sickness, or animal existence. The inherent powers of the cosmos come into play for the social as well as egotistical purpose. Curses represent a doctrine of correspondences wherein the sins committed by a person invite natural calamities. Curse belongs to the realm of spirituality, while it influences the physical realm. Curses are generally considered to be the genres of power of a particular culture and lead to establishing power hierarchy. Curses conferred upon human beings by gods and seers bring forth their disability and fallibility, thus presenting a strong premise before the mortal beings to remain concerned and vigilant towards their social and moral predicaments. It shoulders the responsibility of putting human beings on a constant guard against losing their care, concern and presence of mind towards their elders. By dint of our strength of character and faith, we please gods, and we could displease them by our actions and thus can credit only unhappiness. The dexterous handling of curses accords this phenomenon a prominent and significant eminence.

Myth witness the exploits of men and women who show moral fallibility, and thus, it became a paradigm of doom for such a person. Adultery invokes disability by rending the power of curse for social and moral corruption. Wives who committed adultery or remained unchaste towards their husbands are also disabled with curses in the Indian mythological worldview. The offspring of their illegitimate relations suffered disability for their mothers. Devdutt narrates about Brihaspati, who was married to Tara. He used to perform Yagna for the Devas who reside in Amravati so that they may remain in the state of bliss and enjoy their charms and lustre. Brihaspati wanted his wife to be by his side whenever he is to perform any Yagna. As the time paces ahead, Tara started feeling that Brihaspati was not interested in her. What interests him more is his own calculative mindset and *yagna*. Tara, the goddess of stars,

eloped with Chandra for whom she was more important. Brihaspati asked Indra that if they want him to perform *yagnas* for them, they must bring Tara back. Gauging the importance of *yagna* without which there will be drought and Devas could not bestow boons, Tara was made to return to Brihaspati by *devas*. She conceived Chandra's baby but refused to tell anybody about the name of the father of an unborn child.

Nevertheless, the unborn child, out of mother's womb, enquired about his father's name from his mother. The unborn child was named Budh for his desire to know the truth by all the people who assembled there. Tara told everyone that the seed belongs to Chandra. Brihaspati got annoyed about knowing the truth. In his agitated state of mind, he cursed that the baby that is going to be born will be of neuter gender as it is the love child of his unfaithful wife. He utters that "May this love child of my unfaithful wife be of neuter gender, neither male nor female" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 12). Apart from disabling the unborn child from its due gender, Brihaspati has somehow disabled his own existence. Though the seed belonged to Chandra, it belonged to Brihaspati. As the field belonged to Brihaspati, Budh is always known as the son of Brihaspati. Brihaspati is considerably disabled because of fathering the one who is of neuter gender. In India, the social fabric is so close-knit that one disabled person brings the entire household under its impact.

When Budh grew up and wanted to get married, his mother saw his frustration. He wanted to know if he would marry a man or a woman. Tara responds by telling him that nothing happens without reason. If your father has cursed you to be like this, then it may sync with the divine design of happenings of importance. Budh met a woman Ila and married her.

Ila was not a woman by birth. She was born as a prince called Saudyumna, son of Manu. Once Saudyumna was riding his horse and went into a forest. He got turned into a female. Saudyumna got disabled and lost his manhood under the impact of the curse that the great hermit and ascetic Shiva has cast upon the place. Shiva was making love to Shakti in the forest.

Shakti did not want any male human or animal to see her in the arms of her lover. Shiva, in order to please her, placed an impeachment upon the place to have no male member in it. All the males got turned into females under the impact of Shiva's curse. All the lions into lionesses, peacocks into peahens and Saudyumna into Ila. These metamorphosis deficits concerned human and animals from strength to disabling conditions.

Devdutt outlines the predicament of adultery as a disability in *Sita- An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* and *The Book of Ram* while narrating about Ahalya's destiny. Gautama, the sage, was submerged in austerities. He would spend the entire day in conducting *yagna* and performing *tapasya*. He was married to Ahilya, who was very young and lively. Ahalya was a devoted wife. She used to take care of his husband day and night. Though she served her quite assiduously yet, she always yearned for her husband's companionship and friendship. One day Gautama was very loving and caring towards his wife, Ahilya. Instead of performing oblations and meditating, he returned home. In all his gentleness and love towards Ahilya, he gave in to demands of hers. He spent the entire afternoon with her. As the evening crept in, Ahilya saw one more Gautama walking towards her. The one who was like the Gautama in his usual sense was stern and rigid. She immediately understood that an imposter duped her. When the original Gautama enquired her about the man in his arms, the imposter came to his original form. Indra was blinded by his desire and has taken advantage of her loneliness by disguising the form of her husband.

Gautama was intolerant of the fact that his married wife spent her time with somebody else. He got annoyed and angry. He immediately cursed Indra for his desire that he would lose his manhood, and his body may be filled with thousand sores. He also cursed his wife that she may become a stone figure, and travellers and animals would abuse her by spitting and peeing on her. She would not be able to move and would never eat. She would be ashamed of her adultery till the heir of Raghu clan, 'Maryadha Puroshotam' Ram liberates her.

It is said that Ahilya had three kids with Gautama - one daughter and two sons. Ahilya's daughter tells Gautama about his wife's adultery, and Ahilya cursed her to be a monkey. She became a monkey under her mother's curse, and later on, she mothered Hanuman. While Gautama cursed the two boys for remaining quiet and thus becoming partners in crime, he cursed them to be the monkeys also (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 42-44).

Even the unborn ones could not escape the net of curses. Devdutt tells that Brihaspati went to Mamata, wife of his brother Uthathya, desiring her. There was an ancient practice of sharing wives amongst brothers. Mamata returned him as she was pregnant with Uthathya's baby. Brihaspati became frustrated and cursed Mamata's child to be born blind. Thus, the child of Mamata; Dirghatamas was blind by birth (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 20). Later Dirghatamas married Pradweshi. She got tired of taking care of her blind husband and his sons. She threw Dirghatamas into the river. He survived by clinging to a tree and was taken out of the river by a childless king Vali. Vali further asked him to perform Niyoga and impregnate his wife, Sudeshna. Dirghatamas fathered Anga, Vanga and Kalinga, the kings of eastern kingdoms.

Devdutt tells about the curse upon another unborn baby, Ashtavakra, that leads him to osteo-disabilities. When Ashtavakra was still in the mother's womb, he angered his father. His father was discussing Vedas and somehow gave misinformation regarding Veda. Ashtavakra corrected his father. His father, in a fit of rage, cursed Ashtavakra to be born with eight bends in the body. Ashtavakra tells Janaka that humans curse others to keep intact their image of themselves. He further proclaimed that Aham is what I am and how others should see him requires validation from the outside world.

Unbridled passions are always cursed with disability and deficit. A king named Mahabhisha was given entry into Swarga. He relished the perks and privileges like Devas. He

used to drink Sura and had access to Kamadhenu, the desire fulfilling cow. One day Ganga entered Indra's sabha. With a sudden breeze, her clothes got awry, baring her breasts. All the assembled Devas ignored it by lowering their eyes but for Mahabhisha. He got spellbound with her beauty. Indra cursed Mahabhisha to lose all his merits and to return to earth. Ganga also enjoyed the attention given by Mahabhisha, so she was also asked to leave Amravati and to return back after breaking the heart of Mahabhisha. Mahabhisha was reborn as Shantanu Pratipa's son. Though he was not the eldest, he succeeded crown as the eldest son had a skin disease.

One day while Pratipa was meditating, Ganga went to her and sat on his right thigh, indicating that he would treat her as his daughter. Ganga told him her desire to be Shantanu's wife by saying that "I want to marry your son." (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 30). When Shantanu came to visit his father, Pratipa apprised him of his wish to see Ganga as Shantanu's wife. When Shantanu saw Ganga gliding over a dolphin, he immediately fell in love with her. Shantanu proposed her. Ganga agreed on one condition that Shantanu would never question any of her actions. Shantanu agreed, and they both got married.

Ganga gave birth to her eldest son and drowned him in water immediately after his birth. Shantanu kept his promise and did not ask her the reason. She did the same to all her offsprings. When she was about to drown her eighth son, Shantanu stopped her pleading not to do so. Ganga told that he had forgotten his pledge and so she would be leaving for Amravati. Further, she told that the sons she had given birth are the Vasus. These Vasus were cursed by Vashishtha to be born as mortals as a punishment for stealing his cow. These eight gods were known as Vasus. On their request, she accepted to be their mother, and as they wanted their stay on earth to be a brief one, so she drowned them immediately after their birth. Now the one which you have stopped from getting drowned will have a miserable life on earth. "He will neither marry, nor inherit your throne. He will have no family, yet will be obliged to live as a

householder" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 31). The Vasu, which was thus doomed, was Bhishma.

Devdutt tells us about Sarmishtha, the daughter of the king of *Asuras* who has the best friend Devayani, the daughter of Shukra, the guru of *Asuras*. One day they fought when Devayani mistakenly wore Sarmishtha's robes. Sarmishtha got very angry and named her a thief. She also calls Devayani's father a beggar. In a royal huff, she threw Devayani into the well and then she went away. A man named Yayati, a Chandra Vamsi, rescued her from well by holding her hand. On coming out, Devayani asked Yayati to marry her. Quoting the scriptures, Devayani told him that she is a virgin and he has held her by her hand. He came with Devayani to Shukra's hermitage. Devayani narrated her woeful story to her father, who, in turn, abstained from performing any sort of Yagna for Visha parva until he makes Sarmishtha his daughter's maid. As ordered by her father, Sarmishtha went along with Yayati and Devayani as a maid. Sarmishtha fell in love with Yayati at his first sight. Being a royal in blood, Sarmishtha, too, sought the attention of Yayati with his spirits. Sarmishtha secretly married Yayati and even borne children. Sarmishtha managed to convince Devayani that she has married the palace guard.

Nevertheless, one-day, Devayani heard Sarmishtha's sons. They were calling Yayati as a father. She got annoyed as she felt duped by her husband and her maid. She again narrated her woes to Sukra. Sukra cursed Yayati to become old and impotent.

To the men who are not committed to their marriages, As for punishments, which; are pronounced as part of the Curses, they are e. g. pestilence, consumption, showers of powder and dust, madness, blindness, etc., Further these Curses are to pursue the condemned person or persons, overtake them, destroy them and also their progeny. (Kelkar 57)

In a fit of rage, Sukra's curse caused harm to Devayani as now she is the wife of an old and impotent husband. Her life would be miserable, and her husband would be of a little value to her. When Sukra's anger got pacified, he modified his curse that if any of Yayati's son accepts his curse on his behalf, he would be relieved of it. Yayati asked his son Yadu. Yadu refused and asked Yayati not to try to reverse the march of time. Yayati in turn cursed Yadu that even though he is the eldest of his sons but neither he nor his inheritors would ever be the kings. Krishna also belonged to the Yadu clan. Yadus remained Kingmakers but never the kings themselves.

However, his youngest son Puru mothered by Sarmishtha, decided to take his father's curse so that he may fulfil his worldly desires. Yayati when felt that youth and virility can never bring contentment, he took back his curse from Puru and also made him his successor. Puru's inheritors were Kauravas and Pandavas. Yayati's curse not only disabled him and later Puru, but it disabled Yadu of his kingship and thus sowed the first seeds of the war of Kurukshetra (*Pattanaik Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata 21-24*).

An apsara Girika was cursed by Brahma to be a fish until she gives birth to human children. She gave birth to the children of king Uparichara who wrapped his semen in a leaf and sent it to his wife by a parrot. On his way, the parrot was attacked by fawn and semen fell into the river. A fish ate it. Fisherman caught fish and found twin children, a boy and a girl. Uparichara accepted the male child and gave away Satyavati to the fisherfolk.

Under the impact of curses, gods are disabled, and they are turned into mere humans. Once Mandavya was busy in meditation, and a few thieves entered his hermitage. The king's soldiers came and caught those thieves. They accused Mandavya of hiding the thieves, and he was tortured and impaled for this. When he was taken before Yama, he demanded an explanation from Yama. Yama told him that when he was a kid, he impaled tiny insects, which is why he suffered at the hands of soldiers. He protested as he was punished for childhood

crimes. An angry Mandavya has cursed Yama that he would suffer as a man on the plane of earth. Though highly laden with all the qualities of a good ruler, he would never get a chance to rule. Under the impact of Mandavya's curse, Yama was born on earth as Vidura. He was a perfect ruler, yet he was never a king as his mother was a maid. (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 40)

Sages curse upon kings. After getting married to Madri, when Pandu could not beget a child, he went on a hunting expedition. Pandu struck an arrow. It hit an antelope who was mating with a doe. What made matters worse was that antelope turned out to be Kindama, the sage and doe was his wife. Using the ascetic powers, Kindama and his wife metamorphosed to enjoy the pleasures of love freely. Before dying Kindama cursed Pandu "May you never know the pleasure of lovemaking. If you ever touch a woman, you will die instantly" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 46). Pandu was now aware that he would never father a king. So, he left for the forest. Pandu once found Madri and could not resist touching her in desire. Pandu died of Kindama's curse.

Rishi Vashishtha has a son named Shaktri. He got perturbed when he saw that King Kamlashpada had blocked a narrow bridge. He asked for the way but was not given any by the king. In a fit of rage, he cursed the king to get converted into a Rakshasa. The curse immediately came into action, and the king turned into a flesh-eating demon. However, due to the immediacy of the action, Shaktri did not have the time to leave the place. He instantly got killed by the Rakshasa as it has developed an appetite for the flesh of the human being. Kamlashpada pounced upon the great Vashishtha's son and devoured him to satiate his hunger. The curse came into effect instantly, but it ended up hurting Shaktri, the most" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 82), i.e., The curser got hurt the most.

Gods wanted a supreme warrior to stand with Ram and Lakshman. So, Vishnu himself acquired the form of a beautiful damsel Mohini and enchanted Shiva. Shiva let his seed slip

out of his body and the wind God put this seed in the ears of Anjana. From this seed, Hanuman was born as a son of Kesari and Anjana. His birth is meditated by the god of Vayu Known as Marutta, so Hanuman is also known as Maruti. Once Hanuman leapt into the sky to eat the Sun, assuming it to be a fruit. He tossed planets like balls, and it angered Indra, who struck him with a thunderbolt. Vayu got annoyed, and he withdrew air from all three worlds. Indra sought forgiveness and, in turn, blessed Hanuman with a body as swift as lightning and as strong as thunder. The notorious kid kept hurling boulders and mountains such a racket that the rishis cursed him that he would forget his full strength until someone reminds him at the right time. Hanuman told Sita that "I kept hurling boulders and mountains and creating such a racket that the rishis cursed me that I would forget my strength" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 190). The curse caused the loss of memory – a disability in Hanuman. When Hanuman stood over the edge of the sea to go to Lanka, Jambuvan reminded him of his special powers. Hanuman himself told Sita that Jambuvan asked him to leap and cross the sea." It happened after Jambuvan told me the story of my birth, which I had long forgotten" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 190). Then Hanuman raised his size and got back all his powers and vitality.

Teachers are positioned on the very high esteem in Indian antiquity. One cannot dare to annoy one's teacher. This can bring loads of misfortune and disability. Kunti got a boon from Durvasa, a sage. It was a magical formula with which she can call any God and have a child with him. She was unmarried then, and to check the efficacy of the boon, Kunti called Sun god. She was blessed with a son with magical armour and earrings. Kunti put Karna in a basket and left it to a river's whim. The basket was found by Adiratha, who served the Kuru clan as a charioteer. Karna wanted to be a warrior and hence went to Drona's hermitage. Drona refused to take Karna, the son of a charioteer, as his student. Karna went to Drona's teacher, Parashurama, in the disguise of a Brahmin. Parashurama was willing to teach Brahman, the use

of weapons so that they may have their stand against the warriors and Kshatriyas. Parashurama took Karna as his student, and he became well versed in the martial arts. Once Parashurama was taking a nap in Karna's lap, a worm bit him so hard that his thigh got soaked in blood. Parashurama thought that Karna duped him by telling himself to be a son of a Brahman which he never could be with the rare strength he has. Karna told him that he is not aware of his origin, but a charioteer raised him. Parashurama, in his rage cursed Karna "because you duped me into teaching you, you will forget what I taught you the day you need it most." Having uttered this curse, Parashurama drove Karna away" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 69). The curse disabled Karna of all his powers and knowledge, which ultimately became the cause of the death of Karna.

Affinial relations curse those responsible for the disability, downfall and death of their near and dear ones and the divine scheme of things upholds those curses. The king of Ayodhya Dashratha had three wives and four sons. He was living a happy, prosperous life. His sons were married now, and he has brought four beautiful daughters-in-law in his home. He went to hunting to joyfully while away his leisure time. After trapping a tiger, he chased a deer. He was very gleeful. He wanted to test his skills, and so he blindfolded himself. The blindfold disabled him from seeing. Then he heard the sound of water. He assumed that a deer is drinking water from the stream and immediately shot an arrow. After shooting the arrow, he heard a terrible wail and screams of a human being. He hurriedly ripped away his blindfold and ran in the direction of the scream. He saw a young man struggling in death. The boy was shot with Dashratha's arrow in his chest. Dashratha heard the pleadings of the young boy asking him to take his parents to a safe place. He was worried that the hunter who had hunted him would hunt his parents too. Dashratha saw the pot of water floating in the pond. He understood that in his blindfold, he had hunted the boy. The boy went to the pond to fetch water for his thirsty parents. Shravana was taking his parents to a pilgrimage. Guilt struck Dashratha lifted the body of the

young boy and tried searching for his parents. Dashratha heard the fragile voice of a man. The man noticed that the footsteps he heard were very heavy and asked Shravana if he was carrying anything. Dashratha saw the old and the blind parents of Shravana sitting in baskets joined together to the end of a long stick.

Dashratha introduced himself to the parents of Shravana. His father, in turn, responded that their son heard a tiger and deer running and assumed that there was a waterbody near. He went to fetch water for his thirsty parents. He would be coming soon. Dashratha threw himself at the feet of Shravana's old parents and sought their forgiveness. Parents pulled their son's body from his hands. On checking pulse, they knew he was no more. The old parents started wailing and screaming. The father of Shravana cursed Dashratha, "The father spat out a curse, ' As my wife wails, so shall you when you will be forced to separate from your son. As my heart is ripped in pain, so shall yours, when the joy of future is stripped' from you" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 73). So unbearable was their pain that they wanted to be getting eaten by tigers and vultures but did not want any sort of assistance from the king. Boons and curses are narrative tools to explain karma: all actions have consequences. When Kaikeyi asked for the two boons as a promise by Dashratha that Ram is sent to the forest to live as a hermit and Bharata be made king, Dashratha flinched as if he stung a by scorpio. It was all under the impact of the curse by Saravana's father.

It is said that Dashratha's mother was an Apsara. She was cursed for some misdeed, and she married Aja. One the day a garland of flowers fell from the sky and with it comes the remembrance of Aja's wife that she is an Apsara. She wanted to go back to Amravati, and she died of her yearning. Aja could not bear the separation from her, and he, too, died as a lovesick fellow.

Curses also devalue the material entities. After the death of Dasharatha, his spirit refused to go to Vaitarni until all his sons made his offerings. Bharata and Shatarugana, along

with their entourage, sought Ram and Lakshman's help to make funeral offerings to their father so that he may leave the land of the living and enter into the land of the dead. All the four brothers performed the rituals of *Shraad* for Dashratha's soul. After the brothers were taking a bath in the river Falgu, the soul of Dashratha appeared before Sita and asked her to feed it immediately. She did not have any rice or black sesame seeds, so she made *pinda* balls from sand and fed the soul of Dashratha. This pleased Dashratha. When Ram and his brothers came back, Sita told everything to him. He could not believe her. Sita pointed towards the banyan tree, the river, the cow, the tulsi plant and the priests, but none except Banyan tree supported her and thus spoke for her. It annoyed Sita, and she cursed river Falgu to lose its waters in Gaya. She cursed the Tulsi plant that nobody would ever worship it in Gaya. Cursing the priests, she stated that they would always remain hungry, and nobody ever could satiate their hunger (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 95).

Curse disabled Gandharvas by turning them into Rakshasas. One day Sita was grabbed by a rakshasa who put her on his shoulders and fled. Ram and Lakshman intercepted the rakshasa and severed his arms and legs. He was Viradha, who could only die if he is buried deep. He requested Ram and Lakshman to bury him. When they buried him, a handsome man arose out of mound who said, "I am Tumburu, cursed to remain a rakshasa until I was hunted like an animal by a hunter" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 121-122). He thanked Ram and Lakshman for liberating him.

A curse is used as a narrative device to strengthen the piousness of Sita. Kubera's son Nalkubera had a beautiful nymph as his wife, whose name was Rambha. Ravana desired her and consequently forced himself upon. Nalkubera cursed Ravana that if he ever forced himself on a woman again, his head would burst into thousand pieces. Because of the curse of Nalkubera, Ravana never forced himself upon Sita but continued to make efforts wooing her

and winning over her. This curse also seconds Sita's chastity that though she stayed in Lanka, her modesty was never outraged by Ravana.

Once Vali killed Dundhubi and kicked the demon's carcass into the air. It fell into Matanga's hermitage. The angry sage uttered a curse that he who has kicked the carcass if ever steps on Mount Rishyamukhi would die. However, for the curse of the sage Vali never come to the place, and this place became a haven for Sugriva to hide.

When Ram lost Sita and asked from birds if they knew her whereabouts, one bird told him that it knows where she is, but it will not tell him. He got annoyed with the bird and cursed that bird is forever separated from its mate at dawn. "When the bird apologised, Ram amended his curse and said its mate separated at dusk would rejoin at dawn" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 158).

When Ram was searching for Sita, he met Kabanda. Vishwvasu was cursed to be a demon Kabanda. Vishwvasu was always hungry for food, wine and music. He was so overindulgent in the sensual pleasures that rishi has found that he never uses his mind and brain. He used to mock Tapasvis who were performing penances to outgrow their hunger. In response to such an act, one rishi once cursed him that the head on the top is such a waste on his body. Vishwvasu would only use his stomach more. His head should vanish and should be replaced by his stomach. Rishi said, " I would turn into a monster whose stomach was his head, who did nothing all day but eat" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 162). Vishwvasu immediately turned into a demon who has only stomach and two arms at the top. He did not have any head, and he would eat day and night and be a monster. He grabbed Ram and Lakshman. In response, Ram and Lakshman sliced his arms in a single swoop and escaped his grip. Ram and Lakshman chopped his arms, and it compelled him to stop eating and to reflect upon his hunger. He was so grateful to Ram for liberating him of the curse.

Hanuman searched Gandhamadan in search of Sanjivani, where Kalanemi (Ravana's rakshasa) met him as a rishi and asked him to take a bath in the lake before touching herb. Hanuman encountered a crocodile in the lake. He overpowered it and liberated it as the crocodile was a nymph cursed to live as a crocodile. When Hanuman was battling it, the crocodile spoke in a woman's voice, "I am an apsara cursed to live as a crocodile until a monkey overpowers me" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 228). The nymph told Hanuman the truth about Kalanemi.

Tara was married to Vali, the king of Kishkindha. One day Dhundhubi's son Mayayi challenged Vali to a duel. It was a rule in the jungle that if somebody is challenged for a duel, nobody can say no. Vali started fighting Mayayi. It was a fierce fight. They hurled rocks, trees at each other and then kicks and blows too. Mayayi gave up and hid in a cave. Vali wanted to finish him once for all, before entering the cave, he asked Sugriva, his brother to kill Mayayi if he wins. The fight continued long, and then all voices stopped. Sugriva called Vali, but he did not respond. Considered Vali to be dead, Sugriva placed a boulder at the mouth of the cave to kill Mayayi. However, Vali was sleepy and tired, so he did not respond to Sugriva's call. When Vali found the boulder, he considered it a plot of Sugriva to kill him too.

Firstly, he threw the carcass of Mayayi towards the Rishyamukhya mountain. It fell into rishi Matanga's hermitage. Rishi, in turn, cursed Vali that if he ever would place his foot on the mountain, he would die.

Vali turned towards Sugriva with bloodshot eyes. Sugriva ran on Rishyamukha mountain. Then Ram and Lakshman met Sugriva while searching Sita. Sugriva made a deal with Ram that if he helps him to kill Vali, in turn, Sugriva will help them to find Sita. Sugriva asked Vali for a duel. Ram was ready to shoot Vali, but he could not identify Vali as they looked similar. So, in the next challenge, Sugriva went to fight wearing a garland of flowers. Ram shot Vali while he was fighting with Sugriva. When Tara, wife of Vali heard about the

incident, she hurled a strong abuse against Ram. Tara cursed Ram, "You have killed my husband so that you can get your wife. May you never find peace when she is by your side" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 177).

Curses provide the logical conclusions to the number of activities which are otherwise succeeded by the deprecation or devaluation or decapacitation of the individual or entity. e.g., Nandi, Shiva's bull cursed Ravana that he would die at the hands of monkeys. The curse foretells that Ram's army is going to have a substantial impact on Ravana's life. In another incident, Sita heard *Ramayana* from two parrots when she was a child. The parrots did not know the whole story, which Sita assumed as if they were telling a lie. Mistakenly one parrot was killed by Sita accidentally asking for the entire tale. The other parrot cursed her that she would also be separated from her mate. It is believed that every action leads to another. Curse paves the way for Ram and Sita's separation. Curses outline a synchronous disability in the material as well as the natural world. E.g., A rishi Rishashringa, forbade clouds to release rain after getting annoyed with getting wet with rain. He was a great tapasvi who had not even seen a woman in his life. Gods told king Lompada whose country was suffering from famine because of lack of rain that if someone marries Rishashringa, then this curse will be broken. Lompada did not have any daughter, so he sought help from Dashratha and adopted his daughter Shanta. When Shanta married Rishashringa; the curse got broken, and rain returned to Lompada.

Nala, children of Agni, were cursed as kids by a rishi whose washing stone, the kids used to throw in the sea. The sage has to pull it out every day. He got fed up and cursed them that the stones touched by him will float in the sea.

Ram wanted to stay lonely. Lakshman quite theatrically said that he would put to death anybody who will disturb him. Suddenly Durvasa appeared before Lakshman and asked to meet Ram. Durvasa warned Lakshman that if Ram would not meet him, he will curse Ayodhya.

It incited Lakshman to open the door himself and disturb Ram. “Now. Now. Now insisted the sage, 'I want to see Ram now’” (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 306).

“Moreover, if you do not open the door, I will curse the city of Ayodhya, set it aflame with my rage” (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 306). When Lakshman turned back to call Durvasa, there was nobody. It was just an apparition of Durvasa as Lakshman has taken an oath to behead anyone who would not allow Ram to rest and open the door. Lakshman eventually killed himself.

A Yaksha woman Tadaka, daughter of Suketa and wife of Sunda, attacked Rishi Agastya. Rishi killed her husband during a confrontation in the forest. Agastya cursed her to become a Rakshasa. When this Rakshasa woman tried to disrupt Vishwamitra's yagna, Ram raised his bow and killed her.

When Ram went hunting the golden deer and did not return for long, Sita asked Lakshman to search for Ram. Lakshman went after Ram drawing a line invoking mantra and told Sita that she would be safe inside that line. However, Ravana came in the guise of a rishi and wanted to step over Lakshman Rekha. He could not do it because of the ascetic power of the mantras of Lakshman. Ravana then forced Sita to step out of Lakshman Rekha else he would curse her entire household. She stepped out of the line as she risked a curse on her husband's family.

Dilip did not show respect to the divine cow Kamdhenu, and so he was cursed with childlessness. In order to get rid of the curse, he offered to serve Nandini, calf of Kamdhenu for 21 days. On the last day, the calf was attacked by a lion. Dilip could not move his body to kill the lion. So, he begged the lion to eat him instead of the calf. Nandini revealed that the attack of the lion was the part of the test and blessed Dilip to father an illustrious son.

Sage Valmiki went to bathe in the Ganges. He went near Tamasa stream and found the water to be apparent and pleasant there. He heard the chirpings of a pair of birds. He felt elated

and pleased to listen to the sounds of the birds. Just then one bird got hit with an arrow and fell on the ground and died instantly. It was the male bird. The female bird starts wailing and making terrible noises exhibiting her pain. Valmiki heard those wails of the bird who was a few moments back enjoying its lives bliss. Suddenly there appeared a man with bow and arrow, and it was the hunter who hunted the bird for its food. Valmiki uttered a curse upon the man, and as it was willed by the divine scheme, the curse was uttered in the form of Shloka. This surprised even Valmiki. However, it was the Brahma's blessing upon Valmiki, and he was asked by Brahma to write *Ramayana*.

Once a handsome prince married Bahugami and took her to his palace. On her wedding night, she waited for her husband, but he did not come to her chamber. The wait became endless as everything he would promise to be with her, but he never turned up. One night, she saw him mounting his horse. She followed him. She saw a woman in sari crying badly from the rear, when she saw her face, she was taken aback to know that it was her husband (Pattanaik *Shikhandi and the Other Tales They Don't Tell you*). Her husband told her that though he has the body of a man, his heart is that of a woman. He further told her he had sought the help of Rishi, Yogis and Siddha's, but they could not help him. The virgin princess asked him why he has spoilt the life of his earlier wife and hers. Then she uttered a curse that if anybody like the prince ever dupes a woman, he will never be able to cross the *vaitarni* and enter the land of the dead. He would rather be a ghost or *Pisachas*. She cut her husband's genitals. She turned into a goddess and ordered the prince to be her priestess and dress as a woman.

Once the fever goddess was married to a merchant. A king accused her of theft and got her killed. Deprived of the joy of marriage and maternity, she swore to sweep the king's city. She made her presence felt through fever. She sat on the shoulders of *Jvara*, a three-headed, six-armed and three-legged demon. The curse is removed when a mother in all her bride finery offer lemons and sour curds (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King*).

King Shikhidhvaja wanted to attain enlightenment. His wife was a wise yogini. She was an expert in ancient occult powers. She possessed the power of metamorphosis, i.e., the ability to change her shape and form. However, the king would never pay any heed to her, considering her to be a female and a householder. To explore wisdom, the king decided to renunciate everything and retired to the forest. Chudala did not stop him as he was not ready to accept any of her thoughts. However, she has made her mind to bring him back. She followed the king and met him in the guise of a man Kumbhaka who was willing to share his wisdom with the king.

Shikhidhvaja was receptive to accept the words of wisdom that comes from the mouth of a man. One day Kumbhaka told Shikhidhvaja that he is cursed by sage Durvasa when he was hurrying through the sky. To Durvasa, it seemed as if a beloved is pacing fast to meet her lover. So, he cursed him to turn into a female every night. Chudala would stay as Kumbhaka with the king during the day and as Madanika during the night. The king let her sleep beside and would never desire her at all. He was a true ascetic as he has overpowered his desires. The king had a yearning to be a true hermit, and so he was not affected by Madanika sleeping next to him. The king spent his days listening to Kumbhaka and nights sleeping around with Madanika dispassionately. One day Madanika pleaded to him that she wanted to experience the pleasures known to woman and asked him to satisfy her. He agreed. So the king became a hermit during the day and would live as a householder during the night.

Chudala has the power to create illusions. One day she created an illusion wherein a young man was making love to Madanika. The king entered and saw it and remain unperturbed and unmoved. He has become a true ascetic. Chudala thought this time to be the appropriate one, and she told the king everything. Then she asked the king to return with her to his kingdom.

King Bhangashvana did a yagna in order to father a hundred sons Devas got happy and blessed him. Bhangashvana forgot to make offerings to Indra. Indra cursed him to be a woman.

Bhangashvana became a woman and bore 100 sons. Then Indra, again saw him living happily. He again hissed a curse that his children would fight and kill each other. When Bhangashvana learned of his lapse, he offered offerings to Indra. Appeased Indra gave Bhangashvana the boon that he could revive one set of kids. Bhangashvana revived those who called her mother and stated that kids love their mothers more than their fathers. Pleased Indra revived both sets of children.

One day Mandavya, an ascetic, saw a woman who was taking her sick husband to a prostitute as her husband desired. The sage got angry with the man and hurled a curse that the man would die at the sunrise. The man was lucky to have a very chaste wife. The lady used her power of chastity and did not let the sunrise happen till devas blessed her with the life of her husband.

Krishna's son Samba creates many problems. He would fool the junior wives of Krishna by pretending to be him. He was punished for this crime with a curse to get a skin disease so that father and son could be distinguished. Samba prayed to Sun god, and he cures him of the disease. Once Samba and his friends decided to mock sages. Samba, dressed as a woman who is pregnant, approached sages to ask whether he will bear son or daughter. The sages cursed him that he would give birth to that iron mace, which is going to destroy the Yadava Clan. Samba, under the impact of the curse, delivered the mace bearing excruciating pain like childbirth. Yadavas threw this mace in the sea by thrashing it as a powder. The powder, however, deposited on the beach and grew into the grass. Yadavas killed each other with the blades of the grass that were sharp as a razor. The curse came into action, and the entire Yadava clan died.

Pramila, a princess, once saw a Gandharva who was flying over her head. She was cursed to live in the kind of women where no man would enter when she passed unflattering comments about the genitals of Gandharva. She lived in the land of women and prayed to

become a mother. Nath Yogi Matsyendranath, in response to her prayer, entered the Kingdom of Women. He did not turn into women by his ascetic powers and celibacy. Pramila wanted him to stay and impregnate the women of Kadalivana, and so she did not allow him to leave. To liberate Matsyendranath, one of his students, Goraknath used his yogic powers and entered Kadalivana. He cross dressed as a woman. He played the drum and sang song reminding Matsyendranath his true purpose. Matsyendranath remembered everything; he left the forest along with his son. Pramila was again left with her female companions.

Bhrungi was an ardent devotee of Shiva. He intended to go around Lord Shiva. Parvati stopped him as he did not want to acknowledge her. But he refused. Parvati sat on Shiva's lap, and then she even fused her body with Shiva. However, Bhrungi was so adamant that he metamorphosised himself into a bee and tried to fulfil his wish of taking a round of Shiva. When Parvati saw the negation of femininity by Bhrungi, she cursed him to lose those body parts that had emerged from female seed. Under the impact of the curse, Bhrungi lost all flesh and blood. He collapsed on the ground immediately. He wanted to seek forgiveness from Parvati, so he sang songs to her glory. Appeased Shiva and Parvati gave him the third leg to stand upright. Nevertheless, his skeletal frame reminds him of the importance of the goddess.

While summing up, we find the Indian model of Studying disability in Myth prevailing with the idea that in the primitive ages, the society was dominated by animism, polytheism as well as by magic. Customs dictated the rules of morality, and for making these customs strong and meant to be abided, the punitive measures of curses are attached to it. A strong will power nullifies the impact of curses but while pronouncing the curse, curser as if psychologically burdens the one who is cursed. He is devalued immediately. He is so much weakened in mind that curse starts influencing his weak sensibilities causing nervous prostration, thus signalling him to go weak as if the curse is causing the intended physical harm. The words of the individuals who have borne a spotless character with penance, a chaste woman and devoted

towards her husband, brahmanas, father, mother, teacher and the best and the eldest, words of people on death bed have the sharpness of curses. Curses end up in terrible and far-reaching consequences and effects. Death, disfigurement, miserable and diseased life, maimed body, loss of limbs and physical weakness, defeat, loss of progeny etc. can be the effects of curses. Relational affinities bring upon the power and effectivity in curses. Being performative, curses are fully expressive. Interruption in penances emerges as a significant cause of cursing. Sages, preceptors and elders are social chastisers. Curses are used for rendering moral laxities. The curse causes severe illnesses, deformities, metamorphosis, degradation and devaluation. Curses invoke an array of misfortunes like suffering from diseases, barrenness, lack of peace at home. These are inverses of blessings and are context-specific and unique. Curse brings about the retribution and justice for the wrong action. At the heart of the curse is the thought that nothing happens in this universe without a cause. Even the birth of Vishnu as Ram finds its causal link in the curse of the Brigu. Once the curse is uttered, it may only be modified because of the verbal subterfuge. In Myth, seers and gods liberally utter curses upon those who dare to insult or anger them or even ignore them. In the Introduction to *This Able Body Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, the authors argue the Greco-Roman disabilities in antiquity quite in consonance to the Indian view. The Greeks share “the mythological portrayals of deformed and disabled persons to find out the relationship between disability and the divine, the use of deformed and disabled persons as entertainment for the non-disabled, the treatment of congenitally deformed infants, the career prospects for the disabled, disability as punishment by the gods, and special compensatory abilities associated with certain disabled individuals” (Avalos, Melcher and Schipper 6-7) quite like the Indian mythologists.

These incidents enfold and unfold the host of events changing the destiny of several characters propelling the mythological narrative forward. It can only be annulled by a higher power as the curses are the power incarnate in a specific formula at a specific time and place.

When Arjuna was cursed by the damsel Urvashi saying, " May you lose your manhood instantly (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 170)", the curse was mellowed down by Indra "Indra could only modify it" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 170) by changing his state from forever disabled to be a transgender person for a year only. Indra further added that Arjuna could also decide the year of getting that punishment. Indra though the ruler of Urvashi, cannot annul the curse as void. The pacificatory measure can lessen the impact of curses. They also share the similar depiction of the mythological characters.

Curses ... enfold and unfold the march of events and destiny of characters and propel the epic forward, not randomly or aimlessly, but according to some design that bespeaks sharp intelligence shaping it, taking into account the exigencies of the present, acts of commissions and omissions of the past, and the needs of the future from the artistic, ethical, and religious points of view of the poet, the philosopher, and the believer, all at once. The poet's intelligence in creating order out of the chaos of the universe cannot be denied, whatever views one may hold about other weighty matters. (Aithal 141)

It is established that curse disables the person from present social, economic, political, physical, mental and valued position to just an opposite state. All the denizens of the mythological world can fall a prey to cursing and can in a moment become disabled. This again brings us to the modern technological supposition of every human being as a TABS. Curse is all engulfing and all pervading. It embraces all from unborn babies to the gods. But the eventual logical conclusion is the outset of disability and depreciation. The analysis of the various curses brings us across the establishment of the idea that in the mythological world, this onset of the disability is for committing some sin or acting against the socio ethical norms of the society. The cursed is purged of the Karma of offending the curser by bearing the consequences in the form of disability. So, Indian Antiquity views disability as a retribution of the sins. It is used

as a narrative device to sermonise people to follow the path of dharma. Curse is a tool to upkeep the socio-ethical and moral norms of the society. It creates a sense of fear for the wrong doings.

Chapter IV

Delineating Physical and Mental Disabilities in the Select Works of Devdutt Pattanaik

The term physical disability outlines the visible disabilities that somehow limit the general notion of bodily integrity and physical health. Physical disabilities are the ones that can be seen in an individual. A person who has physical disability can't perform the necessary activities like walking, bathing, toileting, etc. without support. "Physical disabilities can affect a person's ability to move about, to use arms and legs effectively, to swallow food and to breathe unaided" (Nkabinde, F.E.Obiakor and M.T.Offor). Physical disability outlines the loss or lack of a body part, which may lead to a failure in performing a specific bodily function like movement, sensation, or coordination. It impacts the overall personality of an individual rather than effecting only the motor functions. Physical disability is a long-term condition disabling the individual at the physical, cognitive, social and emotional levels as all these systems are interconnected. A person who is deviant from the culturally acceptable biological norm is also considered to be physically disabled. It proposes that the society and its built environment qualifies or disqualifies a person from being Physically Dis/abled; those who conform to the benchmarks of social standards are considered abled, and rest are negatively labelled as Disabled. "Different social classes, cultures, ethnic groups, and nations vary in their perceptions of what is disabling and what is not" (Deegan). Culture educates that particular deformity is a handicap, impairment, or disability. In its popular sense, a person who has lost limbs is physically disabled. It does not include every Physical otherness to be a disability.

"Physical disability is a limitation on a person's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity, or stamina. Other physical disabilities include impairments that limit other facets of daily living, such as respiratory disorders, blindness, epilepsy and sleep disorders. Some

examples of physical disability are amputation, arthritis, cerebral palsy, upper limbs, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, acquired spinal injury, post-polio syndrome, spina bifida” (*People With Disabilities*) etc. to name a few. There is no appropriate standard for measuring disability. A person may be able today, and in no time, he can become disabled. Those who are considered disabled can outperform an able bodied, e.g., a blind man can sing sweeter than nightingale while an able body can end up amusing in the manner of cawing of crows.

When we peep into the disabled group, physically disabled are the most marginalised and excluded groups in society. Condition of a person with disability invokes a lot of concern for its toll of misery when it is the visible form of disability. No overt signs of disability are there if a person is diabetic, asthmatic, or epileptic, yet the triggers may cause the appearance of dramatic symptoms. It is depicted in media, society, literature and culture stereotyped as a position of disadvantage. It enthralls a piteous gaze, which marks it as abnormal. It differentiates and excludes the individual from the mainstream, thus positioning it to be on liminality. It advocates for the assistance of others for support and sustainability. The deformities are evil owing to their existence; so they are the scary ones. The most common permanent disabilities are Musculoskeletal impairments such as partial or total paralysis, amputation, injuries in the spine, dystrophy of muscles, cerebral palsy, to name a few.

"The physical disability the person experiences may be either congenital or a result of injury, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, amputation, multiple sclerosis, pulmonary disease, heart disease, or other reasons. Some persons may experience non-visible disabilities that may include respiratory disorders, epilepsy, or other conditions" (“Physical and Mobility Impairment Information”). Indian epics are rich in disability imagery outlining physical disabilities. Albrecht, Mitchell and Snyder comment in the *Encyclopedia of Disability* that the “Gods, cultural heroes, magical beings, and their adversaries bear marks of bodily and mental impairment that echo or exaggerate common disabilities. Divinities are routinely portrayed in

folklore as possessing a surplus or deficit of organs” (736). When we peep in through the texts of Devdutt Pattanaik Retellings of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, we are astonished to find the variety of disabilities that are conspicuously present and yet marginalised in the epics. Disabled are found in the fringes, or they are put to the margins owing to their disabilities. The world view of the *Mahabharata* would have been quite different if Drithrashtra had not been blind. Such is the impact and influence of disabilities upon *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.

A pivotal role is played by the physical deformity of congenital blindness and acquired blindness (blindfold) in both *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. King Vichitravirya died without bearing a son. Satyawati, the queen of Kuru clan, asked *Bhishma* to do *Niyoga* and go to the wives of Vichitravirya. He refused outrightly as his vow of celibacy does not allow him. He can never at any cost break his oath. Then Satyawati called upon Vyasa, her illegitimate son, with Parasara to levirate *Niyoga*. Vyasa was an ascetic, thus rustic and unkempt in his bearing. When he went to Ambika for fathering her son, she closed her eyes because of the disgust for his dishevelled state. Vyasa cursed that the son would be born blind. Eventually, the child whom she gave birth was born blind.

As undesirables, the physically and mentally imperfect functioned materially and symbolically as metaphors or paradigms for religious and social transgressions. Punishment through disability therefore served a double purpose: it was a tool of punishment because it caused pain and physical deprivation; and it consigned to the transgressor the role of symbol or metaphor for punishment, because of the visibility or obviousness of the punishment. (Vlahogiannis 28)

When we try to discover the reasons for blindness in modern scientific terminology, we come to the study of pre-natal impressions.

There is an emerging field in science called Pre-natal impressions. The way the mother behaves or what all activities the mother does when she is carrying the child has a tremendous effect on the child itself. So, Pre-natal impressions can act in various ways.... Pre-natal means before birth in the womb; the images go from the mother's psyche to the child's body.... That way, the reactions of both the sisters Ambika and Ambalika on seeing Vyasadeva had effects. The response of Ambika on seeing Vyasadeva was that she closed her eyes, and that is why *Dhritarashtra* was born blind, and for Ambalika, she turned pale. (Das).

“*Dhritarashtra* was born blind, and he was forbidden from sitting on the throne” (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 45). Matilal summarises that “although *Dhritarashtra* was the elder of the two, there is some traditional hesitation about allowing a blind prince to succeed to the throne” (Ganeri 11). His primogeniture was denied to him because of his physical disability. *Dhritarashtra* had the might of ten thousand elephants, and he was a sage known for his learning and intelligence, yet his disability paved a marginal place for him. Thus, he let the jealousy creep in his heart because of the bitterness of the behaviour he met at the hands of the so-called abled society.

Meera Uberoi, in her *Mahabharata*, narrates that “*Dhritarashtra* blindness made it imperative that his bride has enormous strength of character and unimpeachable virtues”(35). When *Bhishma* arranged the marriage of Gandhari with *Dhritarashtra*, she was not aware of his blindness. The daughter of Subala, the king of Gandhar, was given to *Dhritarashtra* in marriage by *Bhishma*. When this loyal and powerful lady Gandhari came to know about her husband, she blindfolded herself. It is perceived at two-levels. Firstly, it is thought that she wanted equality in her marriage "I will share his fate." (Meera Oberoi,35) and empathising with her husband, she blinded herself. The second view is that she wanted to pay in revenge for

Bhishma's action of marrying her by forcing her father to agree and abide. Rather than being exploited, she disables herself (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 45). She put a blindfold in revenge. "Gandhari's 'blindness' was welcome to all the representatives of male authority-to *Dhritarashtra*, to the Pandavas, to god Krishna and even to the author of *Mahabharata*, the powerful sage Vyasadeva" (Alam,1517). What requires special notice is that the physical deformity limited *Dhritarashtra* and Gandhari (by birth and induced), but the blindness is stereotyped as a lack of ability to see the evildoings of their sons. Both of them are identified as blinded by the ambition and yearning to rule that Gandhari hit the unborn babies of her in a hurry and as a response to Drithrashtra's hurry to father the king. They further could not see the untruth, dishonesty, and blindness towards duty and honour as they became a party to their sons' outrageous actions. Later in life, Duryodhana is mocked at by Draupadi to be the 'blind son of blind parents 'that further led to unsavoury events.

In *Ramayana*, we meet the blind parents of Saravana, who, because of their old age and feebleness, could not move on their own. Saravana wanted to take them on pilgrimage, so he put them in a basket, tied the baskets to the bamboo pole and put it on the shoulder. When he was taking them through the forest, he was hit by an arrow launched by Dasaratha, the Ram's father. Again, it is worth noting that Dasaratha wanted "to test his skills, he decided to blindfold himself (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 72). He heard the sound of something into the water and assumed that it was a beast and hit his target. Mistakenly he has killed Saravana, who, in turn, pleaded to save his parents from the hunter and die. Dasaratha was thus doomed. When he went to Saravana parents, they cursed him that he may also suffer the pangs of separating from his sons in a similar way they are going to suffer. The old parents of Saravana refused to buzz anywhere from there seeking his help and chose to die at the same place where they lost their son. The blindfold of Dasaratha had plunged him to the dungeons of darkness in his life. Perturbed by the curse of Saravana's s parents, Dasaratha tried to hurry

up the coronation of Ram, leading to further events of Manthara instigating Kaikeyi that it was kings plan to send Bharata away and coronate Ram. Devdutt further delineates that Dasaratha weeps so much that he becomes blind (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 87).

Dirghatamas, the sage, was cursed to be born blind. Brihaspati desired his sister in law Mamata wife of Utathya when she was pregnant with Drighatamas. "She turned him away" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 20) and Brihaspati cursed the child in her womb. Drighatamas' wife Pradweshi, got fed up with caring for her husband, and so she threw Drighatamas clung into the tree trunk and survived. Later Dirghatamas did Niyoga on Sudeshna, the wife of Childless King Vali and the king fathered Anga, Vanga and Kalinga.

The select works of Devdutt Pattanaik also refer to the Rakshahas Bhasmalochan, who was eternally blindfolded as he has the power to burn down everything upon which he would ever lay his eyes on. Bhasmalochan was sent by Ravana to burn down the bridge built by Ram to reach Lanka. "When he removed his blindfold Ram immediately shot an arrow that transformed into a mirror (*Pattanaik Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 217). He saw his image in the mirror and burnt down himself. It gave the first good impression of Ram's skill and expertise to solve the issues regarding war.

There is one more incident of Indra's son getting blind in one eye when a grass missile launched by Ram struck him. Ram felt offended with Jayanta as he was trying to seduce Sita and was poking her. It is further stated that Jayanta travelled both worlds to survive it and later seek forgiveness. So, Ram spared its life but blinded it in one eye, thus reminding it of the misdeed (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 196).

Apart from the physical deformity of blindness, limpness is also looked at with a sinister gaze, Sakhuni, who is the mastermind behind gambling and the ultimate Kurukshetra war, limps. Shakuni, the younger brother of Gandhari, got very disturbed and angry about his sister's

marriage to a blind man. He was aware entirely about the political power of Hastinapur and understood his father's incapacity to refuse the marriage. But he was very angry with *Bhishma*. All the more when *Bhishma* came to know that Gandhari before her marriage to Dritrashtra performed a ritual of marrying a sacrificial goat he felt offended. He put the entire family of Gandhari into prison. They were given food good enough to sustain one person. As Sakuni was the clever and smart of all, the family decided that he would be given food to outlive all and take revenge from Hastinapur. Shakuni's father once struck him on his ankle so that he may always remember the pain his family has borne to keep him alive. It made him limp. His father added that "now, you shall limp every time you walk, and every time you limp, remember the crime of Kauravas against your family" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 140).

Shakuni acts as the central negative character in *Mahabharata*. Shakuni, with his deeds, became a sure cause of the divided house of Kuru clan. He was the one who always instigated Duryodhana and poisoned his mind. Somehow antiquity has shaped such a stereotypical impression that it has somehow attached the image of a con to limpness. It has put a negative value to limpness. Disability is visualised as bearing negative tendencies, and many times it is shown that the society's discordant behaviour asks for such sorts of values.

Quite like Shakuni in *Mahabharata*, the central villainous role is played by Manthara, who is physically deformed and has added the same damaging and sinister value to her disabled disposition and the disability in general. Manthara, the hunchback, is responsible for the negative portrayal of the disabled ones.

When we hear her name, the figure that springs to our mind is that of the grotesquely bent form of an old woman, with a crotchety face and irascible temperament. She had a deformed back, which gave her a skewed perception of life and people, which in turn was reflected in her attitude towards others.

Despite her looks or character, it must be admitted that it was she who brought about a crucial turn in the epic, but for which events would have taken quite a different and a rather uninteresting course. (Sadagopaniyengar)

Manthara is the one who poisoned the mind of Kaikeyi. It was said that Kaikeyi's father possessed the power of understanding the language of animals. But he was also warned that if ever he will tell about what beasts are talking to anybody, he would die that day. One day he heard the two parrots talking, and he laughed at hearing them. Inquisitive Kaikeyi's mother insisted on telling her. It offended the king of Kekya that knowing that he would die, how could his queen insist on asking him. He sent her back to her parent's home and gave her kid Kaikeyi and his brother to Manthara, the hunchback to take care of them. So Manthara was like a mother to Kaikeyi rather than only a maid. But when Ram was being crowned in a hurry by Dasaratha when Bharata was away, Manthara got suspicious, and she instigated Kaikeyi to seek the boons that Dasaratha had promised her. All the more, Kaikeyi was married to Dasaratha that his son would be the king and she would be queen mother. She poisoned Kaikeyi mind and guided her to seek her due right. As a literary device, disability of her body unravels her crooked mind. "Manthara's disability represents her being evil and is a metaphor for disability being evil.... Her physical crookedness may therefore be an exteriorization of this obliquity of vision ... Adhyatma *Ramayana* which demonstrates Mantharas as Gods Instrument ... again endorses the negative belief of PWD having divine connections. Further it propagates the idea that God is an advocate for people with disability, and acceptance comes only if disability solves some purpose. (Yerneni, Sharma and Kumar) .It is also believed that Manthara was a Gandharvi who was asked by Brahma to take birth on the earth for this deed so that the divine drama of Ram, the avatar of Vishnu leaving the palace and going to the forest could be performed. She instigated Kaikeyi that "your son will be the servant of the king and you, my beautiful, brave, intelligent and fertile Kaikeyi will be Kaushalya's maid" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated*

Retelling of Ramayana 76). It is further added that Vishnu blessed her that in his next birth, when he would take birth as Krishna, she would be cured of her disability. In her next birth, she became a Kubja, a *bheelni* who would give Kansa the sandalwood paste. She was deformed and ugly. She was a true devotee of Krishna who, in turn hugged her and removed her disability, and she was turned into a pretty lady. This further provoked the public fancy of evil as deformed and sinned and so disabled while the beautiful means blessed and abled. (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 99).

We also find a mention of the limp body of Lakshman when he was fighting with Indrajit. The *nagapasas* of Indrajit rounded across the entire body of Lakshman hence making him slack in the body (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 227). Lakshman's limpness is not the physical decapacitation of Lakshman but also of Ram, who starts mourning and wondering how he could ever go to Ayodhya without Lakshman.

Indian culture has a very sharp demarcation concerning the definite roles performed by men and women. If a man is weak physically or cannot perform the masculine task of ability, he is many a time chided for wearing bangles. It is a mark of an insult for a man to be assumed weak and vice versa for women. Sita's mother knew of her "effortlessly picking up the bow with one hand and vigorously wiping its undersurface with other (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 47)". Devdutt beautifully draws a contrast by telling that even Ravana couldn't pick up the bow. Ravana, while going after losing the attempt to pick up the bow, told Janaka, "If I couldn't pick up this bow, then no man can. Your daughter will die a lonely spinster" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 48). Sita's mother was also worried and told her father that nobody would marry her if people came to know her agility. Weakness is considered to be a disability for a man, while strength like a man is a disability for the feminine gender.

Vichitravirya, the son of Shantanu and Satyawati, was a weakling and so *Bhishma* went to bring Amba, Ambalika and Ambika as wives for him. Vichitravirya was not a man enough to go and take wives for himself. He also died issueless. He couldn't be a father, and so if his wives didn't accept Vyasa for *Niyoga*, he wouldn't have any chance to go across *Vaitarni*, the land of the dead. He would have lost the opportunity of getting birth again.

Pandu, the younger son of Vichitravirya born of the Niyoga by Vyasa on Ambika, was also a weakling. It is said that Ambika got afraid of Vyasa when he was to levirate Niyoga. So, the child got pre-natal impressions and born as a weakling. All the more, Pandu also couldn't father any child. Kunti called upon various devas using the boon of rishi to beget children of Pandu for herself and Madri, the second wife of Pandu.

Bhishma took an oath of chastity and never marrying and fathering, thus denying himself the right to rebirth and of entering into the higher realm. Devdutt shared a vignette that *Bhishma* is believed to have castrated himself to remain faithful to his oath. Thus, he has incurred a physical disability to remain true to his oath. It is further informed that men were castrated to work in the women quarters (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 209). They were physically disabled so that they may be around the female members of the royal household.

It is said that Brahma conducted a ritual of Yagna. He domesticated Gauri, but nature is sovereign Kali. Both are forms of Kali. Brahma ignores Kali and exerts his authority over Gauri. A father tried to do what he should not. When Brahma persisted even on the resistance by the goddess, Shiva wrenches his head off. In a way, Shiva mocks Brahma for seeking value through culture. So even the creator was disabled by chopping his head (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* xiii).

Renuka was the wife of Jamadagni, who was an ascetic of the Bhrigu clan. With the Tapasya of her chastity she has got 'siddhi', the power to collect water in unbaked clay pots.

One day she saw a very handsome Gandharva bathing in the river, and momentarily she desired her intensely. The moment she lost charity, she was disabled of her Siddha, and her power to collect water disappeared. When her husband came to know about her disregarding the marital rules, he accused her of adultery and asked her sons to chop her head. The older four disobeyed their father but, the younger one in a single strike chopped off Renuka's head with an axe. So, he came to be known as Parashurama. His father got very happy with his obedience and asked him to wish one thing. Parashurama sought forgiveness and revived her mother. So Jamadagni, with his ascetic power, fulfilled Parashurama's will.

Ahilya was a born princess who was given in marriage to sage Gautama who was much older than her and busier in performing *Yagna* for devas. Gautama used to remain focused on his prayers or to perform Tapasya. He didn't pay much attention to Ahilya's emotional needs of companionship and love. Ahilya yearned for his love, affection and care.

One day Gautama didn't go out to the mountains to perform Tapasya but first came back home and expressed love and affection towards Ahilya. She fulfilled all her cherished desires of marital bliss. It was the best of the days for Ahilya till the moment she saw another Gautama walking towards the hut. The one who was walking towards the hut looked stern, quite like the normal Gautama. Ahilya understood in no time that she has been in the embrace of an imposter assuming him to be Gautama. When the real Gautama saw her in the embrace of somebody else, he cursed Ahilya to "turn into a stone unable to move or eat, and animals would urinate on her" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 42), and travellers would walk over. Ahilya got disabled because of her inability to identify an imposter and for giving in to all his demands. The imposter was Indra, who was cursed by Gautama too. Gautama cursed Indra to have thousand Uvulas on his body, each reminding him of his excessive desire and punishing him for his coyship.

In *Ramayana*, Devdutt Pattanaik tells about the physical disability of both Ram and Lakshman when Indrajit attacked them with Naga-pashas. "The noose of serpents that coiled around their limbs and immobilised them with deadly venom.....Neither Ram nor Lakshman could move a muscle" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 218). The lack of mobility disabled Ram and Lakshman until the power of the chastity of Sita revitalised their limbs.

When Devdutt describes the war scenes wherein Ram's army of monkeys is fighting with Rakshashas of Ravana he tells us about several physically disabling causalities. ... "many more were maimed, losing hand or foot, or eye or ear" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 223).

It is said that once Ravana's wife Mandodri forbade serving meat to Surpanakhas. This led to household chaos and it stretched so much that Surpanakha's husband Vidyutjiua swallowed Ravana in the impulse of the moment. The only way to save Ravana was to cut the stomach of Vidyutjiua. Ravana pleaded to her sister to save him. He also promised her that "I will make your son my heir and give you any man you choose as your husband" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 123). Surpanakha, thus with her claw nails torn and ripped her husband's body and saved Ravana. Ravana, pleased with his sister, allowed her to take any husband of her choice.

Surpanakha's son was Sunkumar. He grew quite impatient waiting for Ravana to make him an heir. He decided to do *Tapasya* and obtain a weapon from Brahma that could kill Ravana. Even Indra started feeling intimidated by his austerities and started fearing him. Indra took the form of a boar when Ram and Lakshman were hunting and hid in bushes where Sunkumar was sitting in meditation. Lakshman attacked Sunkumar and assumed him to be a boar hunted him down. Lakshman inadvertently saved Ravana. Surpanakha got furious about knowing about her son's demise and wanted to kill his killer. She was determined to punish his

hunter. But when she looked at Ram and Lakshman, she forgot all vengeance and lust crept in her heart. Giddied with desire, she asked Ram to marry her. He refused to tell her that he is already married and asked her to go to his brother. Lakshman too refused her on account of something that his brother can't keep how could he. Surpanakha got furious and tried to catch hold of Sita, whom she considered as an object for her refusal. Lakshman immediately came into action and chopped her nose and breast, thus disfiguring and disabling her. Surpanakha was punished with a physical disability for expressing her desire openly.

Ravana disabled Jatayu by chopping his wings. When Ravana was taking Sita away to Lanka, suddenly, a bird flew in front of his Vimana and tried to block his path by challenging. It was Jatayu, an old bird who was keeping a watch on Ram and Sita. "Ravana swung the sword in an arc and slashed one of the birds' wings, causing Jatayu to tumble down to earth from the sky" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 136). In no time, Jatayu was disabled and owing to its disability to fly, Jatayu badly tumbled down from the height to the earth. Jatayu was on his dying breath when Ram saw lying it wingless on the floor. Jatayu told Ram about what has happened to Sita and that Ravana has taken revenge for mutilating his sister and he has taken Sita towards deep south.

Lankini, the guarding goddess of Lanka, had eight arms. "She had a torch in one hand and a bell in another, a trident in one hand on which an elephant had been impaled and a sword wet with the blood of lion in another, a snake spitting venom in one hand and a club fitted with a human skull in another, a pot of fire in one hand and an ace in another. Her hair was unbound, and her forehead was smeared with vermilion" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 193). Hanuman swung his tail, and Lankini was knocked down. Lankini got spread-eagled. She could not get up. Her knocking down announced the coxing of doom for Lanka. She was thoroughly disabled by Hanuman, even with her eight arms.

While residing in the forest to trace Sita, Ram and Lakshman once found themselves in the grasp of Kabandha who had "long and sharp nails which were covered with the blood and entailed of earlier prey" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 161). Ram and Lakshman raised their swords and slashed the arms of Kabandha thus physically disabling him. Monster to the utter surprise instead of cursing Ram and Lakshman started thanking them. He told them that he is Vishwvasu, a Gandharva who was always hungry for food and pleasures of life. Once, he mocked a tapasvi who, in turn, cursed him that he should turn into a monster and his stomach may act as his head and thenceforth he started eating day and night. With the chopping of his arms, Ram and Lakshman have compelled him to stop eating and start reflecting on his hunger. This physical disability that Kabandha born at the hands of Ram and Lakshman enabled him to understand the worthlessness of his life. "Without arms to put food into my mouth, I am finally able to shift my attention to understanding my hunger" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 162). Ram and Lakshman cremated Kabandha, and as Gandharva Vishwvasu, he was invited by Indra in paradise. But Vishwvasu chooses to follow Shiva in Mount Kailas where he can learn to outgrow his hunger.

A Nishabda or a forest dweller wanted to learn archery from Droncharya. But Droncharya had promised Arjuna that he would teach him to be the most excellent archer in the world. Eklavya sought permission from Drona to be his student, and he turned away Eklavya. Drona told him that he is too busy teaching the princes and cannot teach him. When Eklavya questioned Drona that who would teach him then. Drona responded that if he had faith in Drona, he could teach himself. Eklavya took his words seriously and created an effigy of Drona and started teaching himself arduously. When he was working hard to learn archery, one day, he got disturbed by a barking dog. To quieten it, he shot arrows towards the dog so that it only sealed its mouth. When Arjuna saw it, he taunted Drona. He questioned Drona that you had promised me to be the most excellent archer. Drona investigated about the archer who was

so skillful and found Eklavya. He asked Eklavya, the name of his teacher. When Eklavya took his name, Drona asked him to pay him fee by chopping his thumb of the right hand. Drona caused Disability to Eklavya to keep his promise. As guru is revered in India, without thinking for a moment, Eklavya presented Drona his thumb, thus disabling himself of the capability to wield the bow ever again. Drona told Arjuna that now he is the most excellent archer. The Indian epics represent the disabling of the people on the basis of caste and race which otherwise do not find any manifestation in the western models of disability. Riddell and Watson highlight this otherness and state that the "Impaired people are thus cast in the position of outsider, placed on the margins of society by virtue of their impairment. ... which render disabled people 'Other' (37). We witness the Indian epics disabling people to upkeep the socio-moral purpose and way of upkeeping the flag of both Karma and Dharma high.

In a popular belief, man has vestigial nipples that stand as a symbol of femininity within them. Arjuna had one while Krishna didn't have vestigial nipples. Though it was because of them being Nara and Narayan but as per the worldly standard, they were deviant. Any deviance from the normal makes the individual disabled. This forces us to question also that can all deviance be categorised so. This difference does not make them weaker first; it asserts the concept of Puran Purusha.

Bhima often bullied Kauravas. One day to seek revenge, Kaurava served him sweets that were laced with poison. He lost his consciousness. He was as in modern medical terminology in a state of 'Syncope'- the temporary loss of consciousness, which is considered as a disability. They bound his limbs together and flung him in a river. The unconscious and tied Bhima was disabled to save himself. This would have killed him, but Aryaka, the leader of Nagas, rescued him and took him to the king of Nagas, Vasuki. Vasuki told Bhima that his mother Kunti, is their descendent of Yadu. In return, Nagas gave him an antidote that no poison in the world

could ever hurt him. After remaining in the river, the Bhima returned to his family hale and hearty, much to the chagrin of Kauravas.

Jayadrata, the son of Vriddhakshatra, was instrumental in killing Abhimanyu. When Arjuna came to know of it that how Jayadrata stopped Yudhishtira from saving Abhimanyu, Arjuna took an oath that he would chop his head if he wouldn't be capable of killing Jayadrata before the setting of the sun. He followed Jayadrata blindly but could not find him. Then Krishna, his charioteer and saviour covered the sun with his hand deluding everyone to believe it to the setting sun. Arjuna then heard the laughter of Jayadrata amongst the cacophony of Kauravas and shot his arrow carrying his head to the lap of Viddhakshatra, the father of Jayadrata. Viddhakshatra in a momentary impulse got up and dropped his son's head on the ground. He has one who has taken a boon from gods that whoever may fall his son's head to the ground, his head maybe burst into thousands of pieces. Jayadrata's death thus killed his father too. During the chase of Jayadrata, Arjun saw two warriors, Satyaki and Bhurishrava fighting a duel. Arjuna disregarded the rules of war and chopped off the arm of Bhurishrava, thus disabling him to fight Satyaki. Satyaki, in turn, swung his sword and beheaded Bhurishrava.

When Ashwatthama tried to kill Abhimanyu's son in the womb of Uttari, wife of Abhimanyu, Krishna bore the effect of the missile on his body. Krishna then cursed Ashwatthama, "the only curse to leave the lips of Gods. "Ashwatthama, so terrible has been your action that even death will shun you for three thousand years. For that period, your wounds will perter with pus and your skin will be covered with boils forcing you to contemplate the nature of your crime." Thus, disabling Ashwatthama was derived from civilisation, and he was considered as inauspicious for humankind.

The sage Durvasa blessed Kunti with a magic formula with which she can call any God with that formulae and can have a child. In her curiosity to test the mantra, Kunti called upon

sun god, giving her a son. Karna, son of the sun god, was born with a pair of earrings attached to his ears and a golden armour cling to his chest. Meera writes that sun told Kunti, " your son will be born with a golden coat of mail and my earrings which were given to me by Aditi (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 39).

When it was Karna's turn to enter the battlefield, he saw an old man coming to him at the dawn of day begging for alms. Karna was known for his charity that he never turns down anybody's request. Karna told the same to an old man to ask whatever he wishes. The old man was indeed a con man who immediately asked Karna to part with his earrings and the golden armour. Without hesitating for a moment. Karna parted with the divine gifts cutting them like bark from his body. This made him vulnerable and somehow disabled him. The old man was nobody, but Indra, who in the love of his son Arjuna asked Karna for the charity. Indra was impressed by his charity and gave him a gift of a celestial spear that will always hit its mark, but it was for single use. Without his armour, Karna was no more impervious to any weapon. Thus, he was disabled without his armour. Devdutt confesses that Vyasa has tried to portray that "our knowledge of the world is imperfect based on perceptions and false information." He further reiterates that Karna would never have been treated so unjustly had the Pandavas had perfect knowledge.

Myth brings us face to face with the modern physical anomalies of Polydactyl or Hexadactyly. The one who is expressing such anomalies may not have any physical impairment or intellectual impairment. But the condition is associated with congenital disabilities and cognitive abnormalities in a certain case. In our modern medical technology a person may be suffering from Apert syndrome (premature fusion of certain skull bones), abnormalities of fingers and toes or syndrome which is a human genetic disorder, Frohlich's syndrome leads to growth retardation, Grieg Cephalo Poly Syndactyly Syndrome, a mess of head size, Cohen syndrome (weak muscular system, to mention a few, there are more than 300 different

syndromes that can cause deviance in the body. Sita had six fingers. This is physical deviance expressing a genetic disorder. But in myth, as she is considered *ajonia* (who didn't come out of the womb) and a form of goddess Kali. She transformed herself and "sprouted many arms with which she grabbed the sticks and stones Ripped out his entrails (thousand-headed demon, Ravana's twin). She chopped away his limbs, crushed his heads, broke his knees and drank his blood" (Pattanaik Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana 254).

Vibhandaka was a seer who was performing Tapasya to churn *tapa* and acquire *siddhi* to control nature. Indra started fearing him. He sent a beautiful apsara to seduce him. Vibhandaka lost his control and squirted his semen out of his body. A doe ate the grass on which the semen fell and got impregnated by it. The doe gave birth to a human male child with antlers, and this child is named as Rishyashringa.

In another instance, Kartavirya was a king who wanted to have Nandini, a cow that could fulfill all desires. He had a thousand hands, a physical state of Polydactyly as per the modern science. He pushed Jamadagni, the seer who owned Nandini and tried to take away Nandini. Parashurama killed Kartavirya, as a revenge for his father's killing and also saved Nandini (Pattanaik Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata 27).

When we think of the phenomenons like polydactyl, we remember Ravana also. Ravana has ten heads and twenty arms. It is said that nine of the Ravana's heads were filled with delusion and thus, he was lustful, impatient, greedy, insecure, envious, rude, angry and dominating. One of his heads was filled with faith and wisdom. The nine heads overpowered the sage head.

Ashtavakra was born with eight bends in his body. He was named Ashtavakra considering his eight deformities. When he was in the womb of his mother, he corrected his father's misunderstanding of Vedas (Pattanaik Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata 19). His father got infuriated and cursed him to be born with deformities.

Prithu, the king, pursued the earth cow to feed his people. Still, earth cow retorted that you couldn't stop your people from milking me "till my udders are sore" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 25), and thus it may be deformed. So, Prithu laid down rules for the people to follow.

One day Sita was grabbed by a Rakshasha while she was picking flowers to make a garland for Ram. The Rakshasha fled carrying Sita on his shoulders. Lakshman pursued it, and Ram shot arrows at the vile creatures. Ram's arrows disabled him by chopping off his arms. Rakshasha requested Ram and Lakshman to bury him deep into the ground as their weapons couldn't kill him. He will die in peace if he is buried deep down. When Ram and Lakshman abided him then out of the grave, a handsome being namely Tumburu rose. Tumburu was cursed to be a Rakshasha till he is hunted like an animal (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 121).

It was believed that if ever a widow would step on Ravana's chariot, it would lose its power to fly. So when Ravana put Sita on his Vimana to show her the corpse of Ram and Lakshman, Sita fearlessly refused to accept it as if she was a widow then Ravana's Vimana couldn't fly (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 20).

Sampati was the younger brother of Jatayu. Once the two brothers raced towards the sun. Sampati was the older and more robust, and so it soared quite near the sun. It couldn't bear the glare of the sun, and its wings got singed. He fell towards the southern shore and always waited with patience for food (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 187).

Yayati was cursed to be "old and impotent" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 22). Under the influence of the curse, Yayati was disabled, and he became old and impotent. When Shukra realised that his daughter would have the immediate effect of the curse, he told Yayati that he would regain his youth and potency if anybody among his sons on his behalf accepts the curse. Puru agreed and suffered old age and disabilities associated with

it. While Yayati enjoyed youthful and virile youth. When Yayati had his fill, he took back his curse and Puru succeeded to his father's crown.

In another episode, we meet Nala, the husband of Damayanti, the princess of Vidarbha. Nala had two children too. His cousin Pushkara defeated him in the game of the cards. Nala had to leave his place and family. Damayanti, quite like Sita, accepted her husband's fate and accompanied him to the forest. But Nala couldn't see Damayanti suffering so when she was sleeping, he fled somewhere. Damayanti worked as a maid for the queen of Chedi when a priest called Sudev identified her and took her back to her father's house. Nala has turned into a decrepit and disabled as an ugly dwarf called Bahuka. He was a cook to their king of Ayodhya. Nala told everybody that after leaving Damayanti, "he witnesses Karkotaka, a dreaded Naga who, with its poisonous breath, transformed Nala into the ugliest of men. Then he removed the magic robe given to him by Naga Karkotaka and instantly got transformed into his original beautiful self" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 200). Then he defeated Pushkara again and won his family and fortune.

Another incident is quoted by Devdutt that highlighted the physical deformity of Bhagiratha, who was born as a misshapen lump of flesh. Sagara was too old when his daughters-in-law got widowed. But one of Sagara's sons had two wives, and they were determined to bear a child. Sagara conducted a yagna and made a potion that could make barren women pregnant. One queen drank it, and the other queen made love to her in the capacity of a husband. From this union, a child was born. But the child has no bones or nerves, only flesh and blood. Then they took this mass of flesh and blood to Kapila, who, with his Siddha created bones and nerves and the mass of lump became a complete child named Bhagirath. Bhagirath performed austere *tapasya* and pursued Indra to let Ganga flow on earth.

The people with visible disabilities are always looked down upon by the society in Indian antiquity. When Puru went to *Vanprasthashrama*, Devapi, the eldest son did not get the

crown rather; the rule of the kingdom is passed in Shantanu's hands, the younger one of Puru. This exploitation or change was reasoned out to be Devapi's physical disability. "Devapi had a skin disease, and the law stated that the man with a physical defect could not be a king" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 30). But Devapi became a mendicant. A king is turned into a pauper, a beggar simply because he is disabled.

Maudgalya was an ascetic who suffered from a terrible disease that had disabled him. "He would cough and spit all day, and his skin was covered with rashes and scales." But his wife Narayani served him with devotion. Mandalya would take human and divine forms using tapa's power and make love to his wife. Though Maudalya is disabled, yet the ascetic rules enabled him to live a fulfilling life.

Ravana got killed when Vibhishana let loose his secret, and the arrow was headed towards his potbelly. It was the place where the elixir was placed. Without elixir, he was like any other common fellow. When the pot of nectar is broken, he became quite vulnerable. Thus, after disabling him of his elixir, Ram killed him.

We have seen several mental disabilities being talked of directly or indirectly in the narration of Indian epics. Man is a rational being. But when that rationality is either vague, marred or diseased by some types of anxiety disorders, mood disorders, psychotic disorders, eating disorders, personality disorders, impulse control and addiction disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders and certain complexes to mention a few; then the person is said to be suffering from mental disabilities. Theory of disability aims to address loss, trauma and mourning and so emerge as a theory analogous to the trauma studies. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are used by the doctors and Psychiatrist as a treatise to deliver answers to the psychosocial problems of people. Both these epics are thickly laden with a number of mental disabilities and their symptoms. It is worth mentioning that the people suffering from such anxieties and disorders

are not treated differently. The symptoms of mental disorders like forgetfulness, oversleep, insomnia, unconsciousness, etc are lucidly found in the select works of Devdutt Pattanaik.

Kumbakarna, the brother of Ravana; did a lot of austerities and *tapasya*. He wanted to have the throne of Indra as a blessing from Brahma. But when he was to ask for the boon rather than saying Indra, his tongue slipped, and he said '*Nidra*,' the goddess of sleep. Thus, Kumbakarna would sleep all day. It was foretold that he would be invincible one day. He would wake up on his own, but if somebody interrupted his sleep ever, and he wakes up; that day will be the last day of his life. On the day of his death, Kumbakarna was poked and prodded by servants with sharp instruments in their hands. But nothing worked. Then the most aromatic foods were brought into his room, and he finally stirred and woke up. Ram shot a volley of arrows and killed Kumbakarna. It is assumed that Kumbakarna suffered from Hypothalamic obesity correlating the scientific and mythological story. A medical publication claims Kumbakarna to be suffering from Hypothyroidism and sleep apnea. Kleim – Levin syndrome, a hypothalamic disorder fits in with episodic nature of Kumbakarna's sleep as the episodes have been reported to last 2 to 80 days" (Om J Lakhani). Another disability that fits in the description is the "inability to articulate what he wanted to Brahma. Abnormal speech is reported in 2/3rd of cases of Klein – Levin syndrome" (Arnulf II).

Lakshman went along with Ram and Sita to the forest. He was ordered by his mother not to rest while serving Ram and Sita. So, when he started getting sleep after a full day's journey, he refuses to sleep. He asked the goddess of sleep to go to his wife instead. The sleeping goddess blessed Lakshman that he can overpower her only for the period in exile after that she will overpower him. So Lakshman did not sleep for fourteen years. As per the modern scientific medical journals the state of sleeplessness is a mental disability and is called as Insomnia.

On the other hand, Urmila slept during the day her husband's sleep, while at night, she used to sleep her sleep. She slept day and night. Modern medical, scientific literature considers the state of sleeplessness as Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome. Insomnia occurred to Lakshman and Urmila; on the other hand, was disabled by Hypersomnia. It is said that when Lakshman returned, Sumitra, his mother asked him to wake up Urmila. When Lakshman touched her, she woke up with a start. She couldn't identify Lakshman, who looked like a hermit. She screamed. When she was told that he is Lakshman, she started trembling with excitement and was unable to tie her hair. Lakshman tied it for her. We can in the modern era, correlate it with a situation when somebody woke up after spending extended time in a coma she would scream, shiver and would be unable to perform meagre tasks. It is said that when Ram was being coronated Nidra arrived to overpower Lakshman and he could do nothing to avoid it but sleep. As per the postmodern logic that the biggest trauma of the life of Lakshman was not to see Ram getting coronated even after the announcement. When he was about to be coronated, the trauma evaporates, and he couldn't control his sleep.

Towards the later part, Lakshman told Ram to take rest after the going of Sita. Lakshman promised that he would behead anybody who would disturb his sleep. Suddenly Durvasa, the sage known for his ascetic powers, came and told Lakshman who was guarding Ram's room to call him immediately. Durvasa said that it was very urgent to meet Ram else he would curse Ayodhya. So Lakshman himself went to disturb Ram of his sleep, and no Durvasa was standing outside to meet Ram. It was perhaps an apparition. Eventually, Ram reminded Lakshman of his oath. Lakshman then went to the forest to behead himself. It may be visualised as a modern man hallucinating and killing himself. In the postmodern world, it somehow goes along with committing suicide, which is a part of mental disability. Even Ram willingly went into the Saryu river never to come back again. The modern man cannot claim it to anything else but suicide. He got frustrated with all the hardships of his life. Even married, he remained

without his wife with him for most of his life and then losing his wife in front of his eyes. He couldn't bear such a traumatic turn of events and killed himself.

Vedavati was one more character in the select works of Devdutt, who committed suicide by jumping into the fire. She wanted to marry Vishnu and so rejected all the suitors. One of her suitors killed her parents, so she went into the forest and started performing tapasya. She got tired of waiting for Vishnu even Ram, who is Vishnu incarnate didn't accept her as wife or wife's servant. So, she got tired of waiting and jumped into the fire as she thought that this would hurry up her birth and to be the Vishnu's wife (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 120).

Aja, one of the kings of Ayodhya, the father of Dashratha, had Indermati as his wife. He loved her very dearly. It is said that when Indermati died, Aja couldn't bear her separation and killed himself. (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 144). It is further added that Indermati was an apsara and she was cursed to be born on earth. She forgot everything regarding her birth. Forgetfulness is again a mental disability. One day a sage's garland fell around her neck from the sky. She was reminded of her living on the earth as a curse. With the memory, she is purged of her curse, and she died. It broke Aja's heart, and he killed himself.

Apart from Insomnia, oversleep, anxiety, suicide, etc. the epics refer to the common mental disability of forgetting things. As a child, Hanuman leaped towards the sun to try to eat it as if it was a fruit. He had tossed the planets around as if they were toys. Indra stopped him by hurling a thunderbolt towards him. As he fell to the ground, the gods gave him many powers. But sages decreed that he would never realise his powers until the time is right. When Hanuman went along with Angad to find Sita and Lanka. Then Jambuvan reminded him of his powers. He then remembered his powers were a mighty force to deal with, and so he overpowered Surasa, Samika and Lankini.

Karna was also cursed by forgetfulness. He was a foundling to his father, who was a charioteer Adiratha and his wife, Radha. He had a yearning to be a warrior. He approaches Drona with the same wish, but he was asked to stick to his father's trade. But Karna was determined to learn archery. So, he went to Drona's teacher Parashurama in the disguise of a Brahman and became his student. One day, when Parashurama was resting for a while and lying down in Karna's lap for a nap, Karna was stung by a worm, but he didn't move and scream so that it may not disturb Parashurama's sleep. When Parashurama woke up to find Karna in unbearable agony, he got very angry. He felt deceived by Karna as he could not be the Brahman's son but a Kshatriya, else he could never have born the unbearable pain.

In an impulsive tone, Parashurama cursed him with a mental disability of forgetfulness of the entire education on the day, he required it most. When Karna was fighting Arjuna, that curse came into action, and Karna forgets his entire education. Karna died at the hands of Arjuna because of this disability of his.

Unconsciousness is one of the primary mental disabilities. When Lakshman was fighting Indrajit, he struck him with an arrow that made Lakshman limp. He grew unconscious and fell on the ground. Jambuvan then told Ram that he could be brought back to life only with the herb Sanjivani and that must be given urgently. He further said that the herb is available in the mountains. So, Hanuman was sent to bring the herb. But Hanuman couldn't identify it. So he decides to bring the entire mountain. Moorkshit Lakshman then comes to senses when he is given "Sanjivani booti."

Saugata Bhaduri quotes Anand C. Paranjabe that it is tempting to suggest that a Yayati complex is a central feature of the Indian civilisation as Freud thought of Oedipal Complex for the whole of humanity (Paranjabe 254). She further calls it reverse Oedipal. Devdutt also talks of Yayati complex, thus outlining the functioning of the unconscious.

King Yayati's bigamous dalliance with Sarmishtha and Devayani and then the incurring of the curse of Sukra for marital breach leaves Yayati with infirmity and decrepitude. Yayati was transformed into an old and impotent person and just can pass on this curse to any of his sons to get rid of it. So, he asked his sons' willingness. The eldest son outrightly refused, and so did their other brothers. He then turned to Puru that for some time, he may take his curse so that Yayati may quench his desires." Puru agreed.

Later on, Yayati realised that sensual desires are never quenched by indulgence, and so he gave Puru back his youth as well as the legacy of his rule and kingdom. Yayati then renounced Grihastha and returned to the forest and then ultimately swarga.

Interviewer Deepa Ganesh puts it, paraphrasing Karnad's words.

"If the west has its obsessions with the Oedipus complex, in India, the engagement works in reverse, which could perhaps be described as the Yayati complex". Karnad cites the Shantanu – Bheeshma story, Ganesha story, Rama as examples. The old decrepit father figure receives hope, youthfulness from sons. Yayati complex emerges as reverse Oedipality by son sacrificing and giving up his youth for the father's sexual gratification. To Goldman Puru's surrender to Yayati is only temporary and it leads to his ultimate victory that it again is an example of positive Oedipal. Yayati, Puru, Pandu, Ila and Arjuna are heroes who are forced by filial devotion to lose or suppress their virility temporarily.

Bhishman too, manifested Yayati complex by renouncing "both kingdom and his sexual life so that his father may marry a fisher girl and continue his (father's) sexual reproductive life." (Bhadhuri). Indians glorify the son, who sacrifices his pleasure for the sake of his father's. It represents the insights of the Indian psyche, here the younger generation experience subservience to the older one. Yayati complex represents the general psychological propensity for submission.

On a concluding note, we can share as the perceptions of Seibers stating that disability is always undesirable. The ones who are physically disabled are treated as the monsters and negatively represented and stigmatised. These monstrous images not only victimise the disabled but act as the cultural signifiers of loss, vulnerability and trauma. It is believed in many parts of India even now since ages are that if you see a visibly disabled in the morning, you have called upon ill-luck upon yourself and your day will remain a lack. Physical otherness becomes automatically a disability that must either be treated with pity or disdain and for sure to be acknowledged as a difference. We have observed that the extent of physical and mental disabilities ranging from minor physical changes of having six fingers to ugliness, blindness, limpness, forgetfulness, unconsciousness, and the ultimate death of choice (suicide). Though people with physical disabilities are cared for, yet they are not neglected for their difference. They are viewed with curiosity—disability shapes and changes the destinies of not only individuals but kingdoms and, thus, the whole mythic universe.

Chapter V

Gendered View of ‘Bodies in Commotion’: Locating Social

Disabilities in the Select Works of Devdutt Pattanaik

In their nascent stage, disability studies looked for the medicalised and pathologised hegemonies of disability. It is viewed as sited in an individual's biological and tragic deficit ending in psychical trauma. The western academia relocated disability, thus presenting it not as a consequence of the impairment but the result of extraneous factors. Michael Oliver discussed 'The Politics of Disablement: A Sociological Approach in 1990 and highlighted the environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers that invade upon the lives of disabled people thus affecting their inclusion in the mainstream living. Disabled are put to the liminal fringes, and either assumed to be outcast or nonexistent. "Social modelist thinkers like Finkelstein (1980), Oliver (1990), Barnes (1991) Barnes et al.,2002) and Barton (1996) understand disability to reside principally in the socio-structural barriers that serve to disadvantage and exclude people with impairments" (John Swain). Disability is no more considered to be the eventuality of a biological condition but as an addendum of non-biological factors. Nilika states that "Disability locates the individual in a compromised position not only for biological factors but also as a consequence of a complex combination of such non – biological factors as gender, caste, class, neighbourhood relations and the nature of kinship and family structure" (Mehrotra, "Negotiating Gender and Disability in Rural Haryana" 408).

Murphy (1990) explains disability as a 'disease of social relations,' and social relations between disabled and the nondisabled are tense and problematic. Furthermore, this situation is known to every person with disabilities. They face many questions from others out of curiosity and unable to answer that. They are facing social hurdles in the form of prejudice, discrimination and avoidance.

They become an object of pity while they are in a group. They are socially isolated, but it is mirrored by physical isolation. (Umer Jan Sofi)

It is always the culture that creates a benchmark on a particular disability to be viewed as a handicap, impairment, or disability. What stands at a bizarre gaze is that we do not have an appropriate standard to measure disability. No individual in this world can be categorised as the perfect being. Consequently, no one can be called abled or disabled completely. As per the disability academia, we are all temporarily able individuals who, in no time, can face disability. The social model defines disability to be the result of a person with a health condition and a particular environmental context. It outlines the antipathy and how disabled are looked down upon and are marginalised and excluded from the mainstream living. Disability is thus the socio-cultural construction of the physical impairment. "Disability affects the gendering process in many ways.... disability has a profound effect on the material and nonmaterial experience of gender" (Gerschick 1262).

Culture mirrors the daily life of its people. If we gaze into the history, we find that deformed and disabled have met with a variety of responses at the hands of its kith and kin in particular and society in general and this lived experience still goes on. From being seen as monsters, bad omens, punishments, embarrassments to being the butt of jokes, laughter, compassion and object of charity, the disabled have always found themselves secluded. Their difference has never become 'the normal.' The stereotype of cosmic intervention or retribution has brought indifference towards them. So, a person with disabilities was conspicuously absent from the mainstream cultural constructs. The negative attitudes of people forced the parents to abuse, abandon, or shun them. T. J. Gerschick in his essay *Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender* argues that

Bodies operate socially as canvases on which gender is displayed and kinesthetically as the mechanisms by which it is physically enacted. Thus, the

bodies of people with disabilities make them vulnerable to being denied recognition as women and men. The type of disability, its visibility, its severity, and whether it is physical or mental in origin mediate the degree to which the body of a person with a disability is socially compromised. (1264)

While tracing out the social disability in Indian antiquity, we have come to observe that disability is no single bodily aspect that creates a socio-cultural presence. However, the other coordinates like class, gender, the race also manifest their presence. However, when disability comes to the fore, all other coordinates as if cease to exist. It is the reason why Indian disability scholars have a de-sexed disability. The deformed body is such a stringent truthful existence that everything else ceases to matter.

Within the Indian cultural context, disability implies a "lack" or "flaw," leading to a significantly diminished capability; images of the disabled are also associated with deceit, mischief and devilry. Disabled people are sometimes depicted as suffering the wrath of God and being punished for misdeeds that either they or their families have committed – a kind of penance or retribution for past misdeeds (Ghai, "Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism" 51).

For example, a person with facial scarring may not have any physical limitation, but yet he can be categorised as Disabled owing to the socially disabling consequences. Disability denies straightforward categorisation as it includes multitudes of human experience. Many overlappings and divergent experiences of people with impairments grope their position in the historical annals of the Disability studies. When considered in the Indian paradigm, disability stands up like a fluid category, which is analogous to the known coercions associated with gender, race, class and sexuality. The social barriers pose a threat to the identity of the disabled by devaluing it and portraying its negative stereotypes. A person with disabilities connects us

with ideological violence through social construction by denying or degrading the body itself. What is strange is that this denial is always laughably impossible, but it presents the moral values and anxieties of its culture. The strangeness gets impetration with the historical mapping of such studies.

They are either a site for cosmic intervention and divine retribution. Indian society contextualises the people with physical, intellectual, sensory and cognitive impairments to be commonly viewed as the begetters of divine retribution for the sins of incest, bestiality, or adultery. Disability thus naturally got associated with deceit or evil. People in some parts, thus shun abuse and abandon the children who are born with disabilities. Impairment burdens the individual with permanent exclusion. The other view of Indian people is to consider the person with disabilities as an eternal child or the god who has taken the guise for observing the relentless care and protection from the people. It is considered 'Punya' to take care of any such fellow who otherwise cannot be treated as a normate. "Here, the emphasis is on images of dependency, thereby reinforcing the charity/pity model. Consequently, charity and philanthropy have remained the predominant response to the predicament of disability" (Ghai, "Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism"). The body of an individual is not only the self of individual but the site for the interplay of cosmic powers. Dr. Jayanthi Narayan looks at the cultural heritage and comments that

Indian heritage has viewed person with disabilities as contributing members of the larger society. From 320 to 480 A.D., workshops were set up for vocational training of persons with Physical disabilities (Mukherjee, 1983). India has a proud history of great musicians, rulers and philosophers with disabilities. To cite a few, King Dritrashtra, in the famous epic *Mahabharata*, was blind. So was the great poet Surdas who was said to have composed more

than 125,000 songs. Ashtavakra, who had multiple disabilities, was a respected philosopher. (Narayan)

When we talk about Indian perspectives on Disability, Pooja Singh quoted the pioneering work of Bhatt, who explores the situation of disabled people in ancient India. Bhatt writes, "it has been part of India's cultural heritage to help the poor and the needy even at a great personal sacrifice. In India, we do not find any tangible instances of the barbaric practice disabled infants was absent" (Singh,68). She further asserts that the "Joint family system was prevalent among the upper castes of society. Providing food and shelter for the helpless people was the belief of Hindu culture. Religion supported charity; help to the deprived and helpless people of the society was common. Helping 'these' people was considered as the religious task (Karna 2001). Even still, daan (charity) is prevalent in Indian society" (Singh 68). People with disabilities are served so that it may purge the others from the wrath of god for their misdeeds and the mis endeavours of their relatives. So, people do daan or charity as a kind of penance or retribution.

Devdutt Pattanaik in his rewritings of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* has tried to bring to the galore the lived experiences of the people. These epics, with their sprawling size and inordinate nature encourage the multiplicity of motifs. They find the interiorisation of history in their mythic view and are by and large the fully humanised versions of Vedas. Indians have pursued the philosophy of 'Darshana' that envisions the human potential to its fullest. There is a fear of invalidation in the cultural endorsement of identity and existence. These social endorsements are very much cared for, at least in Indian society. 'Log kya kahenge' is the rule for the world in Indian social spheres. It is considered that the favourite pastime with the housemakers in India is to pass judgments upon others. Devdutt highlighted that even the knowledge we consider to be the truthful one is disabled. "through Karna, Vyasa reiterates that our knowledge of the world is imperfect based on the perceptions and false information. We

are surrounded by Kuntis who hide the truth in fear. We are surrounded by Karnas, villains who are brothers" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata*).

We are going to concentrate on the gendered view of disability in order to find social disabling barriers and features. "Disability is deeply gendered" (Mohamed and Shefer). Nevertheless, we are stuck with a question by Devdutt himself, "Is gender defined by the truth of birth or by the truth of moment (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 250). A person is born with a sex, but culture presents a gender to it. We have seen the valuation and desire of the male gender in Indian society. In contrast, the female gender is devalued, and the third gender is either negated or put on a pedestal of a 'baba'- the god person by the natives of Indian culture. The disability anthropology thus finds itself travelling with two important stances "the understanding of culturally recognised bodily differences in the context of cosmology and the reflection of such an understanding on self, and society" (Barnartt 71) seem to be central. "In a culture where being a daughter is considered a curse, being a disabled daughter is a fate worse than death" (Ghai, "Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism" 50). In multiple ways, it many times is considered incongruent in a cultural system. When we look into the interstices of women and disability, we find ourselves across two propositions. One is to observe how the female members of the society are considered to be the disabled versions of the male members and second the way impairments have paved the lives of the women members. Pursuing the first premise, we view "Aristotle's claim that the female is, as it were, a "disabled male." (Henry 260).

Devdutt says that "From the Jain traditions, another shaman or ascetic path from India that predates Buddhism, comes the story of how the merit of previous life transforms a king into a sage in his next life but demerit compels him to be reborn with a female body" (Shikandhi, 24). Indians consider women worthy of being controlled.

In childhood, a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, and when her lord is dead, to her sons; a woman must never be independent.... a husband must be continuously worshipped as a god by a faithful wife... If she violates her duty towards her husband, a wife is disgraced in this world; (after death) she enters the womb of a jackal and is tormented by diseases (as punishment) of her sin" (Wadley115).

India is an agrarian economy and women are considered as equivalent to land and property, and therefore they must be guarded. By the father, brothers, husband and later on sons. That is why a woman is considered to be a burden, and the birth of a woman is considered as 'divine curse.' Khanna mentions that a woman is born in a previous life due to bad luck and playing a wife's role is penance for her previous life. These ritualised rationalisations of the inferior status of women lead to the exalted sense of superiority, masculinity, and dominance of men. Ancient texts are concerned with the explicit and blatant depiction of women's sexuality. The male gender is the desired gender. The "notion of locating 'honour' in the women of the household has led to women in India being objectified and denied their freedom and choice. Whether Sita is physically abused or not. Ram's honour has been stained" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 148). Sita is disabled from performing her worldly duties as the wife of Ram and banished to the forest.

Disability fundamentally bears ambiguous and multilayered character, which can be interpreted. Women and girls' roles in Indian society are dictated by their marriageability. In India, where marriage is a conventional and near-universal institution, it is considered as a means to provide social acceptability and status to women. "According to ancient Hindu scriptures, no religious rite can be performed with perfection by a man without the participation of wife. Wife's participation is essential to any rites, wives are thus befittingly called "Ardhanari"- the better half" (Vidhya 5). So as per Veda, the prime duty of the women is to

assist the husband in performing his worldly obligations. The priority in the fulfilment of duties is to beget the male heir so that it may allow an ancestor to take rebirth. Right from the birth mother prepares its daughter to perform the 'stridharma'. Women with disabilities are assumed to be lacking in the performance of their roles, and there is a general apathy towards these women that turn the petrifying existence into a whammy, which is perennially judged with everyone around. "To be a disabled woman is to be considered unable to fulfil the role of homemaker, wife and also mother, and unable to conform to the stereotype of beauty and femininity in terms of physical appearance" (Vidhya 10).

Women with disabilities in India are rendered powerless in a social order that does not want to acknowledge the selfhood of such women, stemming mainly from fear and abhorrence of disability and cultural ideologies about women. Indian Patriarchy has decisively put certain mythical accretions upon the role of women in society. Womanhood in India is defined by the multilevel role-playing of the fair gender as a daughter and sister in parent's home, as a wife in husband's home and as a mother in son's life/home. So, the representation of being a woman in a patriarchal society like India depends on the socio-cultural acceptance and endorsements.

"Socio-cultural ideologies of gender and disability deem disabled women to be unfit to be a homemaker, wife and mother because of their assumed functional limitations (Begum 1992, Morris 1993). Such ideologies are often linked to ideas regarding good and productive bodies. Hence, disabled women often find themselves left out of gendered representations and the symbolic order within traditional patriarchal communities" (Ghosh 79).

Women's body also gets devalued many times in relation to the body politic. While it is a western phenomenon and the masculine body is described as the body politic. It takes the body and enters into a political contract with the state for the wellbeing of one and all. Somebody else takes the decisions related to female marriage. She no longer is the individual

who holds the control of her body, but the male members make decisions for her. The female is considered equivalent to cows who, in no way, are left with any choice but to accept their fate.

Gandhari, princess of Gandhar, given a choice, would never have married Dritarashtra, but in the name of the honour of the family, she was thrown into the life of darkness where she throughout life remained as blind. She was devalued as a body by her father using her as a body politic and to maintain the identity of Gandhar, who otherwise would not have survived, had it reckoned with Hastinapur – the most powerful empire of its time. Gandhari was sacrificed for the good of the state. Gandhari blindfolded herself in outrage to protest against her marriage to a blind man. Rather than being exploited, she disables herself.

Yayati used his daughter Madhavi who was destined to be the mother of four kings by giving her to sage Galava, who was to pay eight hundred horses to his Guru. However, when Yayati renounced his body and was thrown out of Swarga as he had exhausted all his merits, Madhavi saved him by asking her sons to partake in their merits with Yayati. Her sons refused and questioned her, "How can you ask us to give our merits to the man who treated you like a commodity, passing you from king to king so that he can benefit from the trade" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 25).

When Ambika and Ambalika were asked to beget sons and do 'yoga' with Vyasa, they were not perhaps prepared for it. They were not asked but commanded by Satyawati to welcome Vyasa and so they also were devalued as the body politic. For the good of the kingdom, they offered themselves to Vyasa. As they were forced to do so, they did not happily sleep with Vyasa, who, in turn, cursed their begetters. All the future strife in Kuru clan finds its roots in begetting the disabled sons.

While growing up, the girls are conditioned up not to express their desires. They are taught to adjust. Female desire is considered obnoxious. It is one of the most dangerous things.

Indian man does not view the female members as the sexual being but only in private space. There is a cultural anxiety to control the sexuality of women, which is portrayed in the religious scriptures too. The scriptures regulate the sexuality of the women in the name of preserving the honour of the family, the name of the clan. The Indian Lawmaker Manu validates the very existence of female grounded on her reproductive roles. The prime responsibility of females in an Indian family is to produce offsprings. The nondisabled girls are always grown in such a way that getting married in a good household becomes a long-cherished desire. They are given the Samsakaras to walk, talk, eat in the feminine style and grace while the disabled ones are de-sexed and are brought up like sons. The flame of desire is strictly extinguished at the earliest and in a way, they are denied their femininity. Manthara was a hunchback, so she was denied the right to get married and beget children. "On being perceived as asexual women with disabilities are not seen as in need of information about birth control or what is possible in terms of having a sex life and children. Even though women with disabilities may have had fewer opportunities to learn sexual likes and dislikes and to set pleasing boundaries, perceiving celibacy or violent sexual encounters as their only choices, believing no loving person would be attracted to them. They are often perceived to be powerless and physically helpless" (R. Dawn). But Manthara mothered Kaikeyi by looking after her so well and she came along with her after her marriage.

Perhaps by instigating Kaikeyi, Manthara was expressing herself to be one so powerful to change the destinies of entire nations. Expression of Desire leads to disability: women are not allowed to obtain an active role, but they are marked to play as a concomitant to male members. "Disability is thus constituted as being profound of "Other" in our society. The roots of such thinking are found in Indian mythology: Lakshman, brother of Lord Rama, cuts off the nose of Surpanakha, sister of King Ravana, who is interested in him. That Lakshman can only respond to what he defines as nonacceptable behaviour by disabling the ugly female monster

indicates how disability and de-sexing are equated in the Indian psyche. When Surpanakha visited Ram and Lakshman and expressed her desire to wed, she met her fate of getting disabled. "But Surpanakha is brutally mutilated – her nose, her ears and her breasts were sliced off. This disfiguration is aimed at curtailing her aggressive sexuality" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 65). He further adds, "Cutting off the nose is a metaphor for shame. When his sister's nose is cut off, Ravana feels he has been shamed, stripped of honour by the sons of Raghu clan. Thus, he wishes to cut the nose of Ram by abusing the symbol of family honour- his wife, Sita. A married woman cannot desire anybody else except her husband. She is considered a whore otherwise. With a mere thought of desire; Renuka, wife of Jamadagni's head was chopped by her son, Ahilya got turned to stone, Surpanakha's nose got chopped off. Sita was trapped for drawing the image of Ravana's shadow. When Sita drew this image, the gossip started that eventually ended up in her banishment to the forests and consequent death. Disability is put at bay; it is something 'other.' Lakshman finds it suitable for the lady who, according to him, misbehaves. Disability is de-sexed in the psyche of the Indians. It is equated to something monstrous.

Disability is thus constituted as being profound of "Other" in our society. The roots of such thinking are found in Indian mythology: Lakshmana, brother of Lord Rama, cuts off the nose of Shurpanakha, sister of King Ravana, who is interested in him. That Lakshmana can only respond to what he defines as nonacceptable behaviour by disabling the ugly female monster indicates how disability and de-sexing are equated in the Indian psyche.

Women are considered fit to just abide by the male-dominant authority. The earth cannot choose the seed. She is bound to receive the seed that is chosen for her by her kin. The concept of arranged marriage further helps establish patriarchal order in society. Women are to perform set roles in a set manner. When the girls are married, they are given sixteen auspicious symbols to wear. She is to consider the marriage as a soteriological ceremony, and

without her sacred symbols, she can be assumed to be women in for the taking. e.g., Agni impregnated the brahmin women who forgot to wear their symbols of marriage.

Contextualising this, Sita, while going out in the forest, was not allowed to remove her jewellery else it would have brought ill-luck to Raghu clan household. However, when Sita was abducted, she removed her jewellery and threw it as a trail for Ram to follow. When Hanuman visited Sita, she gave him her hairpin, the last of the jewellery she had.

Traditionally, in India, tied hair represent rules and restraint, while untied hair represents lawlessness and freedom. It was inauspicious for a married woman to be seen in public with Unbound hair. Loose hair meant loose morals. Only in the intimacy of her bedroom in the company of her husband was a woman allowed to unbind her hair. As soon as she stepped out of bed, the hair had to be tied. By sending her hairpin to Ram, Sita is giving a compelling message. Her wifely status is in threat. (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 67)

Hereby removing the hairpin, Sita is expressing the urgency as well as warns about the terrible consequences of delay. Sita further commanded Hanuman that "When a woman's hair is unbound, it means she is free. When it is neatly bound, it means she is committed. The hairpin, the only piece of jewellery I did not drop on the forest floor reveals I am committed to Ram in mind and spirit, but Ravana seeks to unbind my hair. Tell him to hurry. Ravana must be stopped, or the consequences will be terrible"(Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana*).

These tokens of jewellery and bound hair added to the value and prestige of women. While removing these devalue and debase and so disable these women. While in the tales of *Mahabharata* we find "Draupadi let her unbound hairstreak across her face, terrifying the women of the duty of their eventual fate"(Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 149) when she was taken to court chambers. She was dragged by Dusshasana holding her from her hair. This was quite equivalent to molesting her physically. She was

thoroughly disabled to do her will, and Then we witness Draupadi's eyes flashed fire "I shall never forgive the Kauravas for doing what they have done to me. I shall not tie my hair until I wash it in Dusshasana's blood" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 147). Karna said to Draupadi, "Ancient law allows a woman to go to only four men with the permission of her husband. You have been with five husbands. That makes you a whore, public property, to be treated as your masters will" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata*).

Indian woman is given this understanding that they are valued if they follow social order. Sita was safe until she stays inside the Lakshman Rekha. Nobody could harm her as she is Ram's wife. However, outside, she is a woman for taking. Anybody can grab her and take liberties. Devdutt ascertains that "Outside, the law of the jungle applies and inside, dharma rules. Outside, Sita is a woman for the taking, but inside she is Ram's wife, protected by the laws of marriage" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 127). However, the moment she comes out of the Lakshman Rekha, Ravana held her and grabbed her. Being a woman, she is to follow dharma. Firstly "In order to force her will on Lakshman, Sita suggests a vile possibility that can only take place dharma breaks down. Thus in insecurity and anxiety, Sita abandons dharma, and that proves to be her undoing" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 126). When she comes out of the 'Lakshman Rekha,' she becomes a victim of the jungle law. She is no longer Ram's wife" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 129). Ram, after winning the fight against Ravana, saved his family's honour. However, he told Sita that as she has stayed at another man's house so "I would like you to go freely wherever you wish, to Vibhashana, to Sugriva, to Lakshman. Let it be known I stake no claim on you" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 251). "Ram describes the sight of Sita as hurtful as 'a lamp to the diseased eye' in the Valmiki *Ramayana*" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 252). Ram was not accepting his wife because of the socially disabling barriers.

There are certain other coordinates attached to womanhood, e.g., femininity in bearing. If a woman is manly in her looks, she is considered to be a butt of jokes and is socially disabled. However, when we peep in Indian antiquity, Chitrangda was a woman of masculine bearing "she feared that her rather masculine bearing would repel Arjuna. So, she invoked Shiva and begged him to make her more feminine" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 116). She prayed to Shiva to turn her into feminine so that Arjuna may like her and wed her. However, when Arjuna came, he searched for Chitrangda, whom he has heard to be the masculine one. Then Chitrangda prayed to Shiva to take back the blessing. She got the masculine bearing again, and Arjuna wedded her.

In another instance, we find Gargi getting bashed that "If you ask so many questions, your head will fall off" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 196). It is considered unwomanly to ask so many questions. It was considered a male virtue.

A woman was not considered to be worthy of entering the battlefield. They were considered to be worthy of the household chores. Society does not approve women garbing the role of warriors. "A woman! How can a woman rule? (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 21) So, when the rules for the Kurukshetra were framed, it was agreed that "A woman would not enter the battlefield and if she did, no one would raise weapons against her, and no one would interfere when two warriors were locked in a duel" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 227). The gender boundaries are so strong in India that these norms are viewed as dharma, and nobody can ever dare to go against dharma. Such is the devaluation of the females that the physical process of menstruation is given several negative connotations. "The menstruating woman is looked upon as possessing evil powers which can deprive a man of his rational and physical faculties if he indulges in sex with her. The menstruating woman's company is, therefore, to be abjured" (Laws of Manu 40-42). When Draupadi was brought in the court chambers, she "was menstruating and so in keeping with the tradition, isolated herself

in the room in the far corner of the women quarters" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 142). Indians historically viewed the menstruating woman as the possessor of evil powers. While Draupadi was abused in the court, when she opened her mouth to utter a curse, she was begged by Gandhari and Dritrashtra not to do so. Dhritarashtra, in turn, offered her three boons so that she may not curse his sons.

Things come to such a pass that Bhima killed Dusshasana and Draupadi washed her hair with his blood, and then she tied her hair. The opened hair of Draupadi indicted her husband for taking revenge. "Killing Dusshasana who had disrobed Draupadi in public gave Bhima the most pleasure. Bhima pinned him to the ground and ripped out his bowels with his bare hands. He then invited Draupadi to wash her hair with Dusshasana's blood so that she could, in keeping with her vow of vengeance taken long ago, bind her hair" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 279).

Once Draupadi plucked a fruit from a tree that was kept by mother nature for the ascetic who was worshipping for twelve years. The ascetic was to get up from the meditation and eat the fruit. When Draupadi was admonished for her action by nature, she tried to put the fruit back on the branch, and she failed. Then again, she heard the tree saying, "If you were truly chaste, Draupadi, you could have done it with the power of chastity" (*Pattanaik Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 183). Draupadi responded that, "But, I am chaste. Although I have five husbands, I am always faithful to the one brother who is allowed to come to my bed for a year" (*Pattanaik Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 183). Later she confessed that she had developed a desire for Karna, and if she had married him, she would not have got abused in the court chambers.

Shabri, the devotee of Ram who was eagerly waiting for Ram and collecting sweet berries. She was tasting each berry to check its sweetness. However, Lakshman objected to it.

He questions her based on caste telling her that she is "A woman without manners, manners you learned at the palace." (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 164)

Nevertheless, Ram reprimanded him telling, "Look at her, Lakshman, she is a forest woman, what does she know of palaces and its manners, its princes and its kings? You judge her by your standards. You do not even look at her. You have eyes, but you are blind" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 164).

Barrenness is considered to be a social disability. Producing heirs is one of the pivotal roles, a female is expected to perform. She is revered and worshipped if she gives a male heir while she is socially disabled if she fails in begetting children. In our historical traditions, we have seen that men used to marry several times to father sons. Dashratha married Kaushalya then Kaikeyi and Sumitra to have a son. In pregnant king, we saw Yuvanashva marrying Simantini, and when she failed to conceive the baby, we witness her physical as well as mental trauma. "Pulomi's presence in the palace reminded Simantini constantly of her failure. 'had I given my husband a child, she would not have come into this house'" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 78). When even Pulomi could not impregnate then a bride was bought for Yuvanashva. The new bride Keshini was a potter's daughter who again could not produce an heir for Yuvanashva's kingdom. These ladies bore the grunt of society's anger and got flunked off by society.

In Jaya, we find Pandu remarrying Madri as Kunti could not produce a child of him. Pandu remarries but to make it clear that he was impotent. After the curse of the rishi, he lost every chance of bearing sons. So, he allowed Kunti to use her magic and call upon gods and beget his sons. Gandhari was also equally impatient to have children. She remained pregnant for two years. In her eagerness, she strokes her stomach hard to get a lump of mass out. Vyasa shredded this lump and put it in 101 jars, and thus Gandhari became a mother of 100 sons and one daughter.

Sagara's son died, leaving his two widows behind. The women were adamant to mother an heir. So they did a yagna, and the havis was shared between them. One woman played the role of a male while others acted as the female counterpart. They made love and got pregnant. They gave birth to half of the baby each (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 51).

The illegitimacy of the child is considered to be equivalent to a congenital deformity. Shakuntala was the illegitimate child of Vishwamitra and an apsara Menka "The child was abandoned on the forest floor by both the parents, by her father because she represented his monumental failure and by her mother because she was nothing but the proof of her success" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 17). Later she married Dushyanta, making nature witness to her marriage. Dushyanta came back to his kingdom, promising her to be taken along in the next visit. However, he never returned. When Shakuntala took Bharata, her son, to his father Dushyanta, he outrightly refused. However, he was later warned by a heavenly voice and "Dushyanta apologised for his behaviour and blamed it all on his fear of social disapproval (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 19).

Vyasa, the great sage, was also the illegitimate son of Satyawati and rishi Parashra. Yama was cursed by Mandavya to be born as Vidura. Vidhura was the son of a maid who was sent as her substitute by Ambika to levitate Niyoga by Vyasa. This illegitimacy of birth always kept him away from the crown though he was the most capable. Karna faced the ire of society because of the illegitimacy of his birth. When he shot arrows more effective than even Arjuna during the graduation ceremony of Kauravas and Pandavas, he was not declared a victor because of this illegitimacy. He held himself that "He would have no answer, for he was a foundling, abandoned at birth by his mother, found by Adiratha floating on the river in a basket. When Karna went to Draupadi's Swayambra, "Draupadi rejects Karna on the grounds of his apparent social status when unknown to all, he is a warrior. When no warrior can strike the

target, Draupada compromises and allows priests to participate. Draupadi accepts her father's compromise and marries a priest who turns out to be a warrior in disguise" (*Pattanaik Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 91).

Gandhari remained pregnant for two years, and Dritrashttra had taken pleasure in a maid who gave birth to his eldest son Yuyutsu. However, because of the illegitimate status, he was not allowed to sit on the throne. (*Pattanaik Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 49). Both Mamta and Brihaspati rejected Vitatha; Brihaspati because the child reminded him (Brihaspati) of his moment of weakness and Mamata. After all, the child was forced upon her" (*Pattanaik Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 20). Vibhandaka saw Rishyashringa as a symbol of personal failure, and raised him with rage and ambition, without any knowledge of women (*Pattanaik Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 13).

Jeffords describes masculinity as a "set of images, values, interests, and activities held important to the achievement of male adulthood" (Jeffords, 1989, p. xiii). Of confrontation [as in a boxing rink] are some acknowledged traits associated with masculinity. Conversely, impotence, homosexuality, physical weakness, public exhibition of emotions and giving in to defeat would be reflective of 'failed masculinity' or 'feminised men' (Sahgal).

Indian society assumes that there are particular roles and duties to be performed by male members. If a person shirks away from his duties, he is chided to "be a man." A man in Indian antiquity needs to be a brave fighter who worships gods and pleases them, who can rule over the woman folk of the household with high handedness and who can beget male heirs, thus opening avenues for ancestors to take rebirth. When we look towards the challenging masculinities... Masculinity is something that is learned and transmitted in a world of social agency. "It is a discursive formation and an embodied posture and projection, a performance in response to social, economic, and political pressures and ideologies.... Agni symbolically

embodies masculine ideals such as fatherhood, partnership, leadership, protection, and wealth, and that men interact with the ritual” (Whitaker,19).

Impotence, homosexuality, physical weakness, public exhibition of emotions and giving in to defeat would be reflective of 'failed masculinity ... The *Mahabharata* is replete with references that are meant to push 'men' to pick up arms of masculinity. Duryodhana's taunt to Yudhisthira, 'Show you are a man' sums up *Mahabharata's* take on masculinity. (Sahgal,156)

Bhishma was socially disabled as he refused to marry on account of his oath. So, he was neither a householder nor an ascetic. Both earth and sky refused him during his death. So, he was lying midway while he was about to die. Devdutt tells that Tamil *Ramayana* states that *Bhishma* castrated himself. Even if he had not, then by not marrying, he has assumed the garb of defective masculinity. If he has castrated himself to fulfill his oath, then his masculinity turns defective, and he is socially disabled. “Sisupala accuses *Bhishma* of living 'like a eunuch' and suggests that his 'Celibacy' is a lie that you either maintain either from stupidity or impotence” (Simon Brodbeck 210). Bhima represents his social failure by spurring generational dysfunctionalities and the ruthless display of Fratricidal neuroses and fighting against his conscience for the side that he thinks is wrong.

The epics are laden with the imagery of defective and challenging masculinities when it introduces the impotent male characters. Vichitravirya died without fathering any sons. Vyasa was called upon by his mother to do Niyoga and who fathered Vichitravirya's sons. The name Vichitravirya is derived from 'Vichitra' meaning odd and Virya meaning masculinity, suggesting that Vichitravirya was either a weakling or an impotent or sterile or perhaps asexual or homosexual, lacking manliness, unable or unwilling to get a bride for himself (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 38). He was so much of a weakling that he was brought wives to him by Bhishma. It was considered that the king who would abduct a princess

would marry her. However, Vichitravirya married Amba and Ambalika, who were abducted by Bhishma.

Furthermore, he let Amba go as it was too much for him to marry three wives. He lacked the virility of manhood. His son Pandu also turned out to be a weakling and so impotent. Gandhari had already delivered an illegitimate child. However, she kept quiet when Pandu was married to Madri, assuming that the field is not good enough to reap the fruit. A distraught Pandu felt that a man who cannot father a child is unfit to be a king" (*Pattanaik Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 46).

Later, "Pandu blames his childlessness, which now obsesses him, and eventually, sons are produced via celestial sperm donation" (Simon Brodbeck). King Dilip once disrespected Kamdhenu, the divine cow and was cursed with childlessness. It is considered that the main aim of the marriage is to beget children, and this is the way to fulfill the family duties as it opens up avenues for the ancestors.

"Dashratha, king of Ayodhya, had three wives but no children" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 3). It is the dharma of the king to father a son and pay the debt of ancestors and continue his lineage. "Dashratha was filled with despair... Moreover, how would he face his ancestors, in the land of the dead, cross the Vaitarni, for they would ask him if he had left behind sons who would help them to be reborn (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 11). Dashratha had fathered a daughter Shanta but still has a yearning for sons. He married thrice for begetting a son. Then he sent his daughter as bait to undo the ascetic journey of Rishyashringa. He considered himself to be impotent in spite of fathering a daughter. The presence of a daughter is not allowing him peace as he cannot have his good share of facing his ancestors. He is losing the chance of the birth of any of his ancestors by not begetting a son.

The devaluation of the girls has continued to the level of considering a daughter a curse or a burden in some parts of the modern Indian society. Dashratha wanted sons. Kaushalya

gave birth to a daughter Shanta, and after that, she could not conceive. So Dashratha married Kaikeyi. But after the marriage, Kaikeyi could not give birth to any offspring, so Dashratha married a third time with the girl, namely Sumitra but to no avail. So, he used his daughter Shanta as bait to allure Rishashringya, who in turn did Yagna for him, and thus he fathered sons.

The prince Yuvanashva when turned thirteen, Mandavya urged Shilavati to crown the king. However, Shilavati responded that "he is incomplete. Let us get him a wife first" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 51). "Wife is the *ardhangini* (half of man) according to Satpatha Brahmana "The wife is verily the half of the husband. Man is only half, not complete until he marries." The *Taittiriya Samhita* is to the same effect" (Indira Sharma). In order to occupy the crown of a queen, she delayed the marriage of Yuvanashva; Crows reminded Shilavati, "If your son, your only son, does not bear sons, we will be trapped forever in the land of the dead. Furthermore, it will be all your fault" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 52). When he got married and failed to father an issue, his manliness was in question after getting his third wife. "Perhaps the prince is sterile, unfit to be a king", said Mandavya (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 71). Yuvanashva told his friend Vipula "I am not yet a father. A king must provide proof of virility before he can rule" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 4). He further shared his frustration that "He would struggle, as he had for a long, long time, to father a child without which his mother would not let him rule Vallabhi and his ancestors would not let him cross the Vaitarni" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 5).

Man is valued with hegemonic power to dominate upon the fair sex. "You have to see a man's eye through a woman's body... Take away dharma and man is a beast. Ready to pounce on any woman. Even a false woman such as me" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 243). Stringent societal norms run a society, and it is considered unmanly to do away with society's norms. King Janaka had Shiva's bow that represents the poise and balance. During the Swyambara, of

Sita, while struggling to thread it, Ram broke the bow, Somehow, it stood as a threat to the societal norms. If the bow is a symbol of poise and balance, by breaking it, did not Ram display a moment of excessiveness?" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 47).

Quite in parallel to the Lakshman Rekha, we have Vibhanadaka Rekha, which Vibandha drew for his son to keep him safe from the access of female members. Any woman who dared cross the line around Vibhandhaka's hermitage instantly burst into flames, which is why Indra could not send his apsaras to seduce Rishyashringa (*Pattanaik Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 13). Shanta, sister of Ram, was sent to allure Rishyashringa and so forced him to come out of that line.

"Sahadev had no choice but to keep quiet knowing all but never being able to tell people what he knew or do anything to avert the inevitable." (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 53). Having a voice, he remained unvoiced as asked by God himself. He was ordained to be quite after he ate the flesh of the mystical body of his father. Social norms are flouted by Lakshman when he towered upon the head of Ravana and sought knowledge quite haughtily. Lakshman went to Ravana and towering over him, said, " I am Lakshman brother of Ram, who has finished you for the crime of abducting his wife. As a victor, he has a right to all that you possess, your knowledge included. If you have any honour, pass it on to him before you die" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 246). Ravana turned his head away, thus putting all the victories of Lakshman insubstantial and his manliness defective.

When Yuvanashva was trapped to drink *Havis*- the blessings of Yagna by the two souls, he became pregnant. He manifested all the signs of pregnancy, including morning sickness and temptations for spicy food. He has a baby in his thigh, which was removed surgically from his thigh. He became the man who nursed his baby with his milk. This is hyper-femininity engrossing over masculinity. It is assumed that Mandhata, like Dionysis, who was too born from the thigh of Zeus “ may lead to social chaos and bacchic excess... the figure of the

pregnant male is the site of such uncanny futurity—a figure feminised in his ability to bear children, queer in challenging traditional gender roles, disabled because freakish and often subjected to medical and therapeutic care.... the trope of male pregnancy posits epistemological or aesthetic creativity against female conception, gestation, and birth" (Davidson). With the male giving birth to the children, we are landed in the zone of in-betweenness. Yuvanashva himself says, "I have created a life outside me, I have also created life inside me. I am ladle that pours the butter. I am the pit that receives it. I am the sky and the earth. I am seed and soil. Man and woman, or perhaps neither. A creature suspended in between, neither here nor there?" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King*, 276,277). "Ravana's flying chariot would lose its power of flight if a widow stepped on it" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 69).

Tobin Seibers puts it, "Disability is the other that helps make otherness imaginable" (48). The epics find instances of cross-dressing, which is viewed ideologically as interdeterminate. Crossdressing admits the failure of the rugged and virile masculinity. This slight deviation signifies a diverse range of social and cultural images. "Garber argues compellingly that the mimesis of cross-dressing opens a "third space," which introduces a crisis in binary modes of conceiving identity, a disruptive combination.... Cultural cross-dressing is the visible index of identification with the Other that proves that possibility of redemption". (Deane, 54)

When Draupadi was called by Kichaka to his chamber, and she got a hint of his ill intentions, Bhima came forward to save her. He cross-dressed in the form of a lady and went as a substitute for Draupadi. In order to protect his wife, he killed Kichaka. We also come across Samba, Krishna's son who wanted to play a prank upon rishis and cross-dressed as a pregnant woman. However, this offended the rishis, and in turn, they cursed Samba, and it became the cause of the destruction of the entire Yadav clan. Georg von Simson probes Samba

origins (he is given as a blessing by Shiva and Uma) both of whom demonstrate his essentially androgynous character. Yuvanashva also took the guise of a woman and had worn a saree and prayed to the goddess of fever, after an offering of his prayers, his son Mandhata got well.

We also came to know of the king who married Bahugami, the princess. He would alight a horse at night and would go at some lonely place and would cross-dress himself. When Bahugami, came to know of it, she cut his genitals, and She was turned into a goddess and ordained that men like you would not marry; rather serve her. She further ordered that men like them must castrate and crossdress. Men abided her. "They castrated themselves, offered their genitals to the goddess, wore women's clothes and adopted women's mannerism" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King*).

The notion of a third sex, or of a gendered identity that is neither male nor female, appears in several sources from ancient India. As Zwilling and Sweet have noted, a 'three-sex model was an important feature of the ancient Indian world view', with ambiguous categories such as *napumsaka* and *kliba* appearing in late Vedic texts. Zwilling and Sweet suggest that at first, these concepts denoted a condition of defective masculinity that was the result of magic or misfortune, but that by the post-Vedic period, a third-sex concept was in place. This meant that the third sex was no longer considered merely the result of a curse or a physical accident, but could be considered 'innate or congenital.' Zwilling and Sweet conclude that 'in general the third sex is a residual category, comprising a wide variety of non-normative biological, gender role and socio-behavioral traits' (Simon Brodbeck).

Wendy Doniger quotes O'Flaherty, in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahabharata* where she discusses the

comprehensive study of androgyny in 208 Indian mythology notes, the vast range and variety of forms that can be grouped under that heading: . . . liminal figures [that] include the eunuch, the transvestite (or sexual masquerader), the figure who undergoes a sex change or exchanges his sex with that of a person of the opposite sex, the pregnant male, the alternating androgyne (male for a period of time, female for a period of time), and twins. (209)

This undecidability of the body means that sexuality is not something securely fixed with strict boundaries: cultural traditions may create certain boundaries as a way of defending social hierarchies as well as solidifying identity and removing the issue of sexuality from the realm of ambiguity to make it more solid than it is as a way of fighting anxiety. Disability is a clear reminder of what one fears for oneself, animosities towards the disabled, such as animosity and violence towards gays, lesbians and transgender people, holds this apprehension at bay by exaggerating the disparity and gap between oneself and others, making such others into a categorical "other," an alien entity that one will possibly never become.

Urvashi turned Arjuna into a eunuch, "You are nothing but a eunuch. May you lose your manhood instantly Arjuna ran to his father hoping he would get rid of the curse, but Indra could only modify it. You will have to lose your manhood but only for a year. You choose which year it shall be." (Pattanaik *Jaya-An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 170)

"He who does not come to a welcoming woman does not need his genitals" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 244-245). Arjuna successfully disguised himself in the court of Virata as Brihannada and turned out to be a dance teacher. When Yuvanashva asks Arjuna how did he feel living like a woman. Arjuna responded, "Liberating. I could get away with anything. I could cry and dance and sing as I pleased. I had to answer to no woman or man. I was no one's husband or wife." (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 246). The perfect man, a warrior Arjuna successfully disguises during the year in Virata's kingdom. He wore woman's clothes and also

adopted the mannerism of the women. As Alf Hildebeitel puts it, 'the epic descriptions leave it amusingly imprecise and ambiguous whether Arjuna is physiologically a eunuch, a hermaphrodite, or simply a transvestite'. Arjuna once got metamorphosed into a snake to make love to Ulipi, the snake princess.

Further, we come across the story of Amba/ Shikhandi, whose story is stretched in two lifetimes. Amba wanted to take revenge on her misfortunes after *Bhishma* abducted her. She wanted to kill *Bhishma* who later dismissed her unwed too. Nobody helped her to take revenge. Shiva told her that she could have her vengeance in the next birth. Amba committed suicide to haste her second birth. She was born as a female, but her upbringing was done like a boy, and she was married off to a princess. She turned from female to male as was promised to Draupada, her father by Shiva. This ambiguous feature of her masculinity/ femininity forced *Bhishma* not to blow arrows towards him, and eventually, he laid down on the bed of arrows. "The ambiguity of this cathartic tale is discussed, and the female-to-male sex change is viewed in light of its homicidal intent." (Simon Brodbeck). Then we come across Chudala, wife of King Shikhandivaja. She was a yogini and could change her form at will. She wanted to help her husband, but he would refute her on the grounds of being a woman and that too his great wife. Chudala changed her form and taught her husband the true meaning of Asceticism. Skanda, the son of Shiva, mothered by six Kritikas who was six days old when he killed Taraka, an asura, also represents the deviation from the normality of birth. He was born *ajonia*.

Bahuchara, whose husband was an incomplete man. She waited for her husband on her wedding night and every night after that, but he would never come. Soon her in-laws started taunting her of infertility. One day, she pursued her husband and was taken aback to see him crying while cross-dressing. She cut his genitals. She turned into a goddess and said a man like you must serve her, the goddess. The ambiguity of the husbands' body, i.e. incompleteness, caused chaos.

One Bhrungi wanted to go around Shiva, but he wanted to leaves Parvati. It annoyed the goddess, and she failed all his attempts. She further punished him by concerting him into a mass of flesh, taking all things which, he has received from the female body of his mother. Later Bhrungi sought forgiveness and regained his true form again.

The soul has no gender. Gender comes from the flesh. The unenlightened value the flesh, hence gender over the soul. "Krishna took the female form known as Mohini, married Iravan and spent the night with him as his wife, bringing great delight to his heart. The next day when Iravan was beheaded at dawn, Krishna wept for him as his widow. No widow had ever wept for a man as Krishna did for Iravan. (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 248) . Krishna – Mohini represents the bodies in flux.

We have already seen Budh and Ila as bodies in commotion who witnessed the social disability for their ambiguity. "Budh rides a Yali, a mythical creature that has the head of an elephant but the body of aloin, a reminder of his liminal nature" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 13) . Shiva is considered Ardha -Nareshwara, a god who is half woman. The children born through his grace possess both male and female qualities. e.g., Shikhandi. Bhangashvana was both man and woman and Aruni, the dawn god.

Aruni- Kashyap had a wife called Vinata, who was a mother of birds. Once, she laid two eggs. However, the eggs took a long time to hatch. Impatient, she broke open one of the eggs. The child thus born became Aruni, the dawn god, he is of unknowable gender as his lower half remains unfinished. Aruni served as the charioteer of Surya (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 154). In literature, the day is masculine, the night feminine and the twilight hour ambiguous defying categorisation. "They will ask you if you have done your duty, repaid your debt to your ancestors, fathered children through whom they hope to be reborn in the land of the living" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 3).

"Social Model" argues that disability is a social inequality problem because those with the physical, mental or cognitive disorder are marked for unfair and unequal care. In the latter stages of the life cycle, there is some logical confusion between the ageing process and the diagnosis of disability. Indian societies, transsexualism or transvestitism, are valued or at least accepted statuses (Barnartt,12) India is a culture where the marked deviation becomes the symbol of imperfection in the Indian psyche. Disability and de-sexing are similar to one another. What is considered inappropriate is displayed as bizarre.

In India, where marriage is a conventional and near-universal institution, it is considered as a means to provide social acceptability and status to women. "Disabled women thus can have plural identity markers that make their daily experience perplexing and difficult" (Ghai, "Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism" 50). Further, she adds that the Indian view of disability is quite different from the western view as here in India, people cannot be identified singly as a body. However, they find their identities in their gender, class, race, rural/urban residence, caste and religion categories. So "the Indian milieu offers very little understanding of the social model of disability, arguing that it is a society that disables people with impairments, and therefore that any meaningful solution must be directed at a societal change rather than at the individual (Ghai,60).

While peeping in the gendered constructs of Disability, we have tried to focus on the social disability realizing that the indigenous model can better understand and cater to the requirements. It can acknowledge the societal needs in a better way. The ideas in the mythic world goes quite in consonance with the T.J. Gerschick observation that all sexes are considered to be devalued, stigmatise, isolated, discriminated and exploited with the presence of disability. In the creation of this Othering, the disabled are devalued of their gender status and their entire existence and being is diminished with their disability. They are not the beings of passions and desire but only the genderless creatures. They are the bodies in commotion

striving to find the meaning of their existence in society. The cultural representation of both these constructs ie gender and disability brings to the fore the unequal power relations. It highlights the lived experiences of men, women and inbetweenness and pose a challenge to the existing socio cultural paradigms. The disabled are given no choice but to negotiate their gender identities thus disabling them socially by limiting their rights of desiring, marrying, legitimising and sticking to their category of sex.

In our Indian view of finding the suitable model as per the Indian needs, we have used gender as an ideological devise to unravel the social disabilities. These are the unmarked given and constructed ideologies which brings the social fabric across our scrutiny. Gender acts as an analytic tool to view the deep embedded facets and aspects of the disabled ones.

Chapter VI

Valuing the Devalued: Locating Enablers of Disability in the Select Works of Devdutt Pattanaik

In India, there is a tendency to look for disability as a charity and welfare issue. The impaired body is seen as an outcome of one's misdeeds or relatives. India, being patriarchy, considers that the actions of the mother write the destinies of the children. So, for the disability of the child, the mother is held responsible. The disability of the poor ones is pitied, and they are given food and resources to sustain themselves. While the disability of the rich ones or landlords is viewed as Stigma and is often kept either in disguise or hidden from the gaze of public view. Disabled are either kept in anonymity, or they have altogether negated the value of their existence. Considering it to be a matter of sin and shame. Deborah Kaplan, Director of the World Institute on Disability (WID), points out in an article on the definition of disability that

There are many cultures that associate disability with sin and shame, and disability is often associated with feelings of guilt, even if such feelings are not overtly based in religious doctrine. For the individual with a disability, this model (charity) is particularly burdensome. This model has been associated with shame on the entire family with a member with a disability. Families have hidden away the disabled family member, keeping them out of school and excluded from having a meaningful role in society. Even in less extreme circumstances, this model has resulted in general social ostracism and self-hatred. (Kaplan 353)

Much of the Indian Literature views disability as a Karmic consequence though Hinduism never promotes or stipulates a disability stereotype. It encompasses an extensive

range of beliefs and practices and is not limited to one foundational set of beliefs, select deities, or collection of texts as perhaps some religions are. It refers to the body of thought and belief inclusive of many ideas and practices that a large percentage of the Indian population adheres to. We are continuously engrossed in the cycle of desire, will act and result in the karmic cycle. The present state is the outcome of the past hopes, and it is inferential that an individual is the slave of his past, pursuer of his present and master of his future. The most critical hurdle in the lives of the disabled people is the misconception of considering them as 'Breed Apart.' Disabled are not allowed to be part of the main fabric; they can take their places and positions glorious as some different beings who have a liminal presence in the mainstream. Thus, they are always pitied, vialled, or kept hidden. Their presence is ever institutionalised, and they are not accepted as normal. The othering of the disabled has manifested their presence as punishment, retribution.

Nevertheless, another strand of the cultural construction conceives of disability as eternal childhood, where survival is contingent upon constant care and protection. Here the emphasis is on the images of dependency, thereby reinforcing the charity/pity model. Consequently, charity and philanthropy have remained the predominant response to the predicament of disability. (Ghai, "Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism" 66)

The Indian patriarchy rests on the shoulders of the joint family system. The Indian joint family systems have three or four generations living together that includes parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews. They all contribute towards the common kitchen, which takes care of one and all. The daughters of the family leave on their marriages while daughters-in-law come as new additions in the family. Being a patrilineal world, the lines of authority are drawn based on hierarchy, and everyone is aware that the control vests in the hands of normal eldest and others will obey, yet the household runs with the philosophy of the

responsibility of all, i.e., collective responsibility. Each member is considered equally responsible for the harmony of relations and cooperation. The eldest is bestowed with the natural authority to rule the household. The women are considered subordinate who take care of the needs of all, thus shouldering the male responsibility of meeting the needs and demands of one and all. The earning male members are considered to be the backbone of the family as they are to consider the needs of the disabled, old, sick, kids and women. They are the ones who provide security and living to all who are otherwise considered weak and needy. The care starts from the cradle and goes up to the cremation grounds. People from India find solace in the religious propitiation and submission to the will of God when someone suffers from disease and disability. Religion explain the purpose of life, hope and meaning to adversity.

These two extremes let the person with disabilities be treated as *Devi* or *Devta*, which must be worshipped or the other considers that if you see a person with a disability as the first person in the morning immediately after waking up, your day is spoilt. Disability stands as the ultimate category of abjection where after several thousand years, the hunchback is named Manthara. By the camel's back, the lady is devious in character and bound to be negative. So, people with disability because of their presence in the myth have taken the form of Labels. We are aware that most Hindus have a firm belief in reincarnation that assumes to be soul undergoing multiple lifetimes of existence. The quality of the present life depends upon past life or previous lifetimes. It adds excellent positivity to the socio-ethical and moral behaviour of the people that the present life is a chance to shape up the future lifestyles. Following the path of dharma or righteousness, the individual can transcend the cycle of life and death and attain moksha or liberation. Even the disabled are given this privilege to suffer the present disability and strive to attain moksha. They may indulge in penances, fasting, worshipping with intensity and praying hard so that they may be blessed by divinity. Though it is fixed in the minds of disabled that the difference is the punishment incurred upon them for their previous

sins that they may have done in any of their previous births. Hinduism puts a great onus on doing good deeds and thus gathers merits. With the aid of these merits, they can reach the various higher spheres of existence and can also attain ultimate moksha.

Once a sage Galava asked Yayati for eight hundred horses. Yayati gave Galava his daughter to offer to four kings and obtain two hundred horse. Galava offered Madhavi to the kings seeking two hundred cows. Three kings accepted and offered Galava two hundred cows. Galava then gave Madhavi and six hundred cows to Vishwamitra as his fee. Madhavi became a tapasvin after serving the cause of her father and the sage Galava.

Yayati, after renouncing everything, entered Swarga. When all his merits exhausted, he was thrown out of Swarga. Yayati fell from Swarga to the forest where his daughter Madhvi was doing her tapasya. She forgave Yayati, and asked her sons to share their merit with her father and thus helped Yayati to regain Swarga.

Most Hindus believe in reincarnation (punarjanma). From this belief follows a corollary belief in multiple lifetimes of existence in the past and the future, lifetimes in which the quality of one's present life is determined by the quality of one's past life (especially moral life) as led in previous lifetimes (karma). It is thus possible to improve the quality of one's life over several lives and attain a better rebirth, but the ultimate Hindu religious ideal aims at transcending the process of the cycle of rebirths itself. The successful attainment of this goal is called *moksa* or *Mukti* (liberation). (*Decisions*)

In the present chapter, we are going to see the various enablers of disability in myth. Myth opens up the doors of blessings by divinity. According to Simi Linton, disability studies "takes for its subject matter not simply the variations that exist in human behavior, appearance, functioning, sensory acuity, and cognitive processing, but, more crucially, the meaning we make of those variations" (2). When we see Dhritarashtra, who was blind by birth, gained vision

with the blessings of Krishna. Krishna came on a mission of peace to Hastinapur. However, when Duryodhana annoyed him with his stubbornness, "Krishna appeared not as a man but as a being with a thousand heads breathing fire, girding entire worlds between his teeth" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 217). For the first time in his life, Dhritarashtra could see and what he saw brought tears to his eyes. He could see God. "Let me not see anything more. Let me be blind once more. Eyes that have seen this must not see anything else" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 217). So, we have found that congenital blind are seeing in the world of myth. Hinduism rests on a stringent belief of serving the disabled to earn the merits. So, the disabled are cared, fed and sheltered to add onto the actions of dharma. People fear disability, and they do not wish it upon themselves. Following the morality, they serve the disabled and try to purge their selves out of the web of disabilities. The people serve and act as enablers.

Dhritarashtra and Gandhari had Sanjaya with them who "was blessed with a divine sight so that he could see all that was happening in the battlefield and narrate it to his blind master and his blindfolded wife (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 226). Gandhari, upon her blindfolding, was always supported by the maids to perform the tasks, even for the movement here and there. Hinduism believes in alleviating or diminishing past karmic sins by bearing the pain and suffering. The relation of *tapas* and ethical action on the analogy of a battery. Both activities generate power that is stored before being discharged in some manner. The charge, however, whatever the origin (*tapas, yoga, punya* etc.), becomes ethically neutral and one's psychic batteries may be automatically recharged or further depleted, depending upon the ethical nature of its karma. Boon is a narrative device or a convenient way of rationalising the improbable or the inexplicable. Boons are the keys to the armory of the gods, and the fabulous events of the great war would have been very different without the boons

to Arjuna of the great *Gandiva* bow, which for eternities had been worshipped by Gods, Danavas and Gandharvas.

Gandhari's blindfold was a mode of penance, and the gods blessed this disability of hers. The piety of her eyes brought her the power to made the body of her son invulnerable. So, she commanded Duryodhana to take a bath before the crack of the dawn and come before her naked. "I will open my blindfold for the first time since the day of my marriage and look upon you. My eyes shut for all these years, are filled with the power of my piety and fidelity. Every part of your body that I gaze upon with my first glance will become impervious to weapons" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 282).

In *Mahabharata*, we observe several other incidents wherein the disabled are powered with special abilities as blessings, which act as an enabler of their being. Boons comprise of blessings, promises, favours. Boons are actually the power incarnates at a particular place and time in a particular manner. Boons, quite like a curse, are marked by the massive release of the speaker's spiritual power. The speaker commands verbally with a desire to bestow grace, good upon the receiver. The flexible Hindu mind with the most explicit narratives of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* presents a kaleidoscopic extravaganza of boons and the changes in all *lokas*. What is conspicuous is that any of the orders of beings that live on the pages of narrative possess the power of bestowing boons. Even Gods may curse, and Gandharvas or demons may offer boons. Boons may be accomplished using yoga. Boons may be conditional too. "the effects of boons are generally designed to achieve one of the two things: the reversal of adverse circumstances or the spiritual or worldly elevation of a person to a higher order of being or temporal prosperity" (J. F.Woods) .

Boons are laced with the power to give life, the power to withhold death, dynastic succession, kingship, power of martial arts. However, we find Satyavati given a boon by Parasara under the influence of kama. Satyavati is the child of King Uparichara and a fish who

is, in fact, an apsara Girika who is cursed by Brahma to be fish until she gave birth to human children. She was a twin to a male child whom the king took and forsook the girl child to be brought up by fisherfolk. She was called Matsya Ganda as she oozes out the dreadful smell of fish. She used to ferry people across the river Ganga. One day, she was ferrying Parashara when he expressed the desire to make love in the midstream. Satyavati wanted not to offend the sage and told him that she smells of a fish. Parasara immediately blessed her with a boon that she would exude fragrance and no man would ever repel her fragrance.

Satyavati further told Parasara that nobody would marry her if she loses her virginity like this. Parasara gave her a second boon that she would become a virgin again after satisfying him and after giving birth to his son. Parasara offered her both these boons accentuating the pleasures of senses. While bestowing boon, the bestower, “harnesses the inherent powers of the cosmos for social and egotistical purposes” (J. F.Woods). Satyavati was told by Parasara, "With my magical powers, I will ensure you will bear a child instantly and regain your virginity. Moreover, you will never smell of fish again. Your body will give out a fragrance that men will find irresistible" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata*).

Boons like curses are good narrative devices to bring forth the issue of enabling disabled. The boons given by Dashratha to Kaikeyi brought about the narrative twists in the tale of a would-be crowned king. It narrates the fickleness of life. When Kaikeyi demanded “Give me the two boons you promised me long ago. 'she said . 'Make my son, Bharata, King of Ayodhya and order Ram to live as a hermit in the forest for fourteen years" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 24). At one moment, Ram is preparing for the crowning ceremony and the other moment, he is going to buy renunciation of every luxury just to upkeep the honour of his family. "Dasharatha had granted her long ago, on the battlefield when she saved his life, boons that she had yet to claim." (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 76). Ram says, “He could have chosen not to give her open-ended boons. She could have chosen not to exercise

them" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 98). However, then the narrative tension would not have disabled Ram in a moment. "The entire *Ramayana* anchors itself on the story of Dasharatha offering Kaikeyi two boons" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 23).

The hunchbacked Manthara was a Gandharva who was chosen by gods to be the part of Leela and thus poison Kaikeyi's mind. "Manthara symbolises the dark side of kama or desire and how it breeds unhappiness, suspicion and anxiety. She casts aspersions on Dashratha's integrity. Ram asked Manthara to poison kaikeyi's mind" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram*). Only then will I be able to go to the forest and kill Ravana,' Ram explained. With a heavy heart, Manthara obeyed God. Pleased with her devotion, he said, "In your next life, you will be as hunchbacked as you are now.... Krishna entered Mathura he embraced a hunchbacked maid called Kubja or Trivakra with such passion that her back straightened and she became a beautiful woman. The kubja was none other than Manthara reborn" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 173).

Manthara, in her next birth, is purged of her disability. Her service by following the commandments brought a change in her physical attributes too. Her services acted as her enabler to remove her disability. The Indian patriarchy values chastity and fidelity in a woman. Chaste women are considered to be the epitome of virtues and values.

Vishnu's Vaikuntha has two doorkeepers, Jaya and Vijaya. Once these doorkeepers stopped Sanat Kumars from seeing Vishnu. In turn, the rishis cursed these doorkeepers to take birth on earth as demons. "When Vishnu came to know that doorkeepers are cursed for doing their duty." Vishnu declared that he would himself descend on earth as Ram to release his doorkeepers from their demonic form" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 168). The disability of getting down to the level of demons from angels is enabled with Vishnu's promise of bringing them back again to their true selves.

Vishwamitra asked Ram to touch her without being judgemental that she would be liberated of her curse. The moment Ram touched her; she became animated again. She rose a huge wail, signifying her relief from the shame she was being put to. Gautama also appeared there from the shadows. He had a combinatory feeling of humiliation and happiness on seeing his wife again. Ram advised Gautama to untie the knots of his mind and accept Ahilya. He asked Gautama to bring joy and happiness to his hermitage by beginning a new life with Ahilya. In response to Ram's suggestion, Gautama stretched his hand and Ahilya after a moment's pause accepted it. Vishwamitra poured water on their joined hands, signalling the new start of their life. What is peculiar here is that with Indra's touch, Ahilya is polluted, with Gautama's touch she is punished and cursed and with Ram's touch she is freed of all the misendeavours indeed and is given her body back.

Myth explores that divinity can bring back the dead and chopped organs of the body can be enthused with life. Barbareek, the son of Bhima and Ahilawati, a naga princess, was invincible. He came to fight in the war of Kurukshetra with three arrows. When implored by Krishna about the side he would be fighting, he said that he would fight the losing side. Only then, he is invincible. Krishna thought that this way, the war would never end. Barbareek would shift turn to the losing side. So, he slyly sought Barbareek's help to attain the head of a warrior. Barbareek said yes, and Krishna asked for his head. So, he severed his head from his body and offered it to Krishna. However, he regrets witnessing the war of Kurukshetra. "Divining this, Krishna breathed life into Barbareek's head. He would see all and hear all, but never be able to participate in anything" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 287).

Just like Barbareek, the four birds also witnessed war, and they were blessed and "were given the gift of human speech. Thus blessed, these birds were able to talk and clarify Jamini's (Vyasa's students) doubts" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* xiii).

When Kauravas poisoned Bhima and threw him in the river, he would have died. First, the opposite happened; he was blessed with an antidote by Vasuki. A particular boon was bestowed upon him as a kinsman (Kunti's son) to the snake tribe. Bhima not only revived to life and came back from the river but was also blessed with the power never to get poisoned.

Once Gaya, a Gandharva, was flying over Dwaraka and he spat, which fell upon Krishna's head. Krishna turned furious and swore to behead it. Fearing death, Gaya went to Indraprastha and sought a haven for himself. Subhadra offered him refuge, telling that his husband would protect him. This situation brought Arjun and Krishna in front of each other ready to fight. This would have threatened the whole world. So, on the plea of devas, Brahma intervened. Krishna beheaded Gaya and "Brahma restored Gaya's head that's chopped by Krishna" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 121).

When Arjuna was following the sacrificial horse of Asvamedha Yagna, he saw the horse walking on the sea waves. He got pleasantly surprised and was curious to know the reality. Upon further probing, he came to know that this miracle was happening because of the ascetic and spiritual powers of rishi Bakadalbhya. It is indeed unworldly for a horse and human to walk on the waves of the sea. He went to meet the sage, who was residing in the lagoon nearby. The sage told him a story, "I once performed Tapasya and compelled Indra, king of gods to appear before me. I asked him if he accepted that I was stronger than him. He said yes, but there is one greater I asked him to take me to that greater being to Brahma. He took me to Brahma, the father of all living things. He had four heads. I asked Brahma if he was the greatest being in the world. He said no, for there was someone greater. I asked him to take me to the greater being. He took me to a Brahma, who had eight heads. I asked this eight-headed Brahma if he was the greatest being in this world. This eight-headed Brahma said no. He took me to a brahmna who had sixteen heads And finally, we came to a Brahma with a thousand heads who was Vishnu aid that greater than him was Vishnu who reclines on a serpent that lives in

the ocean of milk. And that Vishnu walks on the earth as Krishna. Hearing this, I realised how insignificant a creature I was in the universe and how foolish. That day my ego was shattered, and I attained bliss. Since that day, people have been able to walk on water when they come near my hermitage” (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 317). Unravelling the imperfections and understanding of ones present in the macrocosm as miniscule, thus enables a man to be a Brahman and so the part of bigger reality – the macrocosm which is eternity.

Swayamprabha was the owner of the pleasure cave, a female hermit who used clothes of bark and animal hide. She served Angad and Hanuman while searching for Sita and asked them to stay there forever as she felt lonely. Hanuman refused all her injunctions and pleadings to stay there and told her that the most excellent satisfaction lies in providing satisfaction to others. Swayamprabha realised her inadequacies and blessed Hanuman for his guidance. She blessed Hanuman and his search party and "By the power of her Siddha, she transported Hanuman and all the other monkeys to the southern shore of the land" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 187).

Hanuman, the devotee of Ram, had eight Siddhas, i.e., divine blessings to his credit - the power to expand, shrink, change shape, overpower, become extremely heavy, travel anywhere and grant any wish" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 239).

Ram prayed to goddess Kali for having victory in the war against Ravana. He was to offer the goddess 108 lotuses. However, one lotus got missing. So, Ram thought of offering his eye to the goddess as he is known as lotus eyes. The goddess got happy and stopped him just in time and blessed Ram assuring him of victory in battle.

Chitrangda was a princess with a masculine body. She wanted to marry Arjuna and therefore prayed to Shiva. Shiva "blessed her with the feminine body" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An*

Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata 117). However, Arjuna was looking for the princess with a masculine body. So, she prayed to Shiva again, and Shiva gave her last look back to her.

When the modesty of Draupadi was outraged in the court of Hastinapuri, nobody came to her help. She prayed to Krishna to come and help her. One folklore says that Krishna cut his hand when he hurled the Sudarshana Chakra at Sisupala. Draupadi immediately tore her upper garment and tied it around Krishna's wound to stop bleeding. Since she gave him cloth, Krishna promised that the day she needs cloth, he will provide it which he does later in the epic when the Kauravas try to disrobe Draupadi in Public" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 136). Dusshasana, on the orders of Duryodhana tried to pull away Draupadi's saree. Every time he pulled, he found Draupadi covered with another saree. "He pulled several reams of fabric off Draupadi's body, but she remained covered, her honour intact" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 147).

On witnessing the adultery of his wife, Jamadagni asked his sons to chop off her head. Parashurama acted without a thought and obeyed his father. The rishi became happy and asked Parashurama for a boon. Parashurama asked Jamadagni to forgive Renuka and brought her back to life. Pleased with Parashurama's unconditional obedience, Jamadagni offered his son a Boon. "Bring my mother back to life" he said. Jamadagni did so using Siddha (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 27).

In compliance with his guru's order, Arjuna started practising for the shooting of bows even at night. He developed such a skill that he would hit the mark without actually seeing it. His target no more depended on his sight to be hit skillfully. Arjuna was blessed with the title of Gudakesha. This title was a great boon as he has overpowered sleep. With practice, he gained the power to shoot with equal skill and proficiency both with right and left hand and thus blessed to be a Sabyasachi.

We have seen mythic world blessing and enabling the worthy ones. In order to assist the worthy, gods and angels do special favours to these people. As is a story about Balarama's birth that Yogmaya transported the unborn child to the womb of Vasudeva's other wife, Rohini. Balarama was thus delivered in Nanda's household. Had this blessing not happened, Kansa would have killed Balarama too.

In another instance, we found the myth as an enabler wherein the permanent changes happened in response to the blessings and boons of the people, animals, Gandharvas, demons, etc. who try to follow the path of truth and dharma. It is said that Ram got delighted with the squirrels trying to help to make Ram Setu – the bridge to Lanka. He blessed squirrels, and from that day onwards, squirrels developed stripes.

It is said that Sita had six fingers and she chopped one finger, and that finger grew as Bamboo. So, Bamboo trees are considered to be the blessings of Sita.

Ravana is considered to be a devotee of Shiva. Once Ravana cut off his head and made a Rudra Veena. Shiva got happy with his sacrifice and blessed him " a crescent-shaped sword, the Chandrahas, that would always secure his victory in battle" (*Pattanaik Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 50).

Sacrifices please gods and devas, and they give boons and blessings in response to the pain and suffering the disciple has borne.

Myth takes us through the lanes and by-lanes of certain ritualistic practices like Yagna, which are performed to change the present situation (The diseased, disabled, anguished) into a blessing. So, Yagna is one of the enablers in the myth that is highly exemplified in the retellings of Devdutt Pattanaik. Hindus believe in purity, i.e., purity of body, thought and mind. It is a universal axiom in Hindu households that 'you are what you eat'. "The kitchen is the first Yagnashala, for the kitchen fire turns raw food into edible cooked food that nourishes the body and prepares the mind for intellectual enquiry." (*Pattanaik Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of*

Ramayana 22). "Krishna ate, and all the Brahmanas were filled. "Krishna then advised Yudhishtira to pray to the sun god to save him from such embarrassing situations. In response, Surya gave him a magic vessel. Give this to Draupadi. It will always be full of food until all your guests have fed and you have been fed, and Draupadi has had her meal, said the Deva" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 156). Blessings are perhaps the narrative tools to outcry the role of the people good and moral actions. The woman in Indian patriarchy is asked to feed the guests "Atithi Deva Bhaya." Such narratives inculcate the cultural temper in the minds of its threshold. Yagna ends up in the blessings of Deva. While Tapasaya focusses more on the mind, the Yagna also pays attention to the body. (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 22) .

Hinduism considers marriage to be a yagna too. "Alone, I was a tapas. However, with Lopamudra, I have become a yajaman and initiated the Yagna that is family," said Agastya.

The Birth of Sita is considered to be a blessing of earth goddess on righteous king Janaka. Sita is *ajonia*. *Ajonia* is the one who "is not born from a mother's womb ... Children born so are considered special. They defy death" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 10). She chooses Janaka as her father and reached out to her . Janaka was performing a ritual to initiate the tilling of land for harvesting crops. "Farmers convinced it was a gift from the earth goddess to their childless king" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 9). "The yagna represents Dasharatha's refusal to surrender to a childless fate and is a choreographed expression of Dashratha's intense desire to be a father" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 23).

Dashratha requested Rishyashringa to do Putrakameshti Yagna for him. Hindus perform this yagna for the sake of having a child. Dashratha wanted to father sons, but he could not. Though he has married thrice yet, he could not bear a son. Rishyashringa readily agreed to his request. Rishyashringa was well versed in the secrets of nature, and he made Dashratha a

Yajamana and conducted a yagna. "The invocation, the offerings and the requests continued until the devas were so pleased that from the yagna emerged a potion, the havis. This, when consumed by Dashratha's wives, would enable them to bear sons." (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 15). Rishyashringa's yagna gives sons to Dashratha, just as his marriage gave rains to Lompada. (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 21)

Bhishmaka has also performed a *Putra kameshti yagna*. He was enabled of his disabled social status of childlessness. The potion of yagna enabled his wives to impregnate. "He gave the potion to his two wives because he did not want to play favourites. Moreover, each wife ended up bearing one half of the child" (Pattanaik *The Pregnant King* 113). Ajatputra when wanted to get rid of disability of childlessness, he also performed Putrakameshti Yagna "the potion gave four sons to three queens" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 15).

King Draupda wanted to destroy the Kuru clan as well as his friend turned rival Drona. He wanted to beget one son and one daughter who could fulfill this desire of destroying his rivals. He asked Yaja and Upyaya to perform a yagna and create a magic potion for him. When Yaja and Upjaya finished the Yagna, the king's wives were not there to take the benediction of Yagna. "The magic potion prepared by Yaja and Upjaya for king Draupda is cast into the fire altar" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata*). The magic potion created two children into flames. The son was named as Dhristadhyumna and a daughter called Draupadi. With the help of Yagna, Draupada fathered the kids he desired. The yagna, which was performed by Jaya and Upjaya for Yuvanashva, the childless prince, was so potent that when the king himself mistakenly drunk the potion, he got pregnant and delivered a child from his thigh. His seed also got much strength, and he impregnated his second wife after that. Shiva said "When Yagna is done without Tapasya, we exploit other people's hunger to satisfy our

own. Thus, a corrupt society comes into being." Indeed, Tapasya is the shaft of the bow. Yagna is like the string of the bow. (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 45)

Sagara's sons had two wives; they were determined to bear a child. So, they called a sage and asked him to conduct a yagna that would yield a potion that could make barren women pregnant. When the potion was created, one queen drank the potion in her capacity as wife while the other queen made love to her pretending to be late husband" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 51). Thus, with the help of Yagna, they created a misshapen lump of flesh, which was given life by the rishi afterwards. That child grew up as Bhagiratha.

Hinduism in antiquity aimed at celebrating the equal status of men and women. It is stated in Vedas that the husband is imperfect and incomplete without his wife. "Only as long as she is by your side makes you have claimed over wealth. Without her, you cannot perform Yagna; you must only perform *tapasya*" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 66). The yagna of life as a householder is complete and perfect with the companionship of husband and wife. When Sita was left in the forest and Ram was to perform Ashvamedha yagna, he could not be the *Yajamana* of Yagna without his wife. So, an idol of Sita, the golden site, was carved that sit as a substitute Sita to make that yagna a success.

The other type of Yagna that is performed is called Rajasuya yagna. Yudhishtira performed this Yagna upon the advice of Krishna. He got recognition as a King of Indraprastha from the nearby place and kingdoms. In narratives, Kings perform a Yagna to harness material wealth from nature and sages perform Tapasya to get magical powers that enable them to control nature. (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 32)

Rajasuya yagna was also performed by Yudhishtira as advised by Krishna in order to establish his authority and control among the other kings and kingdoms. (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 129)

When we talk of the havis , it is laden with the power of Yagna. Jarasanda was born with the blessings of Putrakameshti Yagna. “His childless father divided the magic potion meant to give him a child equally between his two wives. As a result, each wife bore him half a child. These two halves were fused by a demoness called Jara who protects Jarasandha and makes him invincible. He cannot be killed with any weapon. Only if he is split into two can he die" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 130).

Ashvamedha Yagna is a horse sacrifice that was performed by kings to celebrate their paramouncy. A horse accompanied by king's guards was left free to wander for over some time during which any rivals of the territory travelled by the horse could challenge the king's warriors indirectly challenging the king's authority. If, during this specific time, no enemy can kill or capture the horse it would be guarded back to the king's palace, where finally it is slaughtered, which symbolised the king's undisputed sovereignty. In *Mahabharata*, Yudhishtira performed an Ashvamedha Yagna upon the advice of Krishna and Vyasa to rein over other territories. However, here Yagna also emerged as an enabler, a narrative device for the epic. Arjuna won 22 kingdoms in the northern direction. Bhima won 29 kingdoms. Similarly, Nakula and Sehdev, too, helped the expansion of their kingdom.

This yagna can be found in *Ramayana*, where Rama performed this yagna on the bank of river Gomati since Sita was absent; hence Rama used an idol of Sita and placed it beside him. For the proper completion of the yajna, Rama sent a horse that roamed all over many lands. Surprisingly the horse was captured by his sons, which led to the fierce fight between Rama's army and his sons, where both the boys fought bravely to the surprise of the whole army. Hanuman was captured and taken back to Ashrama, which made Sita realise that sons captured the horse of their father. After a series of events, a family reunites.

“Vishwamitra established the Siddha Ashrama, a hermitage in the middle of the forest. He decided to conduct a yagna there risking attack by rakshasas. He sent messages to kings

asking them to send their sons to protect his fire hall, the *yagna shala* from Rakshasha's attack" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 32). This became the way for Ram to visit the forest and to learn the practical aspect of the knowledge that he was otherwise well versed in theoretically. Vasishamitra told Ram, "Conduct your yagna as only a *tapasavi* can... Yagna will help you discover love that reveals atma... yagna helps you impose rules." (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 35). *Yagna* for a Hindu is a way of life. The point of the yagna is to outgrow fear, not indulge in it. "I conduct this yagna to transform kings into Vishnu, who uplifts with affection rather than subjugates with rules" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 39).

After Yagna, if we look for other enablers of disability in myth, we perceive chastity and celibacy as the powers to enable the disabled. The patriarchal society that invented chastity as a value to be rigorously observed, eulogising the women who have cherished much-enclaving imposition through myth, literature and folklore giving models like Sita who had to undergo the fire-ordeal to prove her chastity to Rama, eventually succeeded in providing us with excellent sculpts that served as a moral guide to our ethnicity for years. The chastity of a woman was held in high esteem within a worldview that saw one's offspring as the medium through which one's merits could be secured in the afterlife. Being loyal and chaste blesses the woman with superpowers in the mythic world. Damyanti, the wife of Nala, was a chaste wife. She never left the side of Nala even during the times of misfortune. However, when Damyanti was left all alone in the forest by Nala, she was approached by a hunter. As "Damyanti was a chaste woman and no sooner did the hunter touch her than he burst into flames (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 197). Her power of chastity came as a boon to enable her during disabling moments of life.

Virginity in a girl, by and large, is still a pre-requisite for her marriage, whereas men and boys are beyond these parameters and are not obliged to observe the yardsticks of chastity

and morality in the same way. It is believed that the offence of rape ruins the woman's chastity and brings dishonour to the family. Thus, the rape victim is disqualified from social or married life. An unmarried girl after rape is not regarded as fit for marriage, as she is considered to have lost her virginity. A married woman who is raped is divorced or rendered homeless by the husband, as she has lost her chastity and honour, and also brought shame and disrepute to the family. In some cases, a victim of rape goes as far as ending her own life. For no fault of the victim, she is subjected to extreme maltreatment and deprivation.

Chastity brings about the special powers or ascetic powers. Ramaswami Mahalingam & Sundari Balan argued that "according to Wadley (1991), chaste women are expected to have magical powers, even the power to curse the gods and the power to produce sons" (Mahalingam and Balan).

It is said that though Draupadi was married to five husbands, she was so chaste that she was saved by divinity during her 'Cheer-Haran.' Draupadi used to stay with one husband for one entire year, and then she would walk through fire to regain her virginity and chastity. Witnessing her obedience, commitment and fidelity towards her husband with whom she had stayed for the entire year, The Agni god would not harm her, and she would walk unharmed through the fire. "Draupadi would walk through fire to gain virginity (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 115). Each brother had exclusive access to Draupadi's chamber for a year at a time, and she dutifully served each one. It was said that before moving on to the next husband, she would walk through fire and regain her virginity. (115)

Ram went into the forest, pursuing the golden deer. On Sita's insistence, when Lakshman was going to follow and find Ram, he drew Lakshman Rekha. "Lakshman Rekha is the line of chastity (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 127). He categorically told Sita that inside the line, she is in the lap of dharma and nothing could happen to her, but outside the line, she is in the forest as a woman for taking. "Lakshman Rekha. I imbue it with the power of hymns, I

have learned from Vasishtha and Vishwamitra. Any man who tries to cross this line will burst into flames instantly. Stay within this line. Inside is Ayodhya, and you are Ram's wife. Outside is the jungle, you are a woman for the taking” (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 130). When Ravana tried to enter Lakshman Rekha, he could not. Had Sita not crossed the line, she would not have got questioned about her integrity and would not have been disabled of her integrity that she needed to prove again and again.

The same happened with Sita when she was asked to prove her chastity by Ram. She walked through the fire unharmed. The fire could not burn her as she possessed the power of chastity and fidelity. There is one more incident highlighting the ascetic power of Sita because of the power of her chastity. During the war with Ravana, once Ram and Lakshman were disabled by Indrajit, who used *nagapashas*- the venom spitting arrows. It struck both Ram and Lakshman. The two got "unconscious on the battlefield overwhelmed by snake venom and surrounded by helpless monkeys, she joined her palms and looked towards the earth and chanted a hymn in praise of Vasuki, the king of serpents. Such was the power of her chastity that Vasuki was forced to release an antidote that rendered powerless the poison running through the limbs of Ram and Lakshman” (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 70). Sita ends up her journey of the lifetime invoking the power of chastity. She prayed to mother earth that "If I have been true to Ram may the earth split open and take me into its bosom" (Pattanaik *The Book of Ram* 162). We are aware that earth took Sita in her lap, and she left the world of suffering.

Chastity is such a great power that it enables the bearer with boons. Renuka, the wife of Jamadagni, could gather water in the raw earthen pots by her chastity and fidelity. The chastity of Anusuya has a special place in the mythic world. It is said that once a few young men who wanted to seduce Anusuya, told her that they had followed severe penances and fastings for twelve years. Now they are to break the fast by the milk of breast of a yogini. They

sought her help. Anusuya agreed and looked upon those young fellows as her kids and offered them her breasts. The three young men immediately changed into infants and got the feed by the power of her chastity. Their wives then told Anusuya about the prank and also seek forgiveness. The power of her chastity is that the moment she forgave the young fellows, they again got changed from infants to youngsters. Her chastity first disabled the youth of their adulthood, and then her forgiveness acted as an enabler. The three youth blessed Anasuya that she would be the mother of a great son, Datta, who would need no teacher...He would become Adinath, the primal teacher (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 106). When Anusuya met Sita, "She gave Sita a garment, a garland and a pot of cream... The garment would never become dirty, the garland would never wither, and the cream would always soften her skin" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 106). Anusuya further added that "If you see chastity as an obligation, it will be tough, not otherwise. If you acknowledge your body's desires, not suppress them, and reflect on what matters to you in life, it will not be problematic" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* 106).

The case of Mandodari, wife of Ravana, the king of Rakshasas, is the best example of fidelity. Despite all of her husband's faults, Mandodari loved him and always requested him to follow righteousness. The same Epic *Ramayana* narrates the story of Sita, who devoted all her life even at severe odds for her husband, Rama. She accompanied him to the forest leaving aside the facilities in the palace. The glorification of fidelity is at its zenith in the story of Savithri. She could follow her husband's soul on account of her fidelity and bring him back alive. The stories of Arundhati, Tara, Anusuya and Renuka were famous for their fidelity and servitude towards their husbands. If we talk of the chastity of women, celibacy also provides ascetic enablement.

"Men were advised to be celibate: it granted them the power to grant boons and hurl curses." (Pattanaik *Shikhandi and the Other Tales They Don't Tell You* 12). Bhishma, who has

taken the oath of celibacy, was given the boon to choose the time of his death. Celibacy, though took away from him the chance of leaving Vaitarni as he is never going to beget children. However, this celibacy gave him the boon. He laid on the bed of arrows to witness the culmination of war. One day, Ram went hunting, and Sita decided to take a nap, and Lakshman sat with his back towards Sita to keep a watch. When Sita was in a deep sleep, the wind-tossed her clothes exposing her body. Suddenly Ram arrived and questioned Lakshman that how he could restraint himself from such a beauty. Lakshman responded as he is the brother of Scion of Raghu clan, he can easily resist such beauty. Indra got unhappy with this and sent an apsara Indrakamini to seduce Lakshman. When Indrakamini failed, she tricked Lakshman by dropping a few strands of her hair. When Sita questioned Lakshman for his integrity towards his wife, Urmila, he immediately "jumped into the fire around which they sat" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 118). However, the fire did not burn him. By the celibacy, he was blessed by Agni god. "The celibacy adds to the tension of the narrative" (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 105).

However, the fire did not hurt Lakshman as he is a true celibate. This is true of Pandu also. After the curse of Kidamba, Pandu spent "years of celibacy and meditation in the forest have given me great knowledge. It is embedded in my body. When I die, eat my flesh, and you will be blessed with real knowledge. That shall be your true inheritance" (Pattanaik *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata*). Only Sahadev eat a bit of Pandu's flesh that one ant was carrying and suddenly, he could see the shifts and turns of the future. It is because of the power of celibacy, *Bhishma*, the blessings to choose the time of his death.

Vibandha Rekha is the line of celibacy. Vibandha Rishi got disabled of his ascetic power of getting Indra's throne by having a look at an apsara sent by Indra. His semen thus dropped was eaten by a doe that gives birth to Rishyashringa. Vibandha viewed his son to be an image of his failure and kept him indoors with Vibandha Rekha. No apsara or damsel could

cross that Rekha. Such was the ascetic power gained by Rishyashringa that Indra started fearing and stopped going towards their hermitage. The whole area witnessed infertility and drought. Inside the line, Rishyashringa was significant, but outside it, he is a householder and a rishi who could do yagna and bring about changes in the lives of Yajamana.

Gods can read the mind of their devotees and can grant the desired boons, but they wish the preceptor to ask for it. The events may get miffed because the boons may get turned into curses because of the small errors on the part of preceptors. To exemplify it Kumbhakarna, Ravana's younger brother's ascetic prayers, please Brahma. When Brahma asked him to seek his wish, instead of seeking '*Indrasana*,' he sought '*Nidrasana*.' Though it is assumed that the goddess ties his tongue as it was desired so in the divine plan. However, the boon he sought turned out to be a curse for him. When the divine assistance was sought to nullify this curse, Brahma blessed him to wake up one day in a year and to eat, make merry and live and then go back to sleep again. The curse further got worsened when it was stated that if he would ever be woken up by somebody forcibly, then that would be the last day of his life. Ravana got more villainous when we perceive that in order to protect himself, he knowingly woke up Kumbhakarna, thus inviting his death. Kumbhakarna fought in favour of Ravana. He is viewed as a faithful citizen and a loyal brother. A slip of tongue can have far-reaching and quite detrimental effects on the preceptor. Draupada prays to Lord Mahadeva, seeking a daughter and a son. As he beseeches the god, the syntax of the prayer distorted and he was blessed with a daughter who later became a son. Brihadrata, the father of Jarasandha, was blessed with mango as a response to his prayers to father a son. He tried to prove his impartiality towards both his wives and thus distributed the mango amongst both of them. His wives gave birth to half a child with each complementary part of the body of the baby. Though these seemed to be the curses, these serve positive ends in the divine scheme of things. Shikhandini played a significant role and so Jarasanda too.

Indian antiquity value humans. “All measuring scales are Human delusions that make humans feel good about themselves. Events are events. Humans qualify them as good or bad” (Pattanaik *Sita : An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana* 122).

The Indian construct of enabling Disability is worth following. The focus must not be on pitying the disabled while the focus should transfer in such a manner that either disability is valued or disability is empathised rather than being sympathized.

“We don’t need to fix people with disabilities; we need to fix our attitudes. We can no longer let people with disabilities exist in the margins of society because of our mistaken assumptions. When we recognize disability is natural condition of being human, we’ll be able to look into the face of a person with a disability and presume competence- and the world will change before our eyes” (Snow).

We started with declaring the premise of disability studies is not to try to remove the physical, mental and social deformities but to provide a serene and calm environment to them so that all may accept their differences and they are given chances, support and motivation to live a life of respect. We are not to segregate the disabled as the Other but we are to strive for their inclusion. We are to respect their alterities and try to put across the flood of opportunities wherein these alterities are welcomed.

Conclusion

We are living in the difficult times when people are closer to the virtual worlds rather than the physical and materialistic presence of people and situations around. Prenatal testing can predict and scribble the future of genetically disabled ones and choice can be made for allowing birth to the ones in the womb. We find ourselves face to face with critical issues and want to seek out the truth of the past to make our lives better. We find ourselves face to face enjoying the richness of our heritage that brings many answers to our queries. The age old query why people are different and disabled finds solution in the karmic philosophy and cyclic world view of Indian culture wherein human can be born as an insect or tree and it invigorates the acceptability of Disability. The yearning to peep in the disability history comes from such perceptions. Disability history is not a new field, yet it has been recently institutionalised in certain countries. India, till now, is emulating the western models of disability which do not cater to the temper, psyche and the ideology of the Indian culture and traditions. The present thesis expresses the desire of the Indian model of disability that suits the Indianness. The living philosophy and lifestyles of the west are in direct opposition to the Indian wisdom, understanding and knowledge. West explores disability as a synonym of the inability in its diverse ways in the antiquity that stays permanently with the one who got disabled. While the Indian worldview witnesses the life in its cyclic dimension exploring disability to be a temporary impact that one may get rid of in one or the other lifetimes. The vastness of the macrocosmic Indian mythological world shows not only the cultural richness but reasons out the Indian understanding of living styles to be the supreme ones.

Dr Devdutt Pattanaik an Indian mythologist, a writer who is renowned all over the world for his mythological rewritings of Indian epics of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, has presented the antique worldview with postmodern temper. His works put forth the ulterior themes of feminism, varna system, lifestyles, and the social set up and order, and he

foregrounded the disabled's plight. He has addressed the exploitation of the disabled while focussing on dharma, wisdom, myths, culture, society, crises and their effects on the disabled. Furthermore, he also explains how disability is considered imperfection that makes the individuals unworthy of the crown. He sees the entire existence to be a search for perfection that is rare. Our understanding and knowledge of the world is imperfect, and we yearn to get out of these imperfections. The imperfections or deviations are never looked down upon. The focus is not physicality, but the essence of being human is to do good Karma and watch one's *dharma* the righteousness and truth. Whosoever that leaves the path of dharma is considered to be deviant and disabled. It widened the scope of disability across the physical boundaries. If one is physically deviant, he will be taken care of, and every action that can assist him will bring merit to the Indians for the present and future births. One becomes heinous and disabled if one transgresses the path of dharma. Disability becomes a bone of contention, and it not only changed the fate of individuals, of their kingdoms but the entire society after that. Although disability studies are an academic discipline that examines the meaning, nature and consequences of disability, it is also considered as a social and cultural construct. However, this fact cannot be denied that the disabled have always been vulnerable to poverty, prejudice, lack of power and social marginalisation. What stands peculiar is the deduction of the difference of place through which we see disabled in the present day which conspicuously differs from the way they were seen in antiquity. In past times, the disabled were treated differently than in the present times. Now we have a coloured reference to see and witness everything in black and white. It bolsters the modern discriminatory attitude towards people with disabilities. It perceives disability as a phenomenon of something wrong with the disabled body and does not have a set predictable and immutable reaction of the society.

Indian antiquity has complex and varied cultural norms, ideologies and diverse circumstances that weave together to stigmatise disability in the present contexts. Fuel is

further added by the religious concepts, the caste systems, gender and the varna system, and it mounts the further stigmatisation of individuals with disabilities. The robust family system further roots up the idea of disability as it calls for the reversal of roles. If a woman is disabled, she will not be married off to be sent to her in-laws' home, and she would stay at her parent's forever as boys do. If a man is disabled, he will stay home like a woman and is not supposed to go out and earn the livelihood. The other members of the family will be responsible for his upkeep. If the disabled are of the lower class in the Varna system's hierarchy, he is pitied while the opposite happens if the disabled are of a higher class in the hierarchy of the Varna system. He will be looked down upon. Indian antiquity has a stringent faith in dharma and considers that it maintains the whole cosmic order. Dharma focuses on the fact that each individual has a fixed span, fixed roles, and specific functions and duties to perform during his lifetime. Each individual is to pass through the four stages in life, i.e., a student, a householder, hermit and renouncer and then the *jiva* is to go back to either enjoy the merits /demerits or can attain salvation or *moksha*. Individuals must refrain from committing sins and doing unrighteous actions. Else these will be reaped as disabilities. One's current situation on earth is directly associated with the karmas. Though society adopts a sympathetic attitude towards them, yet they are put to marginals and provided with a liminal identity. Disabled are viewed as inherently flawed, less capable and unfortunate as a historical precedent. Disability in Indian antiquity is treated as a family issue rather than a medical one. So, the disabled are not seen as the problem individuals rather disability is negotiated as a civic issue among the members of the community. They are denied their rights and privileges because of their disabilities. However, the Indian culture manifests somehow a blending of viewing, sympathising, fearing and yet discarding.

The belief in the karmic theory, the immortality of soul, always forces the disabled to ponder their evil deeds in the past. It may be the bad karmas of the individual alone or anyone

in the family and that is why the families also bear the consequences. The specific question here is about the attitude of the society towards them. They are always put on a threshold finding themselves on a periphery which restricts them from being active and influential members of society, proving them to be a non-integral part of the society who always rely on the sympathy of others. Considering peculiarly Indian culture; it is dominated by religion which influences the perception of the society towards the disabled. Under the influence of the karmic theory, they are psychologically motivated to accept their fate, discouraging them from accessing medical treatment and leading a life of social inclusion, thus disabling them to have a respectable status in the society. However, this fact cannot be denied that the disabled have always been vulnerable to poverty, prejudice, lack of power and social marginalisation. Society adopts a sympathetic attitude towards them, but they are denied to have a prestigious and influential position in society leading to the denial of their rights. In Indian antiquity and other areas of the world, the disabled are treated as the victims of the discriminatory society; they are the other having no voice and identity of their own and thus experienced a deep-rooted cultural antipathy. However, there are also the narratives that highlight that disabled are the children of God whose care must be taken to gain *Punya* in life. Indeed, this theory is interlinked to the theory of karma and the immortality of Soul. Soul is the real which is eternal and never dies. A person has to bear the actions of his Karma in the forthcoming birth. Therefore, out of his fear, he bears the responsibility to take care of the disabled people. Moreover, to the Hindu joint family system, it is considered that all the members are an integral part of the family. The abled one is assigned the disabled's responsibility. The most significant motive was to perform good deeds to achieve '*Moksha*' or salvation which is prominently based on the *Karmas* of a person. *Dharma* is the moral law combined with spiritual discipline that guides one's life. Following the path of *dharma*, the individual transcends the cycle of life and death. Even the disabled, whose present condition is considered to be the result of their past

action, are provided with the chance to attain moksha by indulging in penances, fasting, worshipping with intensity and praying hard so that they may be blessed by divine.

Mahabharata and *Ramayana* are the two great Indian epics which are a storehouse of knowledge touching every aspect of life. There are numerous instances in these epics which signify the impact of curse on all. Curses are mostly uttered upon others by ascetics but any person or being who has lived the life of penance, virtue and dharma has the ability to put the wrongdoer on a disabling position. It is not easy to undo the curse. It can happen with the blessings of the almighty if the person repents and prays to him. Curses were powerful enough to transform a mighty person into a powerless disabled being. Curse by a mortal like Gandhari upon Krishna, the god changed his destiny. The humans are metamorphosed into animals, eunuchs, and gandharvas into the beasts. It degrades and decapacitates the individual/ beings from the present position to the position of loss. Stereotyping of the disabled as evil, negative and villains can be traced and related back to curse. One who is an evil doer is cursed and he turns into a disabled one. Indian karmic theory and Indian epics treat disability as a thing to fear, as a construct of retribution. Curse has always acted as a narrative tool to chide and warn people from doing anything wrong. We have viewed Ahilya turning into stone for lack of virtue, Karna for not telling the truth to his teacher, Samba for making fun of the ascetics to mention a few. So, we can very firmly assert that Curse in myth acts as a metaphoric reference of disability. It projects the Indian worldview of following the path of *dharma* by living a simple life of satisfaction while controlling ones excessive desires else the individual will be doomed by the curse. Disability theory is not a question of health or medicine, it is an issue of quantifying sensitivity and compassion. In the kshatriya world that we tackled in the Indian myths, disability became a question of power, politics and prestige. In the world of learned scholar and Brahmins, it became an issue of deva's favours or disfavours. While discussing curse as a trope of disability, the thesis clearly states that the curses of the sufferers, brahmins,

ascetics, gods, demons, animals, Gandharvas, devas and for that matter by living or material being can result in disability. Perhaps the Indian myths wanted to instate the old Indian philosophy not to be insufficient to anybody as life is fair. You are to reap the consequences of your actions. In a moment, curses can metamorphose abled bodied and handsome to ugly and deformed. The trope of curse vividly manifests disability in the mythological world.

When we look for the range of physical and mental disabilities in Indian epics, we find congenital disabilities, blindness, limpness, hunchbacks, obesity, sleep disorders, dementia, amnesia, unconsciousness, hallucination etc in the select works of Devdutt Pattanaik. What is peculiarly marked is the way of lived experience of the characters with these disabilities is presented. An imperfect being or a disabled cannot occupy the position of king, Yuvanashva had to prove his virility to be the king and Dritrashtra was denied his promigenature for his blindness, Devapi also became a mendicant when he was denied kingship on account of his life-long skin condition that became disabling for him. A king must be perfect and the disabled ones are marginalised for their disabilities. The blindness of *Dhritarashtra* and Gandhari is stereotyped for being blinded by the ambition to give birth to the heir of Kuru clan, and it led to a disability of being unable to see the falsehood, dishonesty of their sons.

Physical disability is perceived as a term having negative connotations associated with it. Shakuni is also being portrayed negatively who was a significant reason behind the war of *Mahabharata*, which was a result of his anger towards *Bhishma*. Manthara, the hunchback is also portrayed negatively. She had instigated Kaikeyi to seek his right and to demand exile for Rama and the throne for Bharata. So, even today the disabled are viewed as evil. Any person with a hunchback is looked at by Indians to be the shrewd and evil entity. One who has these disabilities leads a life of subordination. He is considered worthy of being present during the lifetime but unworthy to control the reigns of his own life or the life of others associated with him. In mythological renderings, we have also perceived Indianness and the Indian way of

helping the needy and disabled. Whatever may the cause be for the physical and mental disabilities, these are treated as different and the 'Other' and the suffering is also great indeed. Not only the individual with a disability but all associated with him bear the grunt of time. Physical disabilities and mental disabilities are assumed to be the wrath of God; they are feared and served and are thus prayed for their removal.

We stand on the threshold of having an Indian model of disability which is quite different from the western models of disability. In West, we find the examples of Oedipus complex as outlined by Sigmund Freud while the Indian socio cultural milieu traces the anti-Oedipal complex which is also known as Reverse Oedipal. In Indian antiquity, the term anti-Oedipus marks its presence, when we study about the myth of Yayati – Devayani – Sarmishtha, where a father exchanged his old age with the youth of his son. Being very sensual and having the un-quenching desire to enjoy the pleasure of life, Yayati asked Yadu to receive his old age and offer his youth in return. Devadatta, also known as *Bhishma*, vowed to live a life of celibacy, an unquestioned sacrifice was made by an obedient son to pay respect to his father, Shantanu.

While describing the social disability, the thesis explored the gendered view on disability. The disabled are considered unworthy to be called of any gender. They are considered like inanimate objects which may have a specific place and role, but yet they do not have any say in society and do not possess any social importance. Like things can be replaced with one another, similarly disabled can be. They are the valueless creatures who can only play the role of serving others. Since the antiquity, the Indian society has been a patriarchal society where an ideal woman is characterised by the virtues of her fidelity, chastity, servitude towards her husband and other family members. Chastity is a yardstick to measure the honour of women. Chaste women are blessed with magical powers while adultery disables. With a mere thought of desiring Gandharva, Renuka lost her ascetic powers as well as got her head chopped

off. Disability stands as a paradigm of evil that happens when somebody loses the path of righteousness. Barrenness, Impotence, not performing the roles as ascribed by society makes one socially disabled. A prince who loved arts more than solving the riddles is socially disabled and so a princess who has the secret desire and intellect to reign the nation. Even after giving birth to a daughter, Kaushalya had to bear the presence of the other wives in the life of Dashratha as she could not produce a son. 'Be a man' when urged to a man is a social disability for him. Social Disability stands as a metaphor of upkeeping the patriarchal order of the society. Challenging masculinities, barren women and the presence of the third gender is viewed as the 'Other' thus disabling them socially. We have entered into the realms of magical mythological worlds to find men who turned into women and women expressing desire and thus challenging the norms of society and emerge as deviant and disabled.

Hinduism, more specifically, focuses that the supreme reality of all religions is Brahman. The Soul is immortal. Human beings take birth to suffer for their bad deeds and to do penance in the present birth to gain salvation. The theory of incarnation helps the disabled to believe that they can follow the principles of Vedanta and can get rid of *avidya* to become Brahman. Their disability will not be a hindrance to be a part of the universal self. Thus, Hindu religion endeavours to provide a healthy atmosphere around disabled to strengthen their abilities. It focuses on allowing them to be the part of the mainstream and to the focus is primarily on enabling the disabled. The renowned scholar Ashtavakra, who had eight deformities is renowned for his learning and ascetic powers. *Dhritarashtra*, apart from being visually impaired, was considered an example of strength. *Dhritarashtra* even ascended the throne, became the king of Hastinapur. Indian society represents two contradictory standpoints on disability. Either a disabled person is treated as a blessing devta, whose care should be taken to gain *Punya* to achieve *Moksha* or liberation as Hindu religion deeply believes in reincarnation. The karmic theory accentuates the fact that pain and suffering help diminish past

karmic sin by purging the evil from the Soul, which in turn elevates them with some divine powers. Gandhari being self-blinded, had attained special abilities due to her penance. Gods blessed her with special powers with which she made Duryodhana's body impervious. When we tried to trace the enablers of disability, we found that the good deeds enable the disabled. As the Indian philosophical view of life sees in its cyclicality, so it brings us to the notion that the man must keep on doing good deeds. With the power of her chastity, Sita was able to bring both Rama and Lakshman into consciousness after Indrajit struck them. Furthermore, she walked through fire unharmed due to her chastity. Manthara, a hunchbacked, was a part of God's divine scheme, and she had to obey God Rama by instigating Kaikeyi's mind. In her next birth, she was born as hunchbacked again in the form of Kubja, embraced by Krishna while he was entering Mathura. Lord Krishna then transformed her into a beautiful woman with an excellent physical body. It was her devotion and services and her obedience which enabled her to remove her disabilities.

In another incident we witness Krishna, the epitome of divinity bestowing his grace upon *Dhritarashtra* after listening to his piteous cries. *Dhritarashtra* who was suffering from congenital blindness gained sight by the blessings of Krishna. Krishna appeared not as a man but as a being with a thousand heads breathing fire, girding entire worlds between his death. Lord Krishna arrived as an enabler to help him regain his vision. But after viewing that scene, *Dhritarashtra* wished to see nothing else and so he got blind again.

Disabled were viewed from two standpoints. On the one hand, the disabled are always looked down upon by society in ancient times. On the other hand, there is also the mention of incidents where efforts were made in antiquity to include children with visual and speech defects during the Upanayana ceremony at the beginning of their education, illustrating that there were some relaxations in antique Hindu laws for the inclusion of disabled. This inclusion owes its origin in the theory of 'universal self,' i.e., All is Brahman. Disability is a mere illusion

as *Jivatman* is not different from the universal Soul. The Verse 22 of chapter 2 of Bhagavad Gita says that as a man removes the worn out clothes and adorns the new ones, the embodied self removes the worn out bodies and enters into the new. Hence, Hinduism also proposes equality and blessings for the disabled. There is a tendency to cope with the divine will and enable the disabled by substantial means considering the Indian viewpoint.

Indian mythological tradition in India has its root deeply embedded in its culture, tradition and folklore which has a broad horizon considering disabled to be an integral part of the system and An Indian poet Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore said, "The problem is not how to wipe out differences, but to live together with differences intact" (Coleridge). We need to celebrate differences which means the inclusivity of the disabled ones in the human family. Even the able-bodied need the disabled ones to cherish the totality of the human experiences by being the friends and enablers. The disabled are to be treated as contributors rather than consumers of the society. We as a society are to shun the negativity, fear and prejudice so that disability may not be seen as a problem. We are to accept disability which is a complex by breaking the stereotypes, removing stigmas and accepting the difference.

When we foresee the future scopes of the present research, the area appears yet to be in its nascent phase and can further be explored to have an Indian Model of disability and Disability History of India as academic paradigms. There can be certain offshoots like Desire and Disability, Indian literature and its Perceptions of Disability, Stereotyping of Disability, Inclusivity of disability, Mythological Characterization of disability in Indian Literature to mention a few. Whatever works we may pursue the aim will be to make disability a special human experience as:

The earth does not argue,
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,

Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,

Closes Nothing, refuses nothing,

Shuts none out. (Walt Whitman: A song of the Rolling Earth)

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