



Title- 'DIVYANG: Respecting Disability through the Biopic of Stephen Hawking The Theory of Everything'.

Mrs. Karishma Jangeed

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Sophia Girls' College (Autonomous), Ajmer

ABSTRACT

About 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability. Nearly everyone faces hardships and difficulties at one time or another in their life. But for people with disability, difficulties can be more frequent and have greater impact. Disabled people can experience discrimination at every place if reasonable adjustment is not made. One should stop treating them basely and should respect them for having the courage of living life irrespective of facing so many hardships. Stephen Hawking (Cosmologist and English Theoretical Physicist) rightly said that 'Disability need not be an Obstacle'. Everyone is aware of the fact that Hawking also suffered from disability but he did something very extraordinary in his life time which has made him immortal for the generations to come.

This research is an attempt to encourage and respect disabled people or rather Divyang or Divyangjan (the one with divine body part) through the Biopic 'The Theory of Everything' (2014) of famous

physicist Stephen Hawking who suffered from ALS, and how he overcame his disability in a beautiful and surprisingly relatable way.

Keywords: Biopic, Disability, Divyang, Divyangjan, Obstacle

What is Disability?

Disability is part of being human. According to the legal definition set forth by Americans with Disabilities Act, “a person with a disability is someone who has a physical and mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities”. Though this definition does not provide a clear picture of Disability as it is a wider term with wide prospect and variety. Disability can be seen or unseen. It can also be by birth and may be acquired later at some point of life. For some people Disability brings an image of a wheelchair or walking with stick but Disability can be beyond mobility. Whenever Disability as a topic is discussed, one should keep in mind that one should not limit the type to Mental, physical, chronic illness or Intellectual Disability. It has a wide scope.

What people think about Disability in society?

People with Disability are looked down at or considered inferior which hurts or demotivates them to explore new ways to live. They are not given equal opportunities, facilities and even education in society and are not even accepted by their own family. First step of socialization begins from family and they are rejected by their own families and if they are given support in family, the society rejects them, if not society, then at school or college or professional places, they face discrimination. At every step of their life, they are examined for being disabled as if they were disabled because of their own choice. Life in itself is a big challenge for them and the environment and people around them make it more challenging for them to even survive.

Meaning of VIKLANG

‘Viklang’ is a Hindi translation for ‘Handicap’ in English. This term was used to describe a person who could not work and had to beg with cap in his hand. Because of this belief disabled people did not like to be called as Viklang or handicapped. This however is not the actual origin of the term, rather it is originated from a lottery game known as Hand in Cap in 1600s, which involved players placing money in the cap. As it had a very negative connotation the term did not give them any motivation or inspiration to continue with life in a positive way. There should be some respectful language to inspire and motivate them for example “disabled people” with “people with disabilities” similarly “deaf people” with “people who are deaf”, thus emphasizing that they are human beings. Recognizing disability as secondary acknowledges the disability as significant characteristic of one’s life, but not the genuine identity of a person. Further the concept favors the use of “having” rather “being” for e.g., “she has a learning disability” in place of “she is learning-disabled”. The concept behind the people first is that it recognizes person, a human being or a citizen first and then the disability is a part of them, not all of them. With this notion word Viklang is replaced by Divyang to give respect to these lot of society.

DIVYANG and NEP 2020

“Barrier-free access to education for all children with disability” is the latest Provision made in the NEP 2020, approved by the Union Cabinet of India, in July of the year 2020. This provision is done by the Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawarchand Gehlot. Education Policy in India was first Formed in 1986 and was last modified in the year 1992. On December 3rd at an Accessible India Event and later in his Mann ki Baat address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had suggested the term DIVYANG (divine body) instead of VIKLANG. He that “We see a person’s disability with our eyes. But our interaction tells us the person has an extra ordinary power. Then I thought in our

country instead of using the word VIKLANG, we should use the term DIVYANG. These are the people who have a limb or several limbs with divine powers which we don't have." The word Divyangan has been suffixed now to the original name and the Department will now be known as the 'Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DIVYANGAN)'.

Introduction to Stephen Hawking

Stephen Hawking was born on January 8th, 1942, in Oxford, England, exactly 300 years after the death of Galileo. His father who was a well-known researcher in Tropical Medicine, encouraged his son to pursue his career in the same, but Stephen felt that Biology and medicine were not exact enough. Therefore, he turned to the study of mathematics and physics. He was not an outstanding student at St. Alban's School, nor later at Oxford University which he entered in 1959. He was a social young man who did little school homework because he was able to grasp the essentials of mathematics or physics problems quickly. His main contribution to science lies in the so-called 'Theory of Everything', words that give name, by the way, to his biographical film released in 2014. He was the first scientist to attempt to unify Einstein's Theory of General Relativity with the laws of Quantum Physics.

His Disability ALS

In 1963, he slipped and fell during a skating session and had mobility difficulties. He was immediately diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), when he was barely 22 years old. Disease commonly referred to in the U.S. as Lou Gehrig's disease. As ALS progresses, degeneration in Motor Neurons in the brain interfere with messages to muscles in the body. Eventually, muscle atrophy and voluntary control of muscles is lost. According to physicians, Life expectancy of people suffering with ALS is two years or shorter but Stephen Hawking lived with the Disease for more

than 50 years as he died at the age of 76. It is believed that people with ALS typically maintain intelligence, memory, and personality, even in the stages of the disease.

It was during his graduation that he was first struck with the disease, a weakening disease of the nervous and muscular system that eventually led to his total confinement on a wheelchair.

Achievements

Professor Stephen Hawking holds a total of 13 honorary degrees. He was awarded CBE (1982), Fellow of Honor (1989) and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2009). Hawking until 2009 held the Lucasian Professorship of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge, the same chair occupied 300 years earlier by Isaac Newton.

Biopic Review

Inspired the life story of Professor Stephen Hawking who was an English Physicist and Cosmologist has been regarded as the smartest living scientist, Jane Hawking made a movie portraying his life. On seeing Eddie's performance Prof. Hawking remarked "At times, I felt he was me,"- this is something which Eddie should get framed on his wall; it speaks volumes about his brilliance as an actor."

In addition to this, in a press conference Prof. Hawking said- "There should be no boundary between human endeavor". The *Theory of Everything* is not merely a movie about the science behind the origin of the Universe, but regarding the science of Love; and also, regarding how life's challenges that are faced by everyone determine the future every day and this can very well be seen through the phenomenal performances of Eddie Redmayne and Felicity Jones who play the roles of the revolutionary Stephen Hawking and his former wife Jane Wilde. The way Eddie puts his heart and soul in portraying Hawking's brilliance and motor neuron disease in incredibly brilliant and impressive and nailed the performance for the Best Actor nomination at the Oscars. On the humane

side, Ms. Jones portrays the limitless love and unending fight which was initiated by Jane in the household of Hawking after marriage and as the years passed, their lives transformed tremendously in a very profound and agonizing way. The story and the movie are the perfect illustrations of Hawking as a very Complex character and his wife Jane living with him in through thick and thin and the challenges and difficulties faced by him as a human being. The Film has been truly appreciated and reviewed. The movie focuses more on Stephen Hawking as a person rather than him as a scientist. The struggles, difficulties, challenges, problems etc. faced by Hawking are a source of inspiration to many people who are abled but lack the necessary courage to do something worthwhile.

Conclusion:

This research paper seeks to prove that a person is not disabled by his body but rather by his mind. Sometimes disabled people perform stunts which abled people might think about. Therefore, we must respect the disabled and praise God for who we are. As Hawking said in one of his interviews with New York Times- "My advice to other disabled people would be, concentrate on things your disability prevent you doing well, and don't regret the things it interferes with. Don't be disabled in spirits, as well as physically." One should be strong in spirits is what makes one abled in every aspect, Disability is mere an obstacle which can easily be overcome when one is free from burdened spirit.

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