

**REPRODUCING OR REJECTING  
REPRESENTATION: STEREOTYPES OF  
DISABILITY AND GENDER IN THE SELECTED  
FICTION OF ANGLOPHONE PAKISTANI  
WRITERS**

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**Reproducing or Rejecting Representation: Stereotypes of  
Disability and Gender in The Selected Fiction of Anglophone  
Pakistani Writers**

By

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## THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Faculty of Arts & Humanities for acceptance.

**Thesis Title:** Reproducing or Rejecting Representation: Stereotypes of Disability and Gender in the Selected Fiction of Anglophone-Pakistani Writers

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Candidate of Master of Philosophy at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis "Reproducing or Rejecting Representation: Stereotypes of Disability and Gender in the Selected Fiction of Anglophone Pakistani Writers" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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## ABSTRACT

**Title: Reproducing or Rejecting Representation: Stereotypes of Disability and Gender in the Selected Fiction of Anglophone-Pakistani Writers**

In literature disabled characters are either nonexistent or they are portrayed as incomplete, silenced, and excluded beings and their lives as tragedies. Minimal representation of such figures in literature indicates the attitude of society towards disabled/differently abled individuals. Literature represents ideal, normal, and able-bodied characters as heroes while people with disabilities/differently abled characters and their experiences are pushed to the periphery. Even when they are included, they serve some purpose in promoting plot development. They or their experiences rarely form the core of the literary work in fiction. Intersection of disability and gender marginalizes women and pushes them to the borders of existence. They feel the disabling impact of society more than their male counterparts. Disabled women face othering on social, economic, political, educational and religious grounds. Works of fiction tend to portray the disabled characters especially disabled women as helpless victims and disability as lack and loss thus stereotyping disability as tragedy. The present study attempted to analyze the portrayal of disabled characters especially disabled women and representation of disability in Muhammad Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) and Kamila Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone* (2014). Nandini Ghosh (2018), Rosemarie Garland Thomson and Ria Cheyne's (2019) work on disability and representation of disability in literature provides the theoretical framework for the study. The goal of the study was to find whether the representation of disabled characters reinforces the 'traditional' view of disability, or it challenges the old views. The study also explored the impact of gender in producing social perception of disabled/differently abled characters.

**Keywords:** *Representation of disability, disabled characters, gender, Anglophone-Pakistani Fiction.*

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*We are tired of being statistics, cases, wonderfully courageous examples to the world, pitiable objects to stimulate funding” - Paul Hunt, 1966*

Disabled people form almost 16% of the world population (*WHO Report*. 2023) but there are many misconceptions and misunderstandings about the disabled segment of society resulting in and resulting from misrepresentation in different medias of representation. If representation is encouraging, life may become easier for the people who have impaired bodies. This fact encouraged the present research to explore the representation of disability in Anglophone Pakistani fiction.

### **1.1 Social Significance of Literary Representation of Disability**

Literature and society are often considered mirrors to each other and as a result both have a deep impact on each other. Literature has power to shape people's attitudes, especially within the field of disability studies; literary works can potentially have the ability to not only represent, but also to shape people's views about disability. According to Ria Cheyne it has been observed by scholars of disability studies that people's attitudes towards real disabled persons are shaped by their encounter and understanding of fictional disabled characters (12). She further says that disability is still perceived and framed predominantly as a lack, loss, and tragedy in contemporary Western culture (20). Such representations shape perceptions both at individual and collective level by influencing the way people perceive a natural phenomenon.

Mostly the subject of disability is avoided in literature as it stirs up feelings of fear, anxiety, sympathy, and pathos. Such a large percentage (more than 16% of the world population) is often excluded from literature and media. Scholars who have been studying and exploring different ways of othering and experiences of marginalization have neglected the disabled people (Gai 24).

According to Rosemarie Garland Thomson disabled characters in literature exist on margins of fiction as “uncomplicated figures or exotic aliens” (9). When disabled

characters are incorporated, they are portrayed as stereotypes (Beauchamp, Mogilner, and Chung 1). The more a literary representation conforms to stereotypes, the more intense is the effect. In this way literary representation exaggerates an already present physical difference (Thomson 11). When a writer focuses only on a single body feature to describe a character, he puts the writer and the reader in a “confrontation that is predetermined by cultural notions about disability” (Thomson 11). The disabled characters do not behave like disabled people in real life; if they are allowed to behave like real disabled people trying to minimize stigmatized status, the rhetorical strength of stigma may be lost or decreased (Thomson 12).

Nancy Eiseland says that to incorporate people with disabilities in the economic, political, and legislative fields and to achieve social equality, our societies need a cultural “resymbolization” (98). Thomson talks about the symbol of perfect femininity in the form of Barbie dolls in her article “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory”: The doll has a disabled friend Becky, a school photographer on a wheelchair. The two dolls are different in their bodies, clothes, shoes, and other cultural symbols. In the same article, she adds to her views about femininity and disability that the images of the disabled models can destroy traditional views about disability: Contrast an image of a slender, blonde, white, blind model with a service dog to the images of freaks, charity images and twisted images of disabled bodies. This simple exercise of comparing and contrasting shows the power of representation in media. The image of a model with service dog can help in normalizing disability.

People with disabilities are segregated and excluded from normal culture products of the society as charity poster and street beggars only. If they are portrayed at all, they are portrayed either as helpless beings, powerless victims of chance and circumstances to evoke feelings of pathos and pity or they are portrayed as downright evil beings and villains (Cheney 27-28).

## **1.2 Disability and Anglophone Pakistani Fiction**

This almost universal attitude of excluding, othering, misrepresenting and pushing disability and disabled characters to the periphery of existence is also seen in Anglophone Pakistani literature. Most of the writers are concerned with themes revolving around

romance, politics, identity, cosmopolitanism and clash of civilizations or any other theme but not disability. The disabled segment of the society has not captured attention of most of the postmodern Anglophone Pakistani writers. The disabled human beings are pushed to the peripheries of existence both in society and in literature. Only a few writers have incorporated disabled characters in their work and from that small sample, the present research has picked some of the contemporary Anglophone Pakistani novelists.

According to a report by the World Health Organization, an estimated 1.3 billion people of world population (or 1 in 6 persons) are disabled/ differently abled (Dec 2022). Disability is one of the common human experiences as almost everyone sooner or later experiences some sort of impairment in life (Gai 60). It may result from accident, disease, or ageing. Rosemarie Thomson's article *Integrating Disability: Transforming Feminist Theory*, argues that disability is a basic feature of human bodies. Despite the universal presence of disability, people never feel at ease with deformity and brokenness. Like all other binaries, binaries of ability/disability, perfect/imperfect and healthy and diseased body are deeply ingrained in human thoughts and actions. Disability has been seen as an indication of misfortune (Stiker xx). The historical records show that the disabled segments of society remained isolated and marginalized (Stiker xix). Cultures continue to produce and reproduce differences. Disability produces a base for biological rejection and segregation of pure from impure. In the Western tradition, disability became a synonym for unclean thus ostracizing disabled bodies from religious sites and rites. Disability had been made a metaphor for human corruption (Stiker 19-21). With the changes brought about by Postmodernism, different human constructs have been challenged. Foucault said that dominant groups 'produce truths' in order to continue enjoying their privileged position in the society (Foucault 93). Different truths have been constructed about disability and disabled bodies that restrict their role in society.

Disability intersects with other factors and makes situation worse for disabled persons. When socially constructed weaker identities combine in one person, it leads to his/ her marginalization; for instance, social construction of women as burden and disability as inability to function makes things complicated and difficult for disabled women (Akbar 213).

### 1.3 Rationale for the Selection of Texts

Disability and experiences of people with disabilities are mostly ignored by the mainstream media and literature (Gai xxi), and when the disabled characters are presented in the works of fiction, they are mostly misrepresented. Their true selves, potential, feelings, and beings are ignored and only their disability is highlighted (Thomson 10-11). Literature has a mimetic function as was said by Aristotle because it reflects and shapes peoples' attitudes to the things, they have little direct exposure to. Thomson says in her book *Extraordinary Bodies* that people construct perceptual categories to understand the world and these categories harden up to produce stereotypes. She further adds, "Stereotypes in life become tropes in textual representation" (11).

The present research looks at the way disabled characters and disabilities are portrayed in the selected fiction. The selected novels have been explored through different lenses by different researchers, but no research has yet focused on the experiences of disabled characters portrayed in these novels. This research added the perspective of disability studies to the existing research on these novels with the hope of providing a positive insight into reading disability in Pakistani context. Facts need to be explored so that they may be appreciated or challenged and transformed to give birth to a more inclusive, happier, and more enlightened society.

As the study focused exclusively on disabled characters portrayed by Anglophone Pakistani writers, I have selected the novels: Muhammad Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) and Kamila Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone* (2014) my primary texts on the account that they are contemporary fiction writers who are well aware of modern trends in novel writing and living conditions of people. The selected novels provide a range of representation of disabled characters: male and female, rich and poor, partially disabled and completely disabled characters of different age groups living in different cities of Pakistan. The characters and their stories are located in different historical periods of Pakistani history. The diversity in portrayal also helps in exploring the intersection of gender and disability. Hanif's novels are set in Punjab and Karachi during and after General Zia's regime, Shamsie's novel is set in Peshawar during and after World War I, and Bapsi

talks about the culture of Lahore during and after 1947. Thus, the selection provides diversity of culture as well as different times in the history of Pakistan. There is a wide range of time periods and culture. It will help in finding whether things have changed for disabled people, or they face the same situation from the time period of roughly 1915 to 2011.

#### **1.4 Biography of the Selected Authors**

Here is a brief introduction of the three writers whose novels have been selected for the study. The selection is based on the fact that all the three writers are Anglophone Pakistani with an exposure of the East and the West. The selected fiction incorporates disabled characters as the research is about disability and disabled characters. The selected writers are contemporary whose work reflects Pakistani society and its attitude to disability and disabled persons of our times so the research is relevant to both our space and age.

Muhammad Hanif is a British-Pakistani fighter pilot turned writer and journalist who works for BBC and The New York Times. He has won many awards for his work, for instance: Sitara e Imtiaz, Welcome Book Prize, Commonwealth Prize for Best Book. He writes in English language which provides him an advantage that he escapes the severe criticism of those segments whom he criticizes but is at a disadvantage that a common Pakistani without knowledge of English language cannot understand him. He is considered ‘the foremost observer of contradictions and absurdities prevailing in Pakistan’ by Dexter Filkins of The New Yorker. (*Dangerous Fictions* 2016). Muhammad Hanif acknowledges that “peculiar difficulties and injustices” provide his fiction its “manic edge” (Filkins). His novels portray oppressive rulers and oppressed people, suppressed and marginalized women and exploitation and corruption prevailing at every level of the society. He owns his Pakistani origin; he says that he did not “fly in from England”. Out of three novels written by Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* have been selected for the study as they are contemporary novels depicting disability and disabled characters in modern Pakistani society.

Bapsi Sidhwa (1938) is a Pakistani novelist of Gujarati Parsi Zoroastrian descent who writes in English and lives in United States. She was two years old when she suffered from polio and could never shake off its effect entirely. She experienced the time of

Partition as a nine-year-old girl. Both life experiences shape the character of Lenny Sethi in her novel *Ice-Candy-Man* (1991). Punjabi is her first, Urdu second and English third language. She translates Urdu and Punjabi words, sentences, and proverbs directly into English which lends a captivating charm to her style. She is a winner of different awards: Sitara e Imtiaz (1991), Modello Prize (2007) and was inducted in the Zoroastrian Hall of Fame (2000). Her work with Indo-Canadian film maker Deepa Mehta made her famous all over the world. The film *Earth* was based on the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, the novel was later renamed as *Cracking India*. *Ice-Candy-Man* (1991) by Bapsi Sidhwa is narrated by a girl, Lenny Sethi who suffered from polio in early childhood and has somewhat mobility impairment. The novel later published as *Cracking India* explores the troubles at the time of partition. Different researchers have explored the social, political, and cultural unrest of that time.

Kamila Shamsie (1973) is a Pakistani and British writer and novelist. She was born in a well-off family of intellectuals. Her mother Muneeza Shamsie is a journalist and editor. She was brought up and educated in Karachi. She earned her B.A in creative writing from Hamilton College as an exchange student. Her first novel *In the City by the Sea* won Prime Minister Award for Literature in Pakistan in 1999. She writes for *The Guardian*, *New Statesman*, *Prospects*, and broadcasts on radio. She won many national and international awards. She was elected as fellow of the Royal Society of literature in 2011. *A God in Every Stone* by Kamila Shamsie has a partially disabled character Qayyum Gul. His disability does not obstruct his way to success and glory, but a social stigma is there in spite of his economic and social position. The study focuses on the character of Qayyum Gul and his impaired vision with a glass eye. The study tried to find whether the novel reinforces or rejects the stereotypes of disability.

### **1.5 Definitions of Impairment and Disability**

There is no universally agreed definition of disability. Traditionally, if a person is incapable of performing certain activities due to some physical impairment/s, s/he is considered impaired (Michailakis 210). According to Davis impairment is “loss or diminution of sight, hearing, mobility, mental ability” (41). Impairment is a medically verifiable and, in some cases, treatable condition. People with impairment face social,

political, educational, cultural, and structural barriers (Michailakis 212). Rosemarie Garland Thomson explains it: when wheelchair user has to climb stairs instead of ramp, a blind person is forced to read printed page instead of braille and deafness becomes a problem when people use only spoken language instead of adding sign language (7). In this way, impairments change into disabilities.

According to WHO's system of classification, disability is the result of impairment in terms of performance and actions. Handicap implies the discrimination that a person faces because of impairment. Disabilities are the result of impairments. An individual may have impairment, but handicap is a social product (D. Michailakis 212). Human beings have certain differences, but some differences become disabling as social constructs. People with disabilities are constructed as non-people when law denies them basic rights considering them as children (Jones and Marks 5).

According to Michailakis, disability is not a subjective attribute of an individual but a collection of conditions which are product of social environment (211). Davis says that disability itself is not a problem. The way normalcy is constructed, is the real problem for the disabled people (Davis 3).

In this study, I will use the term disability as it means the two things at the same time: impairment and social stereotyping of impairment and stigmatization associated with disability as my work is based on social model of disability. In Ria Cheney's words, impairment has only hypothetical existence, we actually meet disability in the real world (13).

Historically, disabled individuals have been considered "animals with human form" (La Mettrie 38). Martin Halliwell describes the condition of the disabled human beings as "degree zero of humanity" (qtd.in Hall 100). Bogdan talks about "freak shows" held in Britain, America, and Canada in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. People with different sorts of physical differences such as missing or additional limbs, too short heighted or too tall, too fat, and conjoined twins were exposed to the paying public as a show of entertainment. They were labelled as "mistakes of nature". Mentally challenged individuals went to the bottom of the society (qtd in Beauchamp, Chung, and Mogilner 3). Often, the root cause for such attitudes is the way the idea of 'normalcy' is constructed (Davis 3). Helander, in



his address to the UN conference about disability in 1993, stated that people with disabilities are outcasts throughout the world. Their number is increasing, and their situation is getting worse since they are often forced to live in shame and squalor; often because public and private organizations have neither the resources, nor an understanding of their accommodations (qtd. in Kinshuk Chakraborty 3697).

My research aimed to study the representation of disability in the selected Anglophone Pakistani fictions. The texts I focused on are: Muhammad Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) and Kamila Shamsi's *A God in Every Stone* (2014). I used the framework of analysis provided by the work on disability by Rosemarie Garland Thomson, Ria Cheyne, and Nandini Ghosh to study representation of disability and disabled/differently abled characters in literature.

## **1.6 Statement of the Problem**

The present study explores the representation of disability in the selected fiction by Anglophone Pakistani writers. The study looks at the way disabled characters are represented in the selected literature and to what purpose. The study also tries to find out whether these representations reproduce or reject the stereotypes associated with disability. Analyzing the intersection of disability and gender through the lives of disabled women and how it affects them, the study will articulate the process of othering and marginalization portrayed in the selected fiction.

## **1.7 Research Questions**

1. In what manner are disabled characters represented in the selected texts?
2. By what means does disability intersect with gender in the selected works?
3. How does the representation of disabled male and female characters challenge or reinforce stereotypes about disability?

## **1.8 Significance of the Study**

As a social group, people with disabilities have been out of the mainstream media and literature. They are stereotyped, othered and misrepresented which leads to social

hinderances in achieving their dreams and full potential. The absence of disability in literary texts creates and maintains a status quo where people with disabilities are seen only as problems within existing social patterns. Our educational institutions are sites of producing and reproducing normative, patriarchal, and neoliberal values. Academic understanding of disability as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon externalizes the problem and counters the common belief that it is an inherent, unchangeable, medical problem and a personal tragedy (Anita Gai xxi- xxii).

The study explores the lives and potential of the disabled characters as portrayed by their writers. The novels selected for the study have not yet been explored under the lens of disability. The research would contribute to exploring disability in Pakistani context. It focuses on the minor and major disabled characters in the selected fiction and their struggles in life; something which has not been brought to light by the previous researchers. Old researchers have explored other aspects of the selected fiction, but no one has worked on portrayal of disability and disabled characters. This research will contribute to the existing research on these novels by adding a new perspective to it. The model selected for the study is the social model of disability which centers on the role of society in making impairment a disability for persons having some impairment when it refuses to accommodate their special needs in different social situations.

Many researchers and scholars in the West are writing about disability but there is a lack of research in Pakistani context. Various aspects of the selected novels have been explored by different researchers, but no one has yet talked about the element of disability and representation of disabled characters in the selected novels. There is a great need of research in this field as the people having some impairments are misunderstood, othered and marginalized by Pakistani society that is already struggling against illiteracy, economic and political instability, and many other social evils. There is a dire need of research and practical steps to alleviate the present condition of disabled people.

### **1.9 Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

The research focuses exclusively on the disabled characters and tries to find the answers to: how is disability represented in the selected texts, and how is disability affected by gender? Owing to constraints of time and space, I have limited the study to a few

novelists, but their work can be taken as a sample to explore the representation of disabled characters in the fiction thus reflecting attitude of the society to disability. Although disability intersects with many other factors like class, culture, geographical location, religion, and degree of disability yet the research focuses mainly on the intersection of disability and gender.

### **1.10 Structure of the Study**

The structure of the present study is Chapter 1 provides a complete introduction of the selected authors and definition of disability and impairment and the difference between the two key terms. Problem of the statement, research questions and significance of the study all are parts of chapter 1. Chapter 2 gives a comprehensive account of representation of disability in literature, review of different researches on the selected novels, and research gap. Chapter 3 is a detailed theoretical analysis. Arguments provided by different researchers on construction of identities especially identity as a disabled person, models of disability studies, intersection of gender and disability, and the arguments of three theorists selected for the study Ghosh, Thomson and Cheyne are discussed in detail. Chapter 4 is about detailed analysis of the selected texts. It analyzed representation of disability in literature, after providing a brief overview of the selected texts, this chapter provides a detailed analysis of representation of disabled characters in the selected fiction one by one. Chapter 5 is about devaluation of disabled characters. It also provides comprehensive analysis of the intersection of gender and disability. Othering of disabled characters is also a part of this chapter. Chapter 6 concludes the study with a detailed conclusion of all arguments.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

It is interesting to note that the term disability comes from law and was used to describe those who did not have legal capacity to hold property and have controlling positions or independent agency: women, children, idiots, and lunatics. Poverty was also regarded as a disability as it made men socially inferior. Thus, the word disability had connotation of lack and inferiority since the beginning. The present study tries to explore the human attitude towards disability, how has it changed or not changed with the passage of time and the impact of stigma of disability on the lives of disabled persons. In the latter part of the twentieth century man's understanding of abilities and disabilities changed (Jones & Marks 2) with the introduction of the medical and social model of disability.

Disability is one of the common human experiences. Its presence in human society ensures its presence in all cultural products of a society. According to Ria Cheyne, "disability makes us feel." It produces a host of feelings and responses in the people who encounter it. She calls encounters with disability "affective encounters" which produce some simple recognizable feelings and some complex emotions difficult to "parse" (11). Literature all over the world includes or excludes disability, represents, or misrepresents disabled characters thus shaping attitudes of people to this aspect of human existence. Barnes states that stereotypes about disability are present in our societies because communication media is still reproducing them just as it reproduces sexist and racist attitudes in people (5). The writers often use disability and disabled characters to evoke strong feelings in their readers which able bodied characters may fail to produce. Thus, disability has been used as a tool in different forms of representation. Reducing a living man or woman to the status of a tool is objectification and othering in extreme form.

Until very recently, literature for children and literature for adults reflected disability as evil and people with disabilities as less than human, freaks, or monsters (qtd. in Miles, et al. 3). Folktales portray disability as something to be mocked and have done great injustice to disabled people (Gai xxvi). *The Blind Men and the Elephant* is a common bedtime story for children. There are five versions of this parable across the world, but the

story is used to represent the limitation of blindness in each version (qtd. in Ghai 296). The use of metaphor plays an important role in representation and understanding of disability. According to Barnes, stereotypes about disability have their roots in superstitions, myths, and beliefs from ignorant times. They are inherent to human culture because they are produced and reproduced through media including television, newspapers, magazines, and books (Barnes 6-7). The process of producing and reproducing same stigmatized images again and again reinforces the inferior position of disabled people in the society and in a way that normalizes their objectification and marginalization to the extent that the disabled people accept it without any question.

Rosemary Garland says that disability studies gain a deeper perspective when it takes insight from feminism, in the same way feminism can benefit from disability studies (2). Disability like gender is a concept not a natural state of “corporeal inferiority” that forms identities, social and political positions and historical communities. Two socially inferior subject positions combine to make lives of disabled women more disempowering than those of disabled men.

## **2.1 Representation of Disability in Literature**

Disabilities have existed since the beginning of human history. It has been an everyday reality since the dawn of human history. The Bible mentions different mental and physical disabilities. People with disabilities were deemed legally unclean like prostitutes and menstruating women. They could not participate in religious rites (Stiker 24) ‘as only a clean person could approach God’s residence’. Overall, disabilities were judged as impurities. According to Jewish law, the deaf and mute are subnormal while the blind people are normal and enjoy all rights. In the Qumran texts, people with disabilities are forbidden from fighting in war or participating in communal meals. It was said that the person was “afflicted” so he could not attend religious gatherings. If he wanted to say something, he had to say it in private not in the company of others (Stiker 24). The disabled people had been marginalized and othered in different periods of history. They were treated differently on account of their disability and discriminating attitudes passed on from generation to generation without anyone questioning them. The disabled people themselves

had internalized their lower social, economic, religious and political position so they too did not raise a voice of protest.

Islam showed kindness and compassion for disabled people. The Holy Quran exempted people with disabilities from participating in combat not because of impurity but because of their physical condition. The Holy Prophet (SAWW) said, “No reproach to the blind, no reproach to the lame, no reproach to the sick.” Islam put the social exclusion of people with disabilities to an end. Jesus also invited people with disabilities to his banquet thus including them in social gatherings. The Bible allowed the priest to check a person for leprosy. People with leprosy were judged as unclean and had to undergo rites of purification. They suffered from social exclusion as they were obliged to warn others to keep their distance. Religion in the right hands provided comfort and somewhat equal position to disabled segment of the society but when religion becomes a tool in the wrong hands, it is also used to marginalize the already marginalized people. Some societies consider disability a punishment not a physical condition. Defect was associated with sins and disability was considered a result of pollution thus man himself or his family was the one who sinned (Stiker 25- 27). The New Testament text rejected the old concept of sin and disability. The wrong has nothing to do with one’s interior but it lies in one’s actions, behavior, and speech. Purity and impurity are produced and maintained by man himself (Stiker 34). Greco-Roman exposed deformed and disabled children to elements of nature outside their settlements thus returning them to gods. Delcourt writes that these children produced fear. They were the cause and sign of god’s wrath (Stiker 39-40). Modern societies know a lot about disabilities and their causes but one encounters such attitudes even today. When people with impairment started raising their voices of protest against social attitudes of othering and marginalization, some people tried to incorporate them in the mainstream media.

Disability studies has inclusive approach to different fields of learning and has become a part of different movements like feminism and postcolonialism. Disability studies and postcolonialism are two interrelated fields of study that explore social constructs of nations and bodies entitled to citizen rights. Different researchers try to study disability in terms of exile, diaspora, colonization and slavery. Disability has often been

used as a metaphor for the problems faced by nations. Concept of colonization has been applied to the relationship of a medical practitioner and a disabled individual, provision of those facilities which suit only able-bodied individuals but not those who have some impairment is seen as a form of colonialism, psychiatric and mental impairment has been called a form of diaspora, and the quest for a cure has been presented as orientalist discourse (Sherry 10-11). Lane draws attention to the similarity of stereotypes faced by black people and people with some impairment in his work *The Mask of benevolence*. He says that hearing people act as colonialists. They try to “civilize” their hearing-impaired charges whom they fail to understand and create imaginary deaf people according to their own experiences and needs. Arthur Frank describes patient- doctor relation as a form of colonization: medical colonization. he says that medical text needs a suffering person without acknowledging his individuality (qtd in Sherry 12-13). Industrialization gave a new signification to disabled bodies: the people having some impairments were considered unfit for an industrial society and had to face negative stereotyping (Turner 6). Slavery and disability have been connected with each other since centuries. Stefanie Kennedy explores the link between slavery and disability in her article “let them be young and stoutly set in limbs”: the slaves were captured and their bodies branded like those of animals. They were forced to work till death, fed only enough to keep them alive and were kept in tight confined places which produced different diseases like yaws, polio, leprosy and scabies. Slaves often developed impairments as a result of such treatment. Disabled slaves lost their worth as a commodity that could be sold but they had to work on plantations. In many cases violence at the hands of sadistic owners led to severe injuries and impairments. The people having some impairments face such harsh attitudes of society in the contemporary world: they are excluded from economic field and are left at the mercy of generosity of some kindhearted people, at time they face violence as they cannot defend themselves because of impairment or their marginalized position in the society.

Feminism has also taken up the stance of disability movement thus producing feminist disability studies. Feminist disability studies tries to address the questions of representation and difference. It tries to address the issues related to identity, sexuality, language and subjectivity. Stereotypical representation in public media, for instance contributes to secondary status given to disabled women (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 59).

Rosemarie Garland Thomson in her groundbreaking work “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory” says that both the movements share many similarities and thus can benefit from each other’s experiences. She says in her article “Re-shaping, Re-thinking, Re-defining: Feminist Disability Studies” that both women and disabled people are considered deviant and inferior, both are excluded from full participation in social and economic spheres, both are compared with norm which is considered superior (7). Disabled women and girls live at the corner of disability and womanhood, with two minority identities (i). As a result, they suffer from double dose of discrimination and stereotyping. She further adds that comparison of bodies becomes a base of distribution of resources, status and power (1). Disabled women are considered unfit for motherhood and are treated as childlike objects (5). Disabled girls/women are considered a lifelong burden for parents who are supposed to take care of them in south Asian societies (Akbar, 216). Women with disabilities are imagined as inferior, lacking, excessive, useless, incapable and unfit. Rosemarie Garland says in her article “Re-shaping, Re-thinking, Re-defining: Feminist Disability Studies” that women and disabled people are considered wrong. Their bodies are weak, vulnerable, dependent, helpless and ungovernable. This cultural narrative of femaleness and disability leads to domestic violence, infanticide, honor killing, eugenic practices and assisted suicide (8). Woman have to face male gaze while disabled people are also objects of the stare. The representation, social scripts and cultural stories about femaleness and disability construct the material world. Feminist disability studies tries to challenge these persistent narratives by focusing on gender and disability as systems of representation and as ways of giving meaning to human variations.

Goldman noted that the number of books showing disabled characters increased after 1970 but they had flat portrayal of the disabled characters lacking multi-dimensional personality. The content was lacking in the sense of plot and felt like a “sermon” (qtd in Beauchamp, Chung, and Mogilner, 3). Anita Desai’s novel *Clear Light of the Day* (1980) has a character named Baba who is suffering from developmental delay and his sisters take care of him. He cannot speak for himself, and other characters treat him as a baby and bully him at times. The novel shows the kind of attitude people who consider themselves normal show to the people whom they regard as abnormal. Salman Rushdie’s novel *Shame* (1984) has a disabled character, Sufiya Zinobia, referred to as birdbrain, naive, a mental case and



beast who suffered from brain fever in childhood which resulted in deranging her mental faculty. She is portrayed in a very negative light as a vampire engaged in disgusting activities. His other novel *Midnight's Children* portrays a large number of children who may be called disabled or super abled at the same time. The main character Saleem loses many of his faculties and special abilities with growing age. He becomes partially deaf when his father slaps him hard, but he hides the fact from his family. Later, he and other children like him are castrated by the government so that they may not reproduce their type of men/women. The novel shows extreme form of hatred which 'normal' people have for the abnormal or super normal people whom they try to wipe off the surface of the earth.

The novel *Noor* by Sorriya Khan portrays a baby girl named Noor, born with Down's Syndrome. Her father finds it very difficult to accept her 'abnormality', while her mother believes that the child has mysterious magical powers. The father throws her artwork in the dustbin, but the mother sees the ocean in blue painted sheets. Quite mysteriously, as the girl grows up, she starts drawing scenes from the past. Her drawings compel Ali, her grandfather, to confess his sins committed during the war of 1971 and the adoption of Noor's mother Sajida. Past lives of elders are revealed through mysterious power possessed by Noor. Noor has been turned into a perfect example of a disabled person having mysterious powers, thus, linking disability with supernatural agencies and removing a disabled person from the realm of normal.

As Dr. Somdev Banik says that disabled characters have always been a part of oral or written literature, but they are never accorded the same fictional space as that to the standard characters. The disabled characters are reduced to stereotypes instead of normal human beings (1). The discrimination against disabled people functions subliminally and learnt in early childhood from books and mass media (Banik 4).

## **2.2 Past Research on Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti***

Muhammad Hanif's work has been explored by different researchers. M. Tanvir, S. Arif and M. Hayat have explored praetorianism in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Their research studied the social and political circumstances of Pakistan during 1980s. General

Zia controlled the government of Pakistan by military take-over till his plane crashed. The researchers investigate different practices which Zia engaged himself in to justify his praetorianism. He was blue eyed boy of America and got dollars in return for his favors. He was a mullah in uniform and used Islam for his vested interest. The researchers debate on the use of religion for political gains in Pakistan. According to Zia's system of government, women were confined to the four walls of house. He used state resources and military power to depoliticize Pakistan which resulted in controversies and polarization.

Yasir Arafat, S. Ahmad, and M. Mehdi have studied the novel from a postcolonial perspective. Their research highlights totalitarianism and colonial legacies practiced by Zia during his dictatorship. Their research also brings to light Zia's failures, inefficiencies, and undemocratic ways. He demanded the dog's loyalty from his people by use of force and exploited them for his own benefit using religious and national ideologies as his tools. They explore the ways the people of Pakistan were manipulated by using the slogans of Islamization and nationalism.

Afzal, Pakri, and Abdullah attempted to deconstruct the novel using Derrida's theory of deconstruction. According to the researchers, the novel enables readers to make multiple assumptions about a single event which ultimately leads to multifarious realities. The mysteries presented at the start remain mysteries till the end. The meaning is different from what is stated thus it differs in meaning. The novel is a product of play between the privileged and the marginal meaning, thus, binary opposition plays a role in construction of meaning.

Muhammad Arfan Lodhi, Sania Muqqadas and Sobia Sikander have explored political imbroglios in Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. The researchers explore the intermingling of economic, political, social, personal, military, religious and political values in the selected novels.

Khadija Majeed, Aniq Rashid, Iqra Nazish, Amna Aziz and Aqsa Aslam have explored irony and nostalgia in Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* through postmodern lens. The researchers find that nostalgia can be denied but it is felt deeply, and people idealize the perfectness of the past. The hidden realities of Pakistani politics and society are brought to light using nostalgic irony, satire, commentary, and conspiracy theories.

All the above-mentioned researchers focused different aspects of Hanif's novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* but none of them mentions Zainab as a disabled lady and her struggles due to her impaired vision. Whenever she is mentioned, it is done generally to show plight of women in Pakistan during Zia's regime.

Abroo Nazar's research explored the representation of women in Pakistani literature in English. Pakistani women are represented as stereotypical victims of oppression and violence. According to the researcher the native informer is guilty of epistemic violence which further silences women thus native informers are unable to represent women. The study finds that women are represented as helpless, meek victims having no individuality. It further silences them.

Rupkatha Paul and Shri Krishan Rai have made a critical study of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* and explored the strains of sexual violence on the backdrop of sainthood. Alice is considered a magical healer, a supernaturally divine being but despite this, her gender makes her a victim of violence in the novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. She is treated more like a witch and a lump of flesh than a healer. There is not only greed for sex but also for violence in different characters of the novel. The researchers study the plight of women and minorities in Pakistan and availability of justice to them in different spheres of life.

M. Mirza explored the trend of 'necroidealising' by subaltern studies historians. The writers have a tendency to romanticize the dead hero and his struggles, but Hanif's novel is a rejection of idealization of the subaltern as a living or dead hero. The researcher analyses Alice's position as an untouchable subaltern in a male dominated society where her untouchability does not stop unwanted male attention and touch.

Mubashar Altaf and Qaisar Shahzad probe the resistance of subalterns against the oppression of capitalist society through their research. Alice is a subaltern on multiple levels thus faces and fights against triple marginalization. According to the researchers, Hanif has produced a subaltern who speaks, fights against the system but in the end is crushed by the same oppressive system. The binaries operating in the society perplex Alice and she must struggle to find her identity. This struggle produces a deep identity crisis in her soul.

The above-mentioned researches focus entirely on Alice as a subaltern and a victim no one mentions Zainab or her problems. No one talks about Zainab as a visually impaired and homeless woman. She and her disability are almost invisible to the researchers.

### **2.3 Past Research on Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone***

Inam Ullah, Gul Andama and Abid Nawaz study colonial discourses in the novel *A God in Every Stone* by Kamila Shamsie. They argue that not only military might, but also colonial discourses helped in establishing and ironically, later destabilizing British rule in India.

Gul E Zahra explores the ways through which war and colonialism altered the ideologies of the colonized and the colonizers by analyzing *A God in Every Stone* and *The English Patient*. According to the researcher, the writers sometime depict hurt feelings of characters in the form of physical pain and injuries. Qayyum loses one eye while fighting for the English, then there is a general massacre of civilians of Peshawar. Kipp also faces the same situation, he fights for the British while they kill his people.

Sadia Naz, Sahibzada Aurangzeb and Saba Hassan explored manacled identity of Pashtuns through their research on the novel *A God in Every Stone*. According to the researchers the Pashtuns are presented as exploited and oppressed people who were loyal to the British government until the government changed its attitude to them. When the British army opened fire on Pashtuns and created hurdles for them, they raised their voice and struggled for an independent state.

Sammar Ayaz, Sadia Irshad and Manzoor Illhai study nationalism in *A God in Every Stone*. They contend that nationalism provides a base for independence movements. The novel depicts nationalism of three different nations: Scylax, a Carian was faithful to the Persian king but sided with his nation. Tehsin Bey, an Armenian sided with Armenians not Ottomans; Najeeb and Qayyum sided with Pashtuns not the English when Pashtuns were massacred. Nationalism is fundamental to human nature and helps in attaining loyalty, unity, and preservation of culture.

Once again, different researches focus on different aspects of the novel but no one highlights Qayyum Gul as a man having one eye and his struggles with himself and his outer world on account of his disability.

Waheed Ahmad, Imran Ali, and Muhammad Farooq have made a comparative study of Partition of Subcontinent in *Ice-Candy-Man* and *A God in Every Stone*. The two novels have a quite contradictory portrayal of partition of India: A Parsee girl narrates the story in Sidhwa's novel and views pre-partition society as homogeneous and friendly; on the other hand, Vivian Rose, an English lady devalues anti colonial movement and the writer, Kamila Shamsie highlights colonial ambition by adding the theme of archeology in the novel. Shamsie depicts Haji Sahib as a warrior and stays silent about his educational reforms, she seems to prefer social change to political change.

Qurat ul Ain Liaqat and Dr. Rizwan Akhtar make a Foucauldian discourse analysis of the novel. They study different power structures embedded in the novel. The researchers contend that although there are gods in every stone on this earth but there is also hope of resistance against those gods.

## **2.4 Past Research on Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man***

Paromita Deb studies the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* as gendered narrative of displacement and dispossession at the time of partition in 1947. The researcher also explores the destruction of communal life of the Subcontinent and reconstruction of old and new identities.

Showkat Hussain Dar has studied *Ice-Candy-Man* through a feminist perspective. Lenny, the narrator observes, reacts to and analyses men's lasciviousness and unwanted attention to women, thus reducing women to only objects of desire. *Ice-Candy-Man* portrays women's exploitation, marginalization, and oppression in a patriarchal society on one hand and on the other it shows women's endurance of that pain and humiliation.

Annie Gagiano makes comparative analysis of *Ice-Candy-Man* and *In the Country of Men*, the two novels set in South Asia and North Africa respectively. These two novels have child narrators, are about gendered power relations, depict horrific savagery inflicted

on female bodies, invasion of houses and transformation of state, displacement of community and ethnic cleansing.

Jharna Choudhury studied *Ice-Candy-Man* under the lens of trauma and transgression of 'Adult-child'. Lenny as a child faces trauma on multiple levels: mass migration, massacre, marginalization of women, improper parenting, and chaos in communal and individual life. Lenny becomes a problem child, a choreographed child, and an adult-child. The stages of childhood and adulthood deconstruct themselves and overlap with each other as a result, Lenny, untimely, starts behaving like an adult.

Aisha Haleem studied the traces of phallocentrism, trauma and Holocaust imagery in *What the Body Remembers* and *Ice-Candy-Man*. The researcher counts Partition of India among major traumatic events of the world like World Wars, Holocaust, the Plague, and epidemics. Partition proved most disgraceful for women, as a weaker sex, they were easy targets. Lack of penis in women means lack of power and authority for women. Women must rely on men who use them as a tool. Abduction and rape of women were used as tools to humiliate other communities at the time of Partition.

Arunima Dey studied the novel as a narrative of gendered violence where women's bodies are used to manifest national or religious enmity through violent acts of abduction and rape. The researcher also studied the resistance and female agency to counter male violence through female solidarity.

Zahid Abbas and Dr. Tufail Chandio explored the elements of indigenous culture and identity in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* using postcolonial theory. The researchers explore how Eurocentric practices of the colonizers pushed the colonized to periphery.

Lenny has been discussed and her character has been analyzed by some researchers, mostly Ayah is the focus of attention and discussion. Lenny as a disabled girl has not been discussed in detail. All previous researches explore plight of women and trauma of migration but life of a disabled girl has been ignored.

## **2.5 Research Gap**

Review of the previous research on the selected novels shows that these novels have not yet been explored through the lens of disability. The present research is significant as

it will add a new dimension to the existing research with the hope that positive representation of disability in literature may help in shaping attitude of the people to disability and disabled persons as literature reflects and shapes human society. All the past researchers have explored main characters, their lives, struggles and different themes but no one has yet explored disability and struggles of disabled characters in these novels. The present research aims to explore representation of disability and disabled characters with the hope that it may help to shift focus from Ali Shigri to Zainab; from Alice to Zainab; from Aaya to Lenny and from Vivian Rose to Qayyum Gul, the less explored characters and their struggles as disabled persons among able bodied men/women.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present research is a qualitative one as it does not rely on statistical data or facts and figures. It is exploratory and analytic in its approach. The social model of disability is used to study the representation of disability in Pakistani Anglophone literature. The social model of disability is suitable to study the construction of disability and intersection of disability and gender. The main theorists are Rosemarie Garland Thomson, Ria Cheyne and Nandini Ghosh.

The selection of the theorists and writers is based on the fact that they talk about disability and disabled characters. The selected theorists agree that the disabled characters are not given proper representation in different forms of media, as a student of English literature, I prefer to explore literature. Living in Pakistan, disability and lives of disabled people in Pakistan is of prime interest to me. Like all other societies in the world, especially third world countries, our society is highly segmented. Man made concepts of gender, class, able bodies, religious piety, social and political positions have a very strong hold on people's lives and minds. Social model suits my investigation as it believes that disability is a social construct. Society itself makes life difficult for disabled people by rejecting them, ignoring their needs, limiting their exposure, providing them little chances of exploring their potentials and depriving them of living fulfilling lives. Another motive of choosing the subject of disability and its representation in literature is that most of the writers and critics are silent about this 16% segment of the society. Lack of counter narratives means strong hold of stereotypes: disability as a result of sin, as a punishment; disabled person as incapable of living a fulfilling life and the resulting attitudes of repulse, condescension and pity.

Women in our society are underrepresented and misrepresented while the women with disability have been pushed to the margins of existence. This research is conducted with the hope of providing a counter narrative to the existing narrative of almost invisible, helpless disabled women.



Thomson's work on representation of disability motivated many researchers to explore representation of disability in different works of literature all over the world. No such work on the representation of disability and disabled characters in Pakistan was found when this research was being planned. Representation in literature not only has a reflexive role but also has a reflective role. Representation of a human issue can make people think and rethink it. If the same stereotypical things are produced and reproduced, no change in human attitude at individual or collective level can be expected.

### **3.1 Social Construction of Identities**

According to Berger and Luckman, all identities are man-made and socially constructed. A person is not born as a member of society, he becomes one. He is "inducted" to participate in "social dialect" (Berger & Luckman 163). Disability is a socially constructed identity. The people who have some impairment live a fully active life if social and cultural arrangements accommodate their special needs. In the hierarchy of power structure, the disabled people are given an inferior position. The group that has desirable physique imposes cultural and corporeal inferiority on the group which does not have those socially and culturally desirable physical traits (Garland-Thomson 7). Simon de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* talks about constructed gender: one is not born a woman but becomes one (Beauvoir 18). No group can define itself as One without setting the Other against it. Women are taught how to play their role by men and others. In patriarchal societies being a woman means to have a weaker identity. "Impairment shapes gender and gender shapes impairment" (Akbar 218). Women who have impaired bodies are not considered ideal for the ideal feminine roles, thus depriving them of family life. (Gai 118, Akbar 218, Ghosh 113). Nidhi Goyal in her article *Privilege or Marginalization* talks about her experience as a blind person and a woman, the two identities which are socially disadvantaged, when intersect, cause double marginalization. Devaluation of impaired female bodies in every domain of life pushes them to the margins of the society (qtd. in Gai 166-167).

### 3.2 Models of Disability Studies

There are different models to study disabilities. Medical models and social models are the most common. The first and the most commonly used is the medical model. The medical model supposes that physical impairment is medically verifiable. Disability implies defects, failure, and impairment. According to this model a disabled person is considered handicapped. Medical examination establishes impairment after diagnostic tests. The medical model of disability takes impairment as a disease that needs treatment. According to this model impairment is limiting for a person. The limitation can be reduced through rehabilitative treatment: all differences can be erased using medicine, therapy, physical exercise, and the individual's own wish of normalcy (Michailakis 209-210). The medical model focuses on the individual and reduces the importance of social, political, economic, and other external factors. The defects of medical models led people to widen their perspective.

The social model of disability studies the interaction between disability and the society. Impairment becomes a problem when society makes it problematic. Adaptations in society can make impairment less disabling. Most of the limitations imposed upon disabled people are not natural and unavoidable. Impairment and handicap do not have a cause-and-effect relationship; rather handicap is a social discrimination. Discrimination does not have roots in biological or physiological form, but it is socially, culturally, economically, and politically constructed. Disability becomes equivalent to oppression by different power structures in human societies. All individuals are different from one another. It is society that decides and makes some differences more limiting and disabling for some individuals (Jones and Marks, 2-3). According to this model disability is a social creation.

According to Luhmann functions of society are performed in terms of meaning not biological forms. Communication about a person's physical, psychic, emotional condition becomes a part of society. Binary codification system helps in perceiving a person. Only those aspects get attention which fit the system-specific communication, all other aspects of a person are ignored. Disability stirs up our fears and produces positions in us and them.

The othering of disabled bodies excludes them from the positions of power (qtd. in Michailakis 213-215).

Law, social environment, institutions, and ideology put some sections of society at disadvantage (Jones and Marks 3). Anita Gai says that the disabled people are treated in such a way by the society that they have a diminished social, political, interpersonal, cultural, and physical wellbeing. Thus, allotting them membership of a minority group that has been oppressed and marginalized throughout history (Anita Gai 19). The idea of social model of disability developed from *Fundamental Principles of Disability* published in mid 1970s which argued that people are not disabled by impairments they face but by the social barriers they must encounter (Mike Oliver 1024). The social model has shifted focus from the impaired body to the social setting. Social constructionist approach highlights the role of social, economic, political forces as disabling factors. Artificial barriers placed by the society limit the lives of disabled people (Melinda Jones 3).

### **3.3 Intersection of Gender and Disability**

The different layers of identity are tangled: gender intertwines with disability, disability overlaps into class, class exerts pressure against race, race entwines into sexuality, sexuality depends on gender and all this piles up in form of human body (Clare qtd in Hall 3). Nandini Ghosh argues in her article *Experiencing the Body: Femininity, sexuality, and Disabled Women in India*, that “disability is experienced in, on and through body”, on the other hand, impairment is experienced through personal and cultural narratives. Cultural constructs shape and give meaning to female body. Patriarchy and male gaze construct incarnation of female inferior to that of male through power structures and socio-political constructs. A host of cultural meanings are attached to a gendered disabled body. Oppressive norms of femininity and ableism are expressed through disabled bodies of women. Women internalize socio-cultural construction of normal and ideal women. These ideals influence their thoughts and shape their behavior. Thus, they try to meet the standard. Bodies are marked by gender, culture, caste, religion, and other such identities. Certain images of gendered bodies are presented by media, family, education, community, and other social agencies as norm and desirable while some are rejected as undesirable and abnormal. Disabled women are considered incomplete in terms of appearance and

productivity and reproduction. Attempts are made to normalize a gendered disabled body. The medical procedures are often time taking and painful, but families and girls endure them for their future benefit. Impaired bodies are socially constructed as incomplete, unwanted, and deeply flawed. The girls internalize these attitudes of the society at an early age through the process of socialization. The devaluation of impaired bodies of women pushes them to periphery in every sphere of life (Ghosh 103-106).

Ghosh says that impairment appears when bodies, minds and cultures intersect. It is an experience as well as a discursive practice. The disabled people experience impairment as a physical affliction and disability as a result of complex social oppression (102). Goyal says that in societies where birth of female baby is far from being celebrated, the birth of a baby girl with disability is a saddening moment (180).

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson is a humanities scholar, disability justice and culture thought leader and a teacher. She teaches English, disabilities studies, bioethics, and feminist theory at Emory University. She has written many books and essays on disability studies: *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring disability in American Culture and Thought* (1997), *Staring: How We look* (2009), *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities* (2002) are some of the notable works. Her work sets the foundation for many new writers who explored representation of disability in literature and other cultural products.

Ria Cheyne is a lecturer at Liverpool Hope University. She runs the Disability and Romance Project which aims to start new conversations about disability and its interaction with readers, writers, and industry professionals. Some arguments from her work titled *Disability, Literature, Genre: representation and Affect in Contemporary Fiction* has been selected as a framework to explore representation of disability in Pakistani literature. She says that disability has always been a part of literature. Readers, writers, and others associated with literature discuss and enquire about the role of disability in literature. People have interest in topics as attractive disabled detective, miserable disabled man/woman, absence of disabled hero in romance novels, presence of disabled villains and uncomfortable portrayal of disability. She argues that scholarly work on disability often invokes negative emotions such as pity, fear, and discomfort, however, encounters with disability can also produce positive emotions such as pride, admiration, and hope. These

emotions depend on the context. She wants such representation of disability that may lead people to understand and rethink disability. The dominant perception about disability in the West is still culturally constructed in terms of loss, lack and tragedy. Ria Cheyne says that disabled characters are often depicted as helpless and vulnerable. They are represented as victims of chance and circumstances. The life of disabled characters is represented as tragic (31-32).

Texts have transformative functions. Texts in horror genre always depict a person with disabilities as monster, or as a helpless victim. Such depictions are reflexive and reflective as they may force people to think(rethink) about their understanding of disability. Works of fiction having disabled characters evoke fear: fear of the disabled monster or fear for helpless disabled victim. Such fiction produces a multitude of emotions such as discomfort, vulnerability, and aversion. When disabled people are depicted as helpless victims, it reinforces social construct of helplessness and vulnerability of disabled people who are victims of chance or situations of their lives. She says that novels often spread and perpetuate stereotypes about disability. In crime genre, evil doers are mostly disabled characters. Disability is totally absent from romance genre.

Using framework from the work of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Ria Cheyne, and Ghosh this study will explore the representation of disability and intersection of disability and gender in the selected texts.

Often, the word disabled, or any other synonym carries a load of social stigma, prejudice, and misunderstandings (Gai 180). Feminist disability studies try to understand representational systems of gender, race, ability, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. These systems produce and sustain identities. Women's experiences are always shaped by 'constructions', 'associations' and 'images' which are produced and approved by patriarchal sociocultural systems so, they try to discipline their bodies according to normative construction of female body. Gendered disabled body becomes a site of multiple cultural meanings (Ghosh 101-102). A female body is produced through cultural practices and lived experiences of women. An ideal female body gets social acceptance. Disabled women and their families face a lot of discrimination. It is not easy for a disabled woman to be constantly judged for her worth as she is considered less valued compared to an able-

bodied woman. Goyal says that whole country (India) rises in protest against the rape of a middle class, young woman but everyone was silent when an intellectually disabled woman was brutally raped (181).

Women actively produce their bodies according to the demands of ideal femininity propagated through cultural and media images. Disabled bodies are constructed socially as inactive, unproductive, incomplete, and incapable of normal life. Disabled girls feel uncomfortable with their 'deficient' and thus 'not beautiful' bodies. Process of normalizing a disabled gendered body is often long and painful. Multiple surgeries, physiotherapies and other medical procedures are very painful, but girls and their families bear them for the future benefit. Families try to give their disabled girls a suitable lifestyle, but other people express negative comments openly (Gai 106-107). Many disabled girls face a process of "de-sexing": their social environment negates their femininity and sexuality. A complete, unimpaired woman who is capable of physical labour is ideal for marriage thus making a disabled woman unmarriageable.

The framework provided by Rosemarie, Ghosh and Cheyne will be used to analyze the role of literature and gender as disabling/abling factors for physically and mentally impaired individuals. The points of analysis will be:

- representation of disability and disabled characters in Anglophone Pakistani literature
- disability as a lack, loss, and tragedy
- devaluation of disability and disabled characters
- intersection of gender and disability
- othering of disabled characters in literary representations

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **REPRESENTATION OF DISABILITY AND DISABLED CHARACTERS**

There are millions of people who live their lives with some kind of impairment. Some people are born with some impairment; some may get impairments as they age; accidents, wars and diseases may bring impairments for some people but the fact is that people having some impairment learn how to manage its impact and negotiate with their environment. Impairment proves a hindrance only when the society erects barriers for people who are differently abled. Disability studies differentiates between the two terms, impairment and disability. Disability and impairment are two different things: Impairment may simply be defined as “loss or diminution of sight, hearing, mobility, mental ability” (Davis 41). Impairments are medically verifiable and, in some cases, treatable. The people having some impairments are capable of living active life, but their impairments change into disability at the hands of society that idealizes ‘normal bodies’ and disapproves anything different from the normal. As a result, they are not provided facilities to reduce the impact of impairment, to make matters worse, the people having some impairments are continuously forced to face negative attitudes within their families and outside their houses. They face the social stigma of impaired bodies, and their disability is stereotyped as lack and loss and the lives they live are considered tragic. As a result of such attitudes, able bodied people marginalize the disabled people in social, economic, political, and educational field.

Not only are the disabled people marginalized in the real world, but also in literary representation when literature reproduces and reinforces a certain type of narrative which misrepresents and thus, marginalizes the disabled segment of society. Literature represents impairments as disabilities. Characters in works of fiction having some impairments are portrayed as incomplete beings who are incapable of living life as others do. They are mostly portrayed as uneducated/undereducated, unemployed, a financial burden, unmarriageable, unable to take care of themselves and dependent on others for their daily needs. Such stigmatized attitude of literature causes problems for disabled people.

Misrepresentation leads to further stereotyping and marginalization of disabled people in real life. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson says in her book *Extraordinary Bodies* that when we accept the mimetic function of literature, we grant it power to shape our perception of the world especially about those situations about which we have little or no knowledge. Disability is highly stigmatized and there are few counter narratives, literature often misrepresents or flattens the experiences of real people of their own or others' disability (10). Literature reflects society, at the same time, it has power to reform negative attitudes. If literature is performing one function and ignoring the other, it is not doing its job in a way that may benefit humanity in the long run. The present research explores depiction of different disabled characters from the selected texts to see how Anglophone Pakistani literature is performing its function in this regard.

The present research is based on the social model of disability. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Ria Cheyne, and Ghosh, all the three theorists selected for the study, support this model of understanding disability and impairment. Cheyne and others support the stance of social model that impairments are physical, mental, and psychological differences but the differences are “value neutral”. Disability is a process of making meanings and it has its effect on readers (Wetherell 96). Dominant understanding about disability positions it as deficit and the disabled men and women are culturally understood as deserving pity. Robert McRuer says that the world we live in, is the world of “compulsory able-bodiedness” in which able-body identity is preferred to disabled bodies. The social, attitudinal, and structural hinderances transform impairment into disability. Disability is “imposed” upon people having some physical or mental impairment. Cheyne holds that whenever we meet impairment, we always encounter disability not physical, mental, or psychological impairment. Our attitude to difference is shaped by past experiences, cultural values, assumptions, and associations (13). Literature plays a great role in forming these associations, assumptions, memories, and cultural values, so, it is very important to study how disability is represented in fiction. Ria Cheyne says in the introduction of her book *Disability, Literature, Genre: Representation and Affect in Contemporary fiction*, “disability makes us feel” (1). Disability produces a host of different responses and complex multiple feelings in the readers or viewers. This feature ensures its presence in all types of cultural products: literature, film, art, and video games etc. (1).



## 4.1 Disability as Lack, Loss, and Tragedy

Ria Cheyne says that the disabled characters are often represented as helpless victims in different genres of fiction. They are shown as vulnerable and defenseless. Depiction of disabled characters as victims strengthens the conceptualization of disability as helplessness and vulnerability. The disabled characters are shown as victims of chance and circumstances (41). Disability is culturally framed as lack, loss, and tragedy (30). At times, writers use disabled character as a narrative tool to evoke strong feelings of fear, sympathy and revulsion. Readers feel sympathy for the victims and horror at their heartless exploitation (Garland-Thomson 84). The higher the stereotypical and stigmatized representation, the stronger the feelings evoked in readers, consequently, some writers with good intention of projecting social injustice reproduce a stereotypical image of a disabled person as Garland-Thomson gives examples of Stowe, Davis and Phelps (83-84).

Some human attitudes are universal. Disabled people are marginalized all over the world. The research will apply framework provided by two Western and one Indian author to explore the lives and circumstances of disabled characters in Anglophone Pakistani fiction. The research questions for the present research are: How are disabled characters represented in the selected texts? How does disability intersect with gender in the selected works? How does the representation of disabled male and female characters challenge or reinforce stereotypes about disability?

The discussion in this research focuses on general representation of disabled characters in different works of fiction by Anglophone-Pakistani writers, the genre of novel will not be a point of discussion as the focus of research is general representation of disabled characters in literature and very limited number of texts does not allow analysis based on genre.

## 4.2 Overview of Selected Texts

Here is a brief overview of the selected texts to introduce the characters and plot of the selected novels.

### 4.2.1 *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*

Ali Shigri, a young cadet, is the narrator of the novel. His father Col. Quli Shigri was killed by ISI under Zia's orders as he had started hating the role of Pakistan army in Afghan War. Ali had the knowledge that his father had not stolen millions of American dollars but had them burnt and had not committed suicide but was killed by Maj. Keyani. With the help of his friend and lover Baby O' Obaid he plotted to kill Zia. Their plot failed and Ali Shigri and Baby O' landed in torture cells hidden in Lahore Fort. There Zainab was also imprisoned who was a poor, blind young woman. She was a rape victim, but she was the one who was in prison because she could not prove that it was a rape not adultery. Zainab called down a curse upon Zia. Zia had grown extremely paranoid over the years and feared that everyone was trying to kill him. Finally, his plane crashed, killing him, principal army officers and the American ambassador Arnold Raphel. The novel ends without specifying the responsibility of plane crash: it may have resulted from Zainab's curse, or General Akhtar and Ali Shigri's plan or the plan of mango producing union.

### 4.2.2 *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*

*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) is the story of everyday life of a Christian nurse living in French Colony: a slum in Karachi. Her father, Joseph Bhatti is a janitor and part time spiritual healer. Alice gets an education and is trained as a nurse. Alice is charged with attempted murder and sent to Borstal Jail where she develops friendship with Noor and his blind mother, Zainab. She gives Noor the address of Sacred Heart Hospital for all Ailments. Noor gets a job doing all kinds of odd work for the hospital and befriends Teddy who works for the police. Alice comes back from jail and joins the Sacred Heart Hospital as a nurse. Alice marries Teddy after a brief love affair to get a better position in society and to have a house of her own. But soon the marriage fails, and she has to leave Teddy. Once a medically dead baby opens his eyes as a result of her prayer. She becomes a spiritual healer for the patients of that hospital and other local people. The fame of hospital and the

spiritual healer spreads far and wide in the city, winning her many devotees. Teddy gets jealous when he finds that she is no longer willing to live as his wife. He throws acid on her which causes her death.

#### **4.2.3 *A God in Every Stone***

Qayyum Gul fights for the British Indian army in the World War I and comes back to Peshawar after losing one eye. Then he starts supervising a plum and apple orchard, later, he joins Ghaffar Khan's Movement for liberation of India as a very zealous member. The other thread of plot is about a very beautiful young British archeologist Miss Vivian Rose Spencer who visits Peshawar during those war years and teaches history to Najeeb Gul, Qayyum Gul's younger brother. The action of the novel culminates in 1930, the general massacre of the Peshawari people. Qayyum Gul and Vivian Rose try to locate the missing Angel girl and Najeeb Gul. The Angel girl is killed by British soldiers while injured Najeeb Gul is killed by the girl's family as a result of honor killing. The city of Peshawar and the lives of Qayyum's family are in chaos when the novel ends.

#### **4.2.4 *Ice-Candy-Man***

At the start of novel, Lenny is a young girl of four years who has a crippled leg as she suffered from polio in early childhood. Although she is quite young, she understands the attitude of people around her; identifies pitiful and mocking gestures which make her uncomfortable. The novel revolves around her Ayah who takes care of her. Ayah is the star of attraction for all local men. Before partition of the Subcontinent, Ayah was able to deflect unwanted gestures and attention of men but after partition, she is kidnapped and forced into prostitution by her ex-lover, the ice-candy-man. Secretly, Lenny's Godmother, mother and aunt try to save as many women as possible. They rescue Ayah from forced marriage with ice-candy-man and send her to her Hindu relatives. Lenny describes the plight of children and women after partition. Her new Ayah is a Muslim who is raped during riots by Hindus and now her husband has rejected her. Lenny's friend Ranna escapes from India and after facing great troubles reaches Lahore as a trauma survivor. When giving accounts of others' sufferings during Partition, Lenny and other characters forget about her impaired leg and no one mentions it.

### 4.3 Representation of Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson says that the writers represent disabled characters with a “rhetorical influence”: the characters have qualities and attitudes that enhance the effect of disability and the traits that can mitigate or complicate representation are omitted and erased from the narrative. She further adds that the act of representing bodily difference others the disabled characters and distances them from the normate readers. Such representations refer to social relations but those relations are not reproduced with mimetic fullness (10). Cheyne says that disabled characters are often portrayed as helpless and defenseless victims and their lives are shown as complete tragedies; the first thing noticed about Zainab is her identity. Zainab is visually impaired, the writer calls her blind (with capital b) many times in the novel, writing her name as *Blind Zainab*; thus, making her impairment a part of her being. It seems as if Blind is her first name and Zainab second part of her name. Disability is given preference to her actual being. She is a rape survivor but being unable to identify her tormentors, she is sentenced to death by stoning for adultery. She is in jail when the readers see her for the first time. She is portrayed as a defenseless victim and her disability as a lack and loss that turns her life into a tragedy. Firstly, she is raped and then thrown in prison and after that she is locked up in a dark cell in Lahore Fort when an American newspaper criticizing Zia’s justice prints her picture and interview. She has no voice of her own and when American reporter raises voice in her favor, she is the one who is punished while the owner of New York Times would get a carpet as a gift the next time Zia visits America (130).

Rosemary Garland-Thomson says that disabled people are portrayed as weak, vulnerable, dependent and incapable (8) and they are not allowed to behave like real disabled people as the power of stigma would be lost in that case (12). Portrayal of Zainab conforms to her statement. She poses no threat to anyone, and everyone is aware of her helpless condition. When she is taken from prison to Lahore Fort, no guard is with her. They know that a handcuffed blind woman can go nowhere. No one comes to tell her to get off the jeep when they reach Lahore Fort. She guesses it herself when the jeep stops and does not move again. She smells “a lot of smoke and a lot of men” (162). She thinks for some moments that they have sent her to a men’s jail. Still, no one comes to tell her

where to go. She keeps on walking for some time and after walking for a few yards she holds a man's hand to ask where she is supposed to live. He, instead of giving an answer, presses two rupees note in her hand and walks away without saying or hearing anything. Finally, a hand firmly grips her arm. He calls her "old woman" and tells her that they are taking her to a cell in the Fort where press would not trouble her.

The sheer neglect of her being shows the devaluation of disabled Zainab at the hands of authorities. For the charitable man, she is only a beggar in need of money, for authorities, she is not a living human being but only a voice that is hateful and should be silenced at any cost. Not only Zia is void of any sympathy and justice, but also are other men who appear in Zainab's life. They all maltreat her as if she were a nothing. When she is in Lahore Fort, she gets her break with all inmates of the prison: the only woman among all men. They are taken out for thirty minutes to get some fresh air and sunshine. It is when Ali Shigri notices a woman with white dupatta at the end of the row, the readers learn about the culture and moral insensitivity of the military authorities that they have grouped her with men in leisure. For a South Asian woman, it is an act of harassment that she is forced to be among unknown men as it is very uncomfortable for women of the East who are not used to be among men other than their close relatives. Her isolation in a cell and her separation from other women is a torture for a rape victim who is already traumatized. Ali Shigri is surprised to see her with no corneas, having all white eyes. He thinks that 'they' have done something to her eyes. He fails to judge that she is blind, and it is a medical condition with no cure (194). After a brief attention, he dismisses her thought from his mind. Once again, she loses her existence for the able-bodied characters of the novel as there is a sheer absence of empathy even sympathy, Ali requests General Baig to release the Secretary General of sweepers' Union but forgets the only woman in the cell in a second.

Her misfortune is directly linked with her impairment as the social stereotyping of blindness causes further troubles in her already troubled life. The rapists knew very well that Zainab, a visually impaired woman would not be able to identify them, the Hudood Ordinance would protect them and Zainab herself would be accused of the crime if she reported it to police, so they kidnapped her, gang raped her without any fear for three days

and nights. The next trauma that awaits Zainab is that General Zia is unable to comprehend implications, restrictions, and consequences of her impairment. The impairment changes into disability when she is sentenced for fornication.

She is portrayed as a passive victim in a helpless situation, and she has accepted her marginalization at the hands of her society. Hanif presents Zainab as someone devoid of emotions: she does not show any emotion very openly, when the superintendent of the jail gifts her a pair of sunglasses, Hanif shows her attitude in these words:

“Zainab had accepted them with a smile, without complaining, without showing any self-pity, without pointing out that sunlight could not enter the dead pools that her eyes were” (159).

She does not protest against her sentence in any way. Her jail superintendent is irritated by her “reckless fortitude” (161) and activists fighting her case in the court and streets are “puzzled” by her forbearance. Zainab only tells her story whenever someone asks her. She says that the people have been stoning devil in Makkah for centuries but have not been able to kill him. Zainab questions, “How are they going to kill a healthy woman like me?” (159). She knows about someone called Bhutto who is killed at the orders of court, but she does not know about his crime either. Zainab is well aware of the fact that she has done no wrong and she also knows very well that she can never prove her innocence. She knows very well that General Zia has changed his mind many times about many things, but he always turns down mercy pleas in death sentences. Some human rights activists try to fight for her, but their voices are not heeded by anyone in the position of power. Zainab herself is a voiceless, passive victim who utters a curse only when it becomes clear that she will have to leave her prison mates and live somewhere else. She tells her superintendent that she likes to live among her prison mates: “I want to live here” then correcting her mistake, she says, “I want to die here” (Hanif 161).

Her words show that she has accepted her death sentence as an ultimate reality, only she wants women’s company as long as her life lasts. The superintendent informs her that the orders are from the President and must be acted upon, Zainab curses Zia, the person who is taking her away from her “home” (161). She calls prison her home; here the question arises: where is her actual home? The writer is silent about it, Zainab and all the other

characters do not mention it. It seems through this omission that having no home is a matter-of-fact thing for a disabled person.

Traditionally disabled people are believed to have power to curse or bless others in many superstitious societies. They are often portrayed as beings that have supernatural powers. It is a way of marking them different from others. Portraying a common being as supernatural is a way of othering which is often done to the disabled people. Zainab curses Zia and her curse seems to tear innards of the General. Hanif says that curses are the last recourse of frustrated mothers and people who cannot use strong abusive language against their enemies. In a way, he says that helpless people resort to cursing their enemies as they can do nothing else. The act of cursing shows the helplessness and frustration felt by Zainab although she is not expressive about her predicament. There are many factors that may have caused Zia's death: Before his plane crashes, worms had eaten his vital organs and he was bleeding, it may have resulted from Zainab's curse. Hanif associates disability with mystery and thus reproduces stereotypical view of a disabled person. It is a way of othering disabled people by granting them supernatural powers and mystery.

The attitude of society is clear from a statement about Zainab by General Zia that "the woman wasn't much to look at" as she was blind (128) suggesting that her unattractiveness compelled her to fornicate. Ria Cheyne says that disabled characters are often portrayed as criminals and Rosemary Garland-Thomson says that disabled people are often presented as profligates. Culture frames disability as something "sinister" producing horror, anxiety, and disorder (70). Zia shows the same association of disability and criminal behavior when he tells Qadi, "Sometimes you can look at a woman's face and tell that she is a fornicator" (132). Qadi's statement also shows how the social behavior transforms impairment into disability when he says that a blind rapist is not provided any privilege on account of his disability; the same is true for a blind rape victim. She has no choice except to identify the rapist if she wants to prove her innocence (133). The attitude of Qadi and General Zia mirrors the attitude of society to the disabled people and disability. It is how impairment is changed into disability by people.

Zainab has a little agency and will in her life. In prison, she feeds sparrows, massages the feet of two pregnant prisoners and teaches the holy Quran to children in

different cells. She tries to take care of herself as she oils her hair and cleans her cell. She is not living a completely passive and dependent life because of her impairment although she cannot prove her innocence on account of her disability. It shows that people having some physical or mental impairment are capable of living a normal life but it is the social set up that denies them the opportunity to do so. She is raped not because of her visual impairment but because the criminals were stronger than the justice. She was thrown in the jail not because of her blindness but because of the blindness of the system of justice. This is the point that this study wants to make through the exploration of social model of disability: that impairments are not as disabling as the social and cultural constructs of disability. She is portrayed as a natural victim who does not and cannot fight back for her rights. The only agency she is allowed is the power to curse and even that is linked with helplessness by Hanif. As a postmodern writer, one may think that Hanif tried to expose the cruel dictator and patriarchy of Pakistan, but he does it at the cost of portraying a disabled woman as a natural victim whose life is presented in a highly stigmatized way. When we compare her to the real life visually blind character Safia in Zia's time who is perhaps the inspiration for the fictional character Zainab, we come to know that the real character was a maid in the house of a rich family where she was raped by the owner of the house and his son but she and her family fought back with the help of human rights activists and lawyers and they won the case but for fictional character Zainab everything is bleak and devoid of any hope. Hanif became successful in producing a caricature of Zia and exposing social evils but at the same time he also enhanced the fear of disability in his readers' heart. After reading about Zainab, every visually impaired woman or her relatives would be fearful for her safety. Garland-Thomson says in *Extraordinary Bodies...* that characters' bodies become a semiotic manifestation of social evils and evoke complex feelings of empathy and disgust. Such narratives about disabled bodies derive from and play on the belief of many able-bodied individual that life with disability is a tragedy and a source of constant sufferings. The disabled characters portrayed in this manner become gestures of human wretchedness rather than those human being with whom readers can identify (84).

Her interview and pictures wearing plastic sunglasses are published in American newspaper that infuriate Zia and Zainab is told that she would be kept in a place where she



cannot “give interviews” (161). She is silenced by the sheer use of force, already she has no agency except telling her story. Even that act of speech is denied to her as she is thrown into a pitch-dark cell in total isolation. The torture cells are built to punish Zia’s sworn enemies where a helpless blind woman is kept. Activities and usefulness of her life is snatched from her. She wants to live with her cell mates and help them with their tasks, but she is forcefully taken to Lahore Fort and punished with isolation, loneliness, and a sense of uselessness. She is pushed in a “liminal space of rolelessness of a disabled woman” (Garland-Thomson 118).

Ria Cheyne says that disabled people are represented as natural victims: they are so vulnerable that no one can protect them from harm (67). When the victim is more vulnerable, the crime becomes more hateful producing a stronger response, thus, sometimes writers use disabled characters only as narrative tools. In order to mount hatred for General Zia and his policies, Hanif has used Blind Zainab as a vulnerable victim whose every move leads to greater punishment. Zia’s act of punishing Zainab makes his rule more atrocious as readers feel sympathy, pity, and fear for a helpless, defenseless, poor, blind woman. Zia appears a greater villain when his victim is more vulnerable deserving sympathy and pity and who can arouse these feelings more than a poor, disabled, lonely, woman? The sole purpose of having Zainab in the plot is exposition of despotic rule of Zia and marginalization of women in patriarchal Pakistani society. Ria Cheyne says that disabled people are represented as natural victims: they are so vulnerable that no one can protect them from harm (67).

All characters of the novel have a good or bad ending. Almost all except Ali Shigri and General Beg die in the crash, the president of sweepers’ union is killed by Major Kiyani, but Hanif forgets Zainab completely. She is in the cell of dead secretary general of sweepers’ union, finds a letter for the Mango Producing Union, hands it over to Ali Shigri through a hole in the wall telling him that she cannot read (208). Her role ends here. Her curse seems to work well when worms eat at Zia’s innards and his shoes are filled with his blood but where is Zainab? When everyone is moving towards his end, she is nowhere. Zainab as a character has a function to serve in plot: to expose cruel nature of Zia, atrocious patriarchy of Pakistan, helplessness of women and that’s it. She is the one who curses

General Zia, and her curse proves effective like plots of many others who were trying to kill Zia; thus, she plays a vital role, but she is nowhere as a living character, just like Ali, the writer forgets her after throwing her in the dark cell of Lahore Fort. Zainab has been treated as a marginal being who exists on periphery of existence even on printed pages as she has not been presented as a woman of flesh and blood, having some proper beginning and end but just Blind Zainab who cannot get justice in “the land of the pure” (128).

Different identity categories connote helplessness when disabled characters are presented in fiction (Cheyne 67). Zainab is a victim of intersection of weak identities: blind, woman and poor in a third world country ruled by a dictator. She is socially isolated and helpless. Her vulnerability and helplessness are used to expose brutal behavior of patriarchal men, General Zia, and his supporters. Exposition of Zia and his supporters may be fine, but Hanif paints a very stereotypical and stigmatized picture of a blind woman as a vulnerable victim whose life has no joy and no hope. She is a voiceless character who can speak but no one listens to her, who can provide useful services to others, but is denied chances of doing so and movements are confined by the law enforcing agencies when she is kept in a narrow dark cell.

Fictional character of poor, blind Zainab reminds us of real poor, visually impaired woman, Safia Bibi who was raped by her employer and his son. Asma Jahangir gives details about that lady in her article “How Far are Penal Laws Effective in Protecting Women”: Safia was a maid who was raped by her employer and his son and out of fear remained silent about her rape, she talked about her suffering only when her mother found her pregnant, then her father lodged a complaint and the trial court acquitted the two men and arrested Safia for adultery. Women activist protested, journalist wrote articles and lawyers agitated in their bar. All these activities-built pressure and Shariat Court on its own *Suo motu* managed the case, women lawyers fought the case and Safia was acquitted (33). The purpose of mentioning Safia is only that a real disabled woman suffered from same plight and her life was not totally hopeless in real life, but Zainab is made to live a life without any hope on printed pages. Safia was not a financial burden for her parents; she had a family who supported her in time of crisis; complete strangers like women activists, lawyers, and writers fought her case and won her freedom, but no support system exists for

poor blind Zainab. It demonstrates that Hanif has reproduced a more stigmatized version of stereotypical image of a disabled woman.

Hanif's disabled characters possess miraculous supernatural powers which is a way of distancing them from 'normal' human beings. Having supernatural powers removes them from the realm of normal. It is also a way of othering which produces fear, hatred and awe in others depending upon how much superstitious one is. There is an association of disability and mystery. Zainab curses Zia with the words: may worms eat his internal organs and his children may not see his face when he dies (161). A crow carries that curse and hits Zia's plane thus causing the plane crash that killed Zia and others. Hanif does not say that it is the result of only the curse, but it may be one of the reasons.

#### **4.4 Representation of Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti***

*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* describes a Charya ward where mentally disabled patients are kept like prisoners. The novel also portrays in detail the character of blind Zainab whose vital organs are eaten by cancer.

The writer, Muhammad Hanif moves Zainab to the extreme margins of existence in his novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. He does not tell anything about her except that she is suffering from three types of cancer (Hanif 15). Is she the same Zainab or another woman with the same name? The novel does not state it clearly. However, there are some clues: Zainab is wearing a pair of cheap sunglasses when she is released from jail and gets a migraine from the traffic noise. If the same Zainab, then it means that she survived the Lahore Fort and most probably, Noor, her son, is the result of that rape. People in hospital think about Noor that he still carries the odor of people who are born into slavery. He was born in a jail and brought up in those corridors. Noor is fourteen when they are released from the Borstal Jail. She lives for three more years as a bedridden patient in Sacred Heart Hospital. There is a passing mention that she once married and lived with her parents in a village but how she ends up in Borstal jail is not clear. What has happened to her husband and parents is not clear. Hanif writes in the novel that Zainab's mother beat her husband in the village square; her father laughed out loud, and the villagers applauded the blows (122). From her mother Zainab learns her ideas about happy marriages. These omissions are very striking when compared to other characters who have families, past and future. Her social

existence is erased in both novels. When Zainab and her son Noor are released from Borstal Jail, they arrive at the gate of Sacred Heart Hospital where they are kept standing for two days: “He and Zainab stood at the gate for two full days although it wasn’t the kind of gate where anyone was stopped” (23).

The guard does not allow them to enter as they look like “Vagrants” to him. A rotten orange is thrown to them by someone, and a beggar advises them to start begging at some other place as the gate is “unlucky spot” to start such kind of a thing (Hanif 23). There is societal association of disability and beggary: as disabled people are not provided decent job opportunities and begging is the only option left to most of them. People assume that a disabled person must be a beggar whereas s/he is only poor. Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* also faces the same attitude of people when someone puts a damp two rupee note in her hand and does not bother to listen to her words: “I am not a beggar” and walks off while she only needs to be told where to go at that time not alms (163). Describing a scene of a roadside Hanif talks about a blind woman who has run away from prison and tries to convince people all day that she is not a beggar (69). Beggary is imposed on the disabled people by providing them no opportunities to earn and by giving them alms when they do not even want to get charity.

Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is seen on bed from the start to the end till her death. She is shown such a helpless poor victim that flies hover around her face, feasting on dribble from a corner of her mouth, a fly enters her mouth, her lips close upon it, her lips part and then it comes out (33). Once again, a fly hovers over her face and she cannot shoo it away (155). When she is dead, a fly sits on her lower lip, goes inside, and comes out. This time, even Noor does not try to shoo it away (174). All these incidents show extreme form of helplessness of a poor victim. This description reminds of the novel, *Friend of Devil* (2007) by Peter Robinson that depicts such a helpless, disabled woman, Karen Drew, who is attacked by seagulls and a seagull plunges into her ear. Ria Cheyne says while analyzing *Friend of Devil* that the disabled woman is portrayed as a “natural victim” in the novel, being paralyzed, sitting on a wheelchair and dead, she is so vulnerable that no one can protect her. Karen has multiple identities and all of them are associated with helplessness. She is described as a helpless victim who is unable to “lift a bloody

finger to defend herself” (43). Zainab is portrayed in the same way because she is unable to shoo away flies sitting on her lips rather her state of helplessness is to the extent that she is not even aware of flies hovering around her mouth. She is a doting mother, but her disability and her disease make her so passive that her son faces near death situation beside her bed, but she is not aware of it. Teddy beats her son Noor, breaks his teeth, forces his eye out of socket with a hard blow and Zainab just lies unconscious.

Dr. Pareira and others at the hospital talk about Zainab’s impending death without a throb of sorrow. Sister Hina says to Noor, “Now run along, go see if your mother is dead yet. We need that bed” (129). They want another bed for another patient thus making a bed more important than a human life, it shows heartlessness of medical profession and the attitude of society in general to the chronically ill person who loses the status of human beings: “There are hundreds of patients who are envious, who are eyeing that bed” (23). Zainab is already dead for everyone except Noor and Alice although her body is still breathing.

Ria Cheyne says that Karen is passive, without voice and totally dependent on others. She is presented as an icon of helplessness. The same goes for Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. Zainab is voiceless, motionless, expressionless, and almost lifeless. Noor and Alice try to take care of Zainab while performing their duty in the hospital but there is not a single ray of hope for her. She has been objectified since the beginning of the novel. Such representation locks the reader into understanding disability as pitiable passive existence thus reinforcing stereotypes associated with disability. Zainab’s son, Noor says that it is a blessing to have eyesight (65) and Hanif proving his words, makes the life of a disabled woman a complete tragedy.

Besides helpless bedridden Zainab there are some disabled men in Charya ward of the same hospital. Sister Hina Alvi sends Alice to Charya Ward knowing fully well that she has no training in handling mentally challenged patients. There is a whole ward of mentally challenged patients but not a single well-trained doctor or nurse. It shows how little care and medical treatment they may get from a hospital. Sister Hina has only one advice to offer: “To pretend that everything is normal.” She has a very dark view of those men as she tells Alice that they may have buried their sister alive after raping her, but the

nurse has to pretend that it is all normal (27). According to her philosophy, the men in Charya Ward suffer from life because they take life too seriously and are too talkative, “lovey shovey types” whom Alice should not take too seriously. “That is all you need to know about psychiatric care” (27). With only these instructions, she visits Charya Ward all alone. Alice has an odd sense of being in Borstal jail again. There is no one whom she can hand over things when her shift in Charya ward is over because no one is assigned the duty to take care of those men in Charya Ward. The men in Charya ward have no proper identification. Hanif says, “nothing there to reveal that these people live on the other side: six Mohammads, three Ahmeds and two Alis” (27). It is clear that different patients have been given different popular names among Muslims. These are not their real names. After entering the ward, they have lost their first mark of identity: their names. The list of information about the patients is blank except that they all are being given the same dose of the same medicine. Medical staff of the hospital shows zero concern for the mentally challenged patients, just like dying Zainab, these men have ceased to exist for the hospital staff. It is how physical or mental disability is treated by the society in general and aggravates those physical conditions for the disabled persons which can be managed and improved if someone in the position of authority really bothers to take some serious steps. The dichotomy of present-absent is really painful for the person who exists but is treated as if nonexistent.

On her way to the ward, she stops to collect lithium sulphate from Noor who tells her that the ward is no place for a decent woman like her. Sweeper is the one who takes medicine to the ward and (perhaps he is the one who takes care of the patients too). According to Beauchamp, Chung, and Mogilner: disabled people were feared even though they were not evil and were treated as less than human beings. The otherness of disabled people was seen as a threat (4). A caregiver is quoted as “what we need here is a vet not a psychiatrist” (Shearer 82). A textbook used in 1960 in California warned students not to refer to their patients as “vegetable” no matter what they feel (qtd in Beauchamp, Chung, and Mogilner 4). The men in Charya ward are also seen as potential threat so, Noor tries to stop Alice from visiting them. He tells her that unless Sister Hina wants to punish her, she would never want her to actually visit the ward, he adds that he will never visit the ward alone. When she nears the ward, she finds that routine smell of hospital has disappeared.

There are some pots that have dead plants and moss is growing in wall cracks. Visitors are warned through a faded notice not to provide food, drugs, or cigarettes to the patients. They are also informed to take care of their possessions. She finds the nursing station empty and full of dust. It clearly shows that no one has been there for a long time, “even the sweepers have stopped visiting” (29). The patients have been left to themselves although they are in a hospital ward and unable to take care of themselves. Their room is damp and musty, the Rexene cover walls are scratched and chewed. She finds a football sized nest of grey human hair with a live rat in it on the floor (29). It repels her and she rushes out of the room. The condition of ward shows the utter neglect it has been facing for a long time. Walls and cracks have not been repaired; plants are left to die just like the patients in the ward; and no one bothers to clean the ward. Human beings are kept in a condition which is worse than that of animals. Rat and mentally challenged men are living at the same level.

When she finally enters the ward, she finds men standing in a rough line with hands folded at crotches and heads bowed. They look at the nurse and beyond her as if expecting someone else. Finding no one, they disperse disappointed and relieved. There is stereotypical portrayal of mentally challenged patients: shouting, beating, nakedness and chaos. One of them takes off his pants and starts shouting at the top of his voice. Another steps forward and slaps him. A tall man tells Alice that she is late as they have been told that she would come three months ago. After that, he goes down on his knees and prostrates himself before her then he starts licking her ankles. Within seconds, she feels herself airborne. They lift her above their heads and then she lands in the arms of two men who shout “Howzat”. She is on a bed of hands and feels that the men have “emerged from various levels of hell.” She feels as if she were participating in some celebration. They shout “Ya Alice! Ya Bhatti! (31). They are mentally challenged but they know her name although they have a separate ward, and it is her first visit. The point to wonder is: is it too difficult for them to recall their own names and have a proper identity? It is only the social construct of mentally challenged persons that they are facing although they are sane enough to remember Alice’s name and recognize her vulnerability as they are least violent to her. One of them raises slogan “Death to America” but no one joins him, and this part is dropped. Their slogans and speech are called “drone-like” “gibberish” that seems pacifying to Alice also the fact that they really need her help. She may have passion to help and serve

but she lacks the required training and education, and the hospital administration would not encourage her attempts to help the men in Charya ward as is evident from their indifference to the wellbeing or even presence of these men.

They put her on a bed with rotten “Molty Foam” mattress. It is interesting to note the choice of words: they put her on bed does not throw her on floor. Had they been insane enough as the writer and Noor have prepared the reader and Alice, they would have broken her to pieces. They have enough physical power to do that; unlike other ‘normal’ men who assault Alice in one way or the other every day, or like her husband who throws acid on her; these men are quite harmless, but they are portrayed as a threat. They hover around her bed and say that she knows how they live and how they die. “She Knows. She knows.” One of them starts hitting himself with her stethoscope and another man, an old man forbids him saying that he will hurt himself and hurting oneself is against the law (31). Note the description of the old man: “half his dentures are broken to accommodate a swollen tongue” (31). Are they beaten to order and good behavior? Perhaps yes, that is why they have a body builder like Teddy in hospital. When Teddy picks her up in strong arms, she kicks and screams in unwillingness. The patients also want her there. One of them tells Teddy that she will come back as “she has been sent for us” (31-32). When Teddy has taken her away, focus shifts from Charya ward to Alice and Teddy and those men disappear from the plot till the end of novel where their attestation of Alice’s spiritual healing powers is given. They all swear to have seen a likeness of Alice Bhatti dressed like Holy Mother, a halo was around her head, and she was sitting on a throne carried by peacocks. Their account is dismissed as they are longtime residents of Charya ward and are Muslims.

The above details show the stereotypical attitude of society towards mentally challenged patients. They are seen and depicted as potential threats. They are portrayed and treated as less than human beings. The hospital administration and the writer of the novel treat them as a bunch of similar men although they have their individual identities. One identity groups them together that they are in Charya ward. There is no one to take care of them. All are given lithium sulphate which is used to treat bipolar disorder. Staying in such unhealthy and neglected condition can impair anyone’s faculties. It certainly damages those who are already facing some problem.



Hanif has portrayed Zainab and mentally challenged men in a very stereotypical manner. Zainab is completely helpless physically: unable to get up, walk or move around, she cannot even shoo away flies sitting on her lips. Men in Charya Ward are mentally helpless although they have physical strength. They are unable to take care of their basic hygiene. No one cleans their room, and they cannot do it on their own. They speak and act randomly without any purpose or aim. They have no name and no case history to give them and their impairment any recognition.

Hanif has not only portrayed disabled characters in a stereotypical way, but he has also presented state, state machinery, hospitals, prisons, men, and women in a very stereotypical way. M.T. Anjum, S. Rehman and A. Samad explored postcolonial elements in Hanif's *Red Birds*. Their study finds that Hanif plays the role of a native informer when he misrepresents Islam and Muslims. The researchers say that literature plays a very important role in producing a "narrative" and Hanif's narrative misrepresents Islam as an outdated religion and Muslims as fundamentalist and terrorists. The researchers say that Hanif Orientalizes Muslim men and women. The same can be said about the two selected novels that they misrepresent disabled characters, Pakistani people, state, and institutions.

Once again in this novel, Hanif links disability and miracles. The day when Alice ascends to heaven, when her husband throws acid on her, that day, a fat legless woman is seen skateboarding up and down the ramp. Alice's father mentions legless woman's miraculous recovery in his petition saying that they are promised that the lame shall walk (180). No facts of her healing process are given. She used to beg Xanax from Alice as she could not sleep at night. Beggary and miracles are linked with disability in a very short description of this character.

#### **4.5 Representation of Qayyum Gul in *A God in Every Stone* by Kamla Shamsie**

Qayyum Gul suffers from loss of one eye and his vision is partially impaired. Kamla Shamsie has portrayed his character in the light of typical cultural stereotypes. His impairment is depicted as a lack and loss, but she does not represent him as helpless, voiceless, and passive victim. Shamsie's portrayal of a partially visually impaired character

is not as hopeless as was done by Hanif in the portrayal of Blind Zainab. She grants her partially visually impaired character a lot of agencies, willpower, physical activity, ways of earning, a very active and desirable life.

Qayyum loses his eye during World War 1. The doctor announces the news by telling him that he is sorry, Qayyum's eye cannot heal like his wounded arm. It must be removed (46). The nurse consoles him for his loss by telling him that a glass eye would be adjusted in his eye socket matching the other eye and he will be breaking hearts again (46). But when he tells her that he does not want to break hearts, she said "O love" in such a sad tone that Qayyum understands that he is "maimed now, a partial man and from here on he would never be admired only pitied" (46). Shamsie has written many paragraphs about his sense of lack and loss. He remembers that he used to climb trees and visit crowded streets. Now every branch poses a threat for his "remaining eye". He is afraid of a gust of wind, elbows of a dear lady, the light of day and darkness of night. Everything seems a threat to Qayyum Gul (46). After getting impaired body Qayyum questions his existence and his being. He is not ready to accept his impairment: "Who was he now, this man who saw proximity as danger?" (46) . While Qayyum is struggling with his new identity and new being, the people around him in England treat him as a war hero. A man offers him ride in his car, another tips his hat to him, a woman thanks him and the wounded are kept in a palace turned into hospital. He and other wounded Indian soldiers feel honored by the royal treatment given to them, though, later it is withdrawn. His impaired eye proves a ticket back to India indicating that a man with one eye is useless for a fighting army although his other faculties and health is intact, as a result, he feels a deep sense of dejection which produces self-rejection. During his train journey, when he rejects the bread offered by Vivian Rose, the lady gives him a look which seems to mean that he is not in a position to refuse a kindness and he immediately tries to cover his face and impaired eye. When the lady learns about the cause of his loss, her tone changes but it hurts Qayyum, and he ceases the conversation. Shamsie writes about Qayyum that "this great, strong man" panicked "over every speck of grit" (60). His self-acceptance takes time. He stands for a long time in the doorway of train compartment instead of disembarking and hops quickly when he realizes that someone taking him as a blind person is about to hold his right hand. He misses the time when his military uniform used to set him apart now it is his missing eye. He

knows that even with his eyes shut, the observer realizes something wrong with the other eye. He feels his lack and loss strongly when he thinks that he should have stayed with 40<sup>th</sup> Pathan, they are his tribe. He thinks of another man, Nelson, who was a part of war with one eye and one arm. Rejection by the fighting army intensifies self-rejection. It is very difficult for him to accept his own self with one eye.

The reaction of his family on seeing him with one eye shows sense of lack and loss but also pride and faith in his masculinity. He is not portrayed as a helpless victim without having any hope in life. His mother is certain that his pension will help her to find a beautiful bride for him. She says, “how many two-eyed men have a guaranteed income for their entire life?” (85). She thinks that pension will make her son’s impairment acceptable to beautiful girls and their families. He has a glass eye matching the remaining eye, his condition is not as bitter as is Zainab’s. His family chats loudly to show him that everything is ok. His younger brother, Najeeb Gul remains silent over the loss. Najeeb goes to receive his brother at the train station, finds one eyed man, gets scared and returns without Qayyum. Najeeb is the only one in the family who cannot hide his sorrow and expresses it openly.

Qayyum has a very caring family. His parents and siblings especially Najeeb Gul are very protective of him. While playing catch with Qayyum, Najeeb shouts a warning when he realizes that the ball is targeting his eye, he tries to fumble before catching the ball so that his brother may not feel awkward when he has to fumble. Najeeb feels sad but tries to hide his feelings under his questions. Qayyum offers apology to Najeeb twice in the novel for losing one eye. At one point he says, “I’m more sick of me than you are” (89). His comment shows the inward battle he is fighting with himself. He feels sick of his new self and impaired body. Social construct of ableism makes him feel a sense of rejection, lack and loss.

When he places his glass eye in the eye socket for the first time, he looks at his face in the mirror and feels “almost himself when a man’s gaze on the world changes everything shifts with it” (89). His friends and their families receive him as an honored guest.

“Everywhere he went he was asked to stay for a night and a banquet was prepared in his honor” (90). Shamsie shows him staying inside house as long as his eye infection lasts. He feels his lack and loss deeply but with a glass eye, he regains some of his confidence and

gets ready to face the outside world. He takes up the job of letter writing when his father falls ill, and his mother's gaze asks him to perform his duties as the eldest son. When he meets his friend Kalam, a fugitive who has joined tribal people to fight against British, thus depriving himself of any benefit as an ex-soldier; Qayyum thinks of his own life as "blessed" (97). The novel, *A God in Every Stone* does not present Qayyum as a victim from the beginning to the end. No doubt he feels and acts like a victim of chance and circumstances for some time, he moves on and accepts his impairment. Shamsie does not leave her visually impaired character in hopeless darkness.

He is a resilient fellow although for some time he suffers from sense of lack and loss. Some people make fun of him as well, but support is greater than ridicule. A dancing half-English girl makes fun of him, and men laugh at him (98). A well-wisher who wants him to join freedom struggle calls him, "You are so blind, glass eye" (100). Shamsie writes that Najeeb has started thinking about the sadness-filled world ever since the return of his brother Qayyum. He thinks of a neighboring boy with crippled arms who keeps looking at birds with clipped wings; an old, stooped man who has to use a mirror to see the world above his knee-level. These reflections show disability as lack and loss and the life of people with disabilities as a tragedy. Shamsie tries to break free from stereotypical representation but typical thoughts about disability are so firm that they appear on many pages. Najeeb is much younger than Qayyum but when he sees him without an eye, he makes a gesture *Abhaya Murda* with his right arm and hand. Later Qayyum visits the museum and learns that the gesture means fearlessness and protection. Shamsie does not portray Qayyum as a passive victim. He steps into his father's shoes and works as a letter writer; he also fulfills his promise which he has made to his friend Kalam: he works with kalam's father in fields during harvesting and sowing seasons. At one point Shamsie makes Qayyum's glass eye an object of beauty when she describes the rain falling on glass eye as "unexpected music of heaven" (116).

Qayyum becomes a local leader when he joins Ghaffar Khan. He teaches boys in a school and rides a bicycle. Everything becomes possible for him (129). He even becomes tenant farmer and grows apples and plums in his garden. He manages to use his impairment to his advantage when soldiers give him a chase on 23 April 1930 in the streets of Peshawar.

He warns the soldier that he would rip his eye out before getting caught and when he actually does it; the soldier stops at the spot, his weapon falls from his hands and other soldiers stop too asking questions and Qayyum runs away laughing. His act is so shocking for the soldiers that in amazement they forget to shoot the Indian they have been chasing and Qayyum saves his life in a very easy way (162).

The attitude of society is demonstrated when Qayyum's mother tries to find a bride for him. She finds one and when everything is settled the would-be bride dies suddenly. People start talking about Qayyum as "ill fated" and "half blind man." Such words have a deep impact, and he tells his mother not to find any other bride as he has a lot to do in his life as Ghaffar Khan's supporter. He thinks that he will marry and have children when the struggle for freedom wins. Shamsie does not deny his human needs although she does not show her partially disabled character as a married man. He visits Street of Courtesans (162). Shamsie has allotted a very active role to Qayyum Gul. He is actively present in the crowd of protestor on 24 April 1930. His search for his brother after the massacre of his people, his efforts to find the lost girl and help the people in need is not hampered by his impairment. For almost three days, he walks in all streets of Peshawar looking for his brother in different houses, shops, offices, roads everywhere. On the first day of fight, he even disarms an English soldier. His disability does not snatch his other faculties.

Shamsie's portrayal of disability allows her character active social, political, and personal life. He is not portrayed as a victim of his circumstances. He and others around him are able to forget his impairment and live a normal life. There are some stereotypical elements in Qayyum's portrayal, but they do not impact his life for a long period. He is able to fight every battle of life and accept things when he cannot change them.

#### **4.6 Representation of Lenny Sethi in *Ice-Candy-Man***

At the start of novel, Lenny is a young girl of four years who has a crippled leg as she suffered from polio in early childhood. Although she is quite young but the attitude of different characters about her impairment can be explored to see how it becomes disability for her. The representation of Lenny's character and her disability will be explored to see whether it is a lack and loss turning her life into tragedy or not.

Lenny starts her narration by telling the readers that her world is “compressed” (12). She names her legs as “my wasted leg and my okay leg” (26). Although she is four years old, yet she is in pram whenever Ayah takes her out. The attitude of people becomes clear from the very start when an Englishman tells Ayah to let the girl walk as she seems old enough to walk. “Shame! Shame! Such a big girl in a pram!” (12). He urges the girl to get up and walk. The Ayah tells him that the girl cannot walk much and gets tired, but he remains adamant. Finally, Lenny shows him leather straps and calipers on her right boot, he moves away only to come back again with a lecture. He now tells them that Lenny needs exercise more than other children. She needs to be strong and for that she cannot remain “sprawled” in her pram (13). Lenny’s attitude to her impairment is quite different from the people around her. Her parents are worried for her, but she calls her impairment “valuable deformity” (15) and limps away happily when the doctor removes plaster to find the impairment intact. She is worried about her future with a normal leg. With an impaired leg, she enjoys privileges which are very dear to her, and she knows very well that she would lose them once her leg heals properly after operation.

Nandini Gosh says that able body and beauty are two standards imposed upon girls by their society which they have to meet at any cost. Disabled girls and their families try to seek normal and able bodies through medical procedures that are painful and often require long periods of time in a rehabilitative center away from families. Parents of disabled girls are worried for their future, and they make their daughters undergo medical and surgical procedures so that they may walk properly (153). Lenny says that her parents “lured” her to the hospital table where she smells something “frightening”, her heart pounds, hands hold her, and she shouts and kicks to keep away doctor and nurses. She calls herself something “eerie” that deserves “punishment”. She wonders how long this horror will last and she can see no end (15). Lenny’s words show that she is quite happy with her impairment, but medical procedures imposed upon her by her parents are unbearable. After that day’s medical procedure when she wakes up, she calls her pain “maddening”. She finds new plaster on her leg and pain “radiates” from leg to her all “small” body. She asks her mother to do something, “I’m hurting” (15). Instead of doing something her mother tells her the story of a mouse with seven tails that wants to look like other mice and his mother chops off his tails one by one until he is left with no tail. Once again, he is a freak

among normal mice. The story is told not only to quieten the distressed child but also to teach her the lesson of normalcy and “compulsory able bodiness” and the irony is that able bodiness is not possible through medical procedures as Lenny and her parents learn later. The painful surgery leaves her leg “pathetically thin” and “dead” with discolored pale patches, “functional but abnormal” (23). All the pain she is made to tolerate results in nothing.

Lenny is a helpless victim of chance and circumstances as far as medical procedures are concerned. Although she is at such a tender age where she is not aware of lack and loss but the people around her are teaching her the lesson of able- bodiness and make fun of her impairment. Her beloved Godmother, Godmother’s husband, and slave sister sing “Lame Lenny! Three for a penny! When she visits them. Their chanting may be a sign of love, but they imprint a sense of lack and loss on a child’s brain. Her parents ask the doctor about her schooling, and he answers that she should not be forced to get schooling. “Don’t pressure her...her nerves can be affected. She does not need to be a professor” But he seals her fate by saying, “she’ll marry-have children-lead a carefree, happy life. No need to strain her with studies and exams” (23). Her all-other faculties and abilities are intact, she visits houses, shops, hotels, parks and hospitals with her Aayah or her parents. Her deformed leg does not stop her from climbing on roof to peer in neighbors’ houses, but the doctor tells her parents that schooling would strain her nerves thus depriving her from getting education and limits her chances of getting a job in future.

Lenny feels hurt when people judge her for her condition. Her Mini Aunty tries to shame her for tormenting her mother, lying “flat like old ladies” thus making her responsible for her pain. Lenny feels hurt and thinks that elders want her to feel guilty for her pain as if she has “deliberately” operated on her foot and “sneaked” her leg in plaster cast (16). Already pain is enough for the little girl, but Mini Aunty holds her responsible for it. Lenny waits for Godmother who can understand and comfort her. There are so many people around her, but she finds comfort only in the presence of Godmother as she understands her and treats her well. Lenny as a child is lucky to have a caring family. Akbar, Gai, and Ghosh say that in South Asian countries disabled girls are considered a financial burden and parents are reluctant to spend money on them.

Disabled people face a lot of public scrutiny and rejection. Thomson says that disabled body becomes an object to stare at. The act of staring at a disabled body becomes “an oppressive social relation” (26). Lenny is just four years old when she records her visit to the zoo after surgery: She is the “star attraction” of “curious glances” and “clucking of tongues”. The less she wants, the more she gets the attention of people in the zoo. She finds that even the monkeys stare at her (17). The act of staring puts disabled people under great stress, and they start avoiding social gatherings. Qayyum Gul, an adult male cannot stand this act of being stared at and stays inside his house until he is able to use his glass eye.

Lenny as a child enjoys her impairment as it entitles her to many privileges, more love, and easy gifts. Other children have to make an effort to get candies and gifts while she just sits showing her calipers and candies are “showered” on her. She does not go to school and has a fear that if her “unique foot” becomes normal after the cast is taken off, she may have to attend school, be a part of competition for positions. Her impairment allows her to visit her mother’s room at mid night, another privilege that is denied to other children of her class and age. She says that having polio in early childhood is “like being born under a lucky star” (19). Lenny finds the thoughts of able-bodied future unbearable as it will be loveless and full of labor (21). These are Lenny’s thoughts at the age of four or five. She starts thinking differently about her impairment as she grows old and the novel progresses.

Lenny’s sense of lack and loss is seen when she talks about her younger brother. He is not only the most beautiful but also very active. He ducks, jumps, turns, and vanishes. At night he falls asleep while Lenny has to treat her chilblained feet in hot water. He has quickly outgrown his cot while Lenny, having slow growth still fits into hers although she is five now. She feels the difference when she says that he lives a part of life away from her as he goes to a school. When the family visits Murree, Adi, her brother sits on a tall pony while Lenny sits on a short donkey. She feels insulted. She feels discriminated. Other children are ignored when they curse, use invective words, and swear but she cannot say ‘damn fool’ without someone telling her that swearing does not suit her (50). As a disabled girl, everyone wants her to behave properly. It is a part of her training as a good girl so that



the effect of her impairment can be mitigated. The elders do not want her to face double rejection: for her impairment and for ill manners.

Her doctor copies her limp in an exaggerated way and pushes her heel down to the ground in an effort to make the two legs equal (38). Papoo, the maid's daughter also mimics Lenny's limp when she is beaten by her mother, not out of malice but she knows its manipulative power (48). Her childhood friend, Ranna imitates her limp in a friendly way without annoying her (54).

Overall, Lenny may experience some sense of lack and loss, but her disability has not turned her life into a tragedy. She has a happier childhood than many other children. She has a very caring and loving family and many friends. Bapsi Sidhwa does not present Lenny as a victim. In this novel, the real victims are poor girls and women who face brutalities at the time of Partition. Lenny belongs to an affluent and well-educated family, so she does not face problems other than her impairment. She lives a well-protected life. Her vulnerability is not exposed much to the outside world which may take its advantage. It should also be kept in mind that she is just a child when the novel ends and realities of life dawn upon wo/men when they face the world as adults. Thus, in a way her experiences are limited, and she sees the world with the eyes of a child even then she has realized that she has a body different from others and her life has been planned by her elders in a way that is different from that of other children.

Jharna Choudhury calls Lenny an adult-child: her closeness to Ayah, Godmother and her family, servants and their friends provides her more than enough experience of adult's world, after Partition, lives of everyone are affected by violence directly or indirectly; as a result of all this chaotic condition, Lenny is forced to grow up before time thus snatching the embodiment of childhood from her. Unlike other children, she stays with the adults because of her mobility impairment and does not go out unattended, consequently, she takes more than the needed interest in adults' issues. At a very tender age, she knows how men pay unwanted attention to Ayah and how she responds to them, she knows and even takes part in pranks which men play upon the gardener Hari. As a child living in adults' world matures her before time and brings its own burdens. She is guilty

ridden when she unknowingly tells the truth about her Ayah, and the Ayah is abducted by ice-candy-man.

The analysis of disabled characters mentioned in the selected novels shows that the role of families and state is very important. The characters like Qayyum Gul and Lenny have very supportive families who help them navigate their way in the world with their impairments. The support allows Lenny and Qayyum to live almost normal life. Somehow, impact of Zainab's disability and three types of Cancer is lessened by the support she gets from her son and Alice but no support system exists for Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. State plays no role of welfare in any of the novels. It is totally absent and in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* where it is present, it only plays the role of a predator preying on a disabled woman. Hospitals, prisons, Lahore Fort and any other state machinery mentioned in the novels is entirely insensitive to the life of needs of disabled characters. The characters have to fight for their survival on their own without any help from the state.

## CHAPTER 5

### DEVALUATION OF DISABLED CHARACTERS AND INTERSECTION OF GENDER WITH DISABILITY

Disability is socially constructed as a lack and loss. The person having some impairment is granted an inferior position in social relations. It is supposed that the disabled person cannot function properly as we have seen in the portrayal of men in Charya ward, both characters named Zainab, Qayyum and Lenny. The disabled people are not provided equal opportunities to get education, learn skills, interact with others, and develop themselves for an independent life. They have very limited options to play their role in domestic, social, educational, political and religious fields. Man-made barriers and social constructs of disability make life of disabled people difficult.

When a disabled body also has to face gender discrimination, the situation becomes very complex and hard for the affected person. Historically in Western tradition, femaleness been considered a disabling condition. Aristotle called women “mutilated males”. Women with ‘normal’ bodies and mental abilities are considered deformed, the situation is really grave for the women with actual mental and physical impairments. Gendered disabled bodies are pushed to the periphery of existence. They are considered financial burden, unmarriageable, weak and dependent Rosemary Garland says that women and disabled person are portrayed as vulnerable, weak, dependent, helpless and incapable beings. Their bodies are subjected to a continuous process of discipline through medical and cosmetic procedure. Ghosh says that disabled female bodies are devalued by the society and their experiences are not given central position. She asserts that female bodies are constructed according to sociocultural formations. Society gives them meaning according to constructed images of femininity. She says in her article *Not Like other Girls* that women are turned into gendered subjects by social institutions and social processes. Historical, religious, socio-cultural, economic structures and ideologies shape the lives of women. Disability implies lack and flaw consequently, disabled people as eternal children who are helpless, dependent and constantly need to be taken care of (79). A host of cultural meanings are associated with disabled female body. A disabled female body becomes a

medium through which culture gives meanings to its oppressive norms of ablism and gender. Rosemary Garland-Thomson believes that femaleness and disability are not natural states of “corporeal inferiority” but culturally fabricated narrative of body (5).

Intersection of gender and disability marginalizes and others women having physical or mental impairments. Women fail to get their basic rights in male dominated societies. Many conservative societies deny the right of education, earning and independent living to their able-bodied women. In such societies having a disabled daughter is a cause of social disgrace. People try to keep their disabled daughters within their houses to protect them from harm thus depriving them of education and chance of earning for themselves.

### **5.1 Disability as Cause for Marginalization**

Zainab faces marginalization on multiple levels in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. She is a woman in a male dominated society; she is poor in a social hierarchy where only rich are privileged; she is visually impaired where an able body is the standard of social acceptance, and she is all alone in a social setting where families provide support and strength. With all weak and disadvantaged identities, she is the most oppressed and helpless character in the novel. Ria Cheyne says that disabled women are placed in different identity categories which connote helplessness (77).

Zainab is a woman in a patriarchal society. There is no male figure in her life to protect her as it generally happens in South Asian societies where women are not independent. There is no mention of a father, brother, husband, or son. Zainab is a blind, poor woman and that is all we know about her identity. She is a rape victim. Perhaps the intersection of her three identities led to this heinous crime. Her rapists find her an easy prey as she cannot identify their faces; being economically poor she cannot buy justice for herself and being a woman, she is already a weaker being. Even Zia’s wife, the First Lady is powerless before her dominating husband whose favorite morning routine includes reading newspapers and lecturing his wife. Zia used to express his frustrations over the headlines by shouting at his wife, so she stopped serving him breakfast (128). Whenever newspapers print her picture, Zia is able to find fault with her appearance. If she wears makeup, he will say that she apes Westernized women. If she does not wear any makeup, he would tell her that she looks like death. He forces her to deliver a speech before All

Pakistan Professional Women Association about Zainab's crime and punishment. Although she is completely convinced that Zainab is innocent, she agrees to do so as it is "what the law says", but she also tells Zia that a woman who has been gang raped for three days, and three nights cannot prove her virginity (133). In a society where the First Lady is forced to speak what she does not want to speak and compelled to stay silent when she wants to shout out, how can a poor blind woman have any voice? There are some women activists who try to fight for Zainab, but their voices are also silenced as government exercises complete control over electronic and print media. Zainab herself is voiceless as she cannot prove her innocence in any way. She tells her cell mates, lawyer, and American journalist about her rape. She tells about that night: In darkness, three men perhaps fourth one at the door held her captive. They tied her hands and beat her when she asked them to let her go "in their mothers' and sisters' name." She says that their hands were soft, and they were not peasants. "They were animals" she concludes (161). But her account of that night and her reliance on her sense of touch and smell is not enough. Zia's laws want her to identify the rapists without considering the fact that being visually impaired she cannot see and after getting raped she cannot prove her virginity. Hudood Ordinance which General Zia introduced proudly to "safeguard honor of all women" (Hanif 133) proved a great hindrance for the rape victims. It required a rape victim to prove her virginity, bring four male witnesses of the rape or witnesses to prove her chastity as a woman of good character. The conditions resulted in one thing: rape victims were sentenced for adultery while the rapists were free enjoying their lives (Jahangir 33). Melinda Jones and Bassar Marks say in their article "law and the Social Construction of Disability" that problems faced by disabled people cannot be resolved using law and that law itself at times becomes part of problem for disabled people, but it is only the law that offers a glimmer of hope (17).

Cruel dictators mold laws to serve their purposes and Zia's regime is no exception. Hudood Ordinance required rape victim to produce four eyewitnesses of the crime which most of the victims could not and so they were punished. Sara Suleri writes in her article "Woman skin deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition" "that ...the real victims of Hudood Ordinance are women and children especially those who are poor, ignorant of their rights and have no access to legal counsel (768). Zainab faces the same situation, and she

is sentenced to stoning for committing adultery. She is powerless, helpless, poor, and alone. There is no one to fight and win her case. Zia is too strong for a few activists and journalists who raise their voice of protest. The noteworthy fact is that Zainab's impairment is not disabling but it is the society that is disabling. The society has constructed different roles for different people, and it denies Zainab any agency in her life. Her human status, right of speech, freedom of expression, right of earning, right of choice are denied by the society; all these have nothing to do with her impairment. Although she is visually impaired, but she can live a normal life if provided a chance.

There are many willful silences and omissions in the portrayal of Zainab. We know about family and the related details about other characters in the novel, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Ali Shigri has a family and a detailed history. Zia also has a family and detailed representation, but Zainab seems to fall out of the sky. Except her disability, she has no identity, no family, no relatives, no past and no future even her age has not been mentioned. She is called 'old woman' by a soldier but is it only derogatory term or is she really old, is not clear (163). She is a woman living in Pakistan where family unit is very strong, but Zainab is all alone. Hanif does not bother to provide any detail about her roots. No one visits her in prison or in Lahore Fort.

The second Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* has a son named Noor. But there is no detail about his father or any other relative. If we assume that it is the same Zainab, then we can assume that Noor was the result of that rape which landed Zainab in the prison. Zainab is a rootless character among well rooted characters. It is not how eastern societies are constructed in real life. Even if all her relatives had died or left her alone, they deserved a mention at least to give sense to her loneliness. Beauchamp, Chung, and Mogilner say in their article *Disabled Literature-Disabled Individual in American Literature: Reflecting Culture(s)* that disabled characters are often portrayed as isolated lonely beings, but it does not happen so in the real world. Someone is there to take care of them (6).

Zainab's character seems to be there in the novel only to highlight General Zia's atrocities and silliness of his laws. He is the one who wants her to identify her tormentors forgetting the fact that a blind woman cannot see. She fails to identify thus attesting that it was adultery not rape. Activists stage protest for Blind Zainab. An anonymous young lady

of twenty, who is not a widow, attends a charity event organized for widows by the information minister and unfurls her dupatta like a banner. “Free Blind Zainab” was written on it. Then “rich Begums” stage a protest to get Zainab free. Every stranger is there to speak for her but where are her relatives? She as well as her sympathizers identify her as “a poor blind woman” (116 & 159). Her eyes are “dead white pools” which makes children giggle when she takes off her sunglasses. Some adults have sympathy for her, like the jailer who gifted her sunglasses; the others like her rapists and General Zia are callous.

Zainab in the novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* has marginal existence. She is disabled, homeless, penniless, and suffering from three types of cancer. She has a son Noor and a friend, Alice. When she and her son Noor are released from Borstal Jail, they have nowhere to go. They have no relatives or friends. Alice, a prison mate has given them the address of Sacred Heart Hospital where they cannot cross the gate for two days as the guard does not allow them, although it is a gate where no one is stopped. Finally, the owner of hospital takes pity and brings them inside, she gets a bed and some medical care. No one can treat her cancer. Once an oncologist on a charity visit sees Zainab’s reports and tells her son to take her home as she is left with only six weeks. Everyone looks down and no one wants to tell him that the hospital is her home (119). Earlier prison was her home and now the hospital. The South Asian concept of home has no existence in her life. After oncologist’s visit Dr. Periera starts spending more time with patients who are not on six weeks’ notice. Zainab is left to Alice and Noor for treatment of her cancer. Zainab has lost all agency and power. She is too helpless to shoo away flies hovering on her face when she lies on a bed in hospital and her son gets a job there. Intersection of her identities puts her in a completely passive situation where she exists only to wait for the arrival of her death. The signs of life in her feeble body are: “she goes to sleep, she wakes up, she takes her pills, she pees, and she drools and feebly scratches the dry patches on her legs” (120). Already major activities of life are no more there for her.

The same novel portrays very briefly a man with his legs amputated. He is sitting at the top of stairs having a pile of x-rays of his legs, he holds them one by one and looks at it as one looks at old family pictures (57). A sense of lack and loss is clearly felt by the choice of words. Suddenly a dark March cloud covers the sun and a kite swoops down

confused by sudden darkness. It plans to take something home before it gets dark. “The legless man fights the kite with the x-ray of his missing legs” (58). It is very unusual that a kite attacks a man, and he is vulnerable enough to be attacked like that. A man who has lost his legs has to fight an attacking kite; his position among human beings can be well imagined. This type of portrayal marginalizes a real disabled person who is forced to think of his vulnerability in a heartless world where even birds attack a disabled man.

The portrayal of Qayyum is completely different from the portrayal of Zainab. His impairment marginalizes him to some extent but his social set up does not disable him as it does with Zainab. He is a man, an earning member of family, has pension and is partially disabled. He is as active as any able-bodied man or even more. He feels the sense of lack and loss for some time but when he gets a glass eye fixed in his eye socket, he starts behaving like an able-bodied man living a completely normal life. Intersection of his identities puts him in a privileged position. Except partial visual impairment, all his other identities are strong enough to give him a respectable position in the society. He has come back from war; war injury has entitled him to lifelong pension. Thus, he has a secure source of income. He works as a letter writer and reader in the absence of his father and works as a helper in the garden and fields of kalam’s father after the murder of kalam khan, his old friend. With the passage of time, Qayyum Gul becomes a tenant farmer and teaches at a school, meets Ghaffar khan and becomes a local political leader. His visual impairment does not obstruct his way except that he cannot get married or have a love affair. For marriage, he is not considered an ideal man; having only one eye, he is considered ill-fated fellow by the people, and they are not willing to get their daughters married to him. This disabling attitude of people keeps Qayyum single, and he cannot start a family life as other men of his age do but his impairment does not stop him from satisfying his sexual needs as he visits prostitutes, and no one judges him for this act. His identity as a man helps him a lot in paving his way. When his father falls ill, his mother’s gaze tells him that he is a man, and he has to shoulder the responsibilities and he does accordingly. The society has accepted him with one eye and does not stop him from living a normal life.

When studying character of Lenny, one thing should be kept in mind that she is four years old when the novel starts and almost ten when the novel ends. The time is too



brief to capture all the implications of her impairment. She is just a child who has very little and well-guarded exposure to the outside world. Nandini Ghosh says that disabled (little) girls are well protected, pampered and cared by their families in patriarchal family system. During adolescent the girls realize the major implications of disability and experience bitterness, resentment, and anger (16 not like other girls). Lenny belongs to a well off and well-educated family. Her parents started treatment of her crippled leg at a very early age. She is only four when she has already gone through one surgery. Surgical and medical procedures are repeated again and again so that she may have a normal walk. Her parents have money and resources to make things easy for her. Her Ayah is always with her and takes care of her every need. She takes her to park, Godmother's house and to other public places. Lenny is in a pram or sometimes the Ayah or some other servant is there to carry her. No doubt her impairment is painful for her, but her condition is not as helpless as that of Zainab in the selected novels. She has a happy and carefree childhood. She plays with other children, teases her brother, becomes a part of mischief made by servants, moves in and out of the house with servants and relatives.

She may not face an extreme form of marginalization but the social constructions of ablism and gender have started influencing her young mind. Her aunt's comments about the difficulty of finding a husband have made Lenny internalize that it will be difficult for her to get married when she grows up. She already feels insecure about her complexion, short height, and crippled leg, when all children in her family go to school, she is the only one who stays at home. When other children of her age will look for different careers, doctor has planned for Lenny to become a housewife, job and education are not for her. As a child, she may not find herself at any disadvantage, but these things matter when a child grows up and has to survive in a capitalist society.

## **5.2 Intersection of Gender and Disability**

Disability intersects with gender and marginalizes some people more than the others. Social hierarchies have been established for ages and challenging them is not an easy task. Women are considered weaker beings since ages. In power structures, especially in patriarchal societies, women have minimal power to decide for themselves. In patriarchal societies, most of women have no access to right of education, right of earning

for themselves and other basic rights are often denied to them. Nandini Ghosh says in her article *Not Like Other Girls* that in culture where birth of a female child is not celebrated, the birth of a disabled girl is seen as a 'curse' thus she faces the disappointment of family and her disability at the same time (79). In cultures where marriage determines the worth of women, disabled girls are not considered valuable for roles as mother and wife. They are undervalued. Cultural stereotyping gives meaning and value to marriage and motherhood. These roles identify women and give them purpose in life. Disabled girls are considered in need of care and dependent thus not suitable to perform their role as mothers and wives. Disabled girls are forced to stay out of ideals of sexuality, desirability, and marriageability. They are given a "liminal space" of existence. Society forces disabled women to find restricted roles for themselves thus producing "subjugated identities" within the limitations imposed by the society (78).

In South Asian countries, daughters are not much desired as they are considered a financial burden because they leave their parents after marriage. Then there are different honour related issues in South Asian countries. Daughters alone have to uphold the honour of the family. Rape is a social stigma which may lead parents to outcast or kill their daughter so, a disabled daughter who cannot defend her honour is confined to four walls of the house and not given any chance to develop herself. Whenever disabled women brought up in such disabling environment have to face the world alone, they become victims of stonehearted criminals as it happens with Zainab.

Disabled women find difficulty in getting formal education. Nidhi Goyal, a visually impaired activist of India recalls the time when she applied for Postgraduate Program; she was invited by the head of the program to tell her that no one can deny her legal right of getting admission, but she should not try to get admission because of her disability (166-167).

The disabled people are economically marginalized because of their disability. Cultural stereotypes prefer able bodied individual to disabled one. Anita Gai says that disabled people are perceived as deprived economically, socially, culturally, and politically because of their impairment (290).

Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* is depicted as an isolated and marginalized being. Hanif tells the reader that Zainab has given her interview to a newspaper but being illiterate she cannot read it when it is published. She has some skills which can be helpful in earning money: she can give massage, take care of pregnant ladies, clean her room, and teach the Holy Quran to children. Any one of these skills can help any able-bodied person to get employed and earn some money but Zainab is denied the chance even in a work of fiction. It is the stance of the social model of disability, selected theorists and present research that the people with impairments have physical and mental abilities to live their life independently but social constructs of disability deny them the chances to do so. The real world and fictional world both keep them dependent, passive and helpless by denying them the chance to grow and behave like able bodied persons. The portrayal of Zainab by Hanif is totally hopeless. He has pushed her in a situation which gets worse with the passage of time. Economically, she is very poor that is why a man thrusts a soggy two rupee note in her hands when she is standing confused in Lahore Fort, not knowing where to go. Her appearance advertises her economic condition. When she is moved from the jail to Lahore Fort, she has only a bundle of her clothes, two dresses and a pair of gifted sunglasses with her. Sunglasses help her in easing migraines which the sun causes but she does not or cannot buy them. They are a gift from the jail superintendent. In jail, she has provided all her services free of cost. No one having a position of authority thinks of paying her for the work she does. Newspapers pay for news normally, but Zainab is pushed to the boundaries of existence as there is no mention of any such payment. The only thing she gets in the jail is a pair of cheap sunglasses that infuriate General Zia even more. When American newspaper publishes her picture wearing those glasses, she is thrown in a dark cell in Lahore Fort away from all human company. Zainab is shown as a stereotypical disabled person who is deprived of social, economic, social, and political role. There is no mention of her family. She is married or not is not mentioned although it is a mark of social position in South Asian societies. The irony of her situation is that she is desirable for rape but not for marriage. Her disability makes her undesirable for marriage but an easy prey for rape. Zia comments about her: "perhaps the blind woman is not much to look at" (128). The Americans are perverts in his view as they have turned a case of fornication into an international issue. He likes and showers wealth on journalists who sing his praises and

publish his pictures but for Zainab he has quite opposite thoughts. He never believes that the woman is actually blind: “Blind people don’t get their photos published on the front pages of American papers” (129). In other words, only able-bodied men are entitled to fame and respect. Stereotypes associated with gender and disability are so strong that General Zia is not willing to trust Zainab’s statement for a minute. When discussing her case with his spiritual guide in Makkah, a Qadi, Zia chooses his words as: if a woman says that “she was forced to fornicate.” He is not willing to call it a rape. He swaps the identity of a victim and a criminal. Zainab is not allowed the real identity as a rape victim/ survivor that may help her in fighting her case. Zia’s actions and words support those men who have committed this heinous act against a visually impaired woman. In Patriarchal society, men are not held accountable for their acts, but victims can be punished. Qadi says that rape is not easy to commit, and women often lie when they are caught fornicating. He rules out possibility of one rapist when he says that it needs at least five men to commit the act and a woman must identify their faces. Qadi is also firm in his belief that rapists do not cover their faces as they want to see their reflection in a woman’s eyes. In other words, the Qadi and General Zia are not willing to accept Zainab’s truth. According to Qadi equality of gender is: if a blind rapist is not given any privilege on account of his blindness, so is a blind rape victim and the law does not differentiate between the people who can see and those who cannot see (133). For a rape victim there is little hope of getting justice when she must prove that she is a woman of good character and was virgin before the crime was committed. For a disabled woman there is no hope especially when one is in a situation like Zainab’s. She has no husband to attest her honour, no family to fight her case and no way to establish her chastity.

Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* has lived most of her life in prison. There is very little account of her life in prison. We do not know about any of her life skills, but it is clear that she is Noor’s mother. She gave birth to him and brought him up. Mothering is a task that requires many skills, so she must have lived a very active and hard life as a single parent living in a prison. As a woman, she is a helpless being. Zainab has no money and no source of getting money as a result, she and her son are penniless and homeless when they are released from the prison. There is no detail about the man whom she had

married once. Why she was in prison is not clear, who is Noor's father is not mentioned. With these omissions, a lot is left to the reader's guess work.

On the other hand, Qayyum is a man in a male dominated society. His impairment does not hit him as hard as it has happened in case of Zainab. After the initial shock and time of recovery, Qayyum plays a very active role like any other man. He takes care of his father's business of letter reading and writing and earns money for his family. His mother looks up to him not to any of her daughters or herself when the head of family falls ill. He is the one who guides and takes care of his younger brother. He saves him from the anger of his mother, accompanies and guides him whenever he needs it or his mother commands him to do so. He can fulfill his promise and after Kalam's murder, he helps his father in sowing and harvesting crops. Qayyum Gul has a control over his life: he participates in freedom struggle by becoming an active member of Ghaffar Khan's movement. Being a man in a male dominated society he cannot sit passively, he is always on the move, doing one thing or the other. Sowing, harvesting, reading, writing, teaching, running, walking, listening, talking, saving his family and other people from trouble, and searching for his brother in every nook and corner of the city. The novel conforms the stereotypical role of man in South Asian societies, except that he cannot marry and start his own family. He remains single till the end of the novel; his disability does not seem to hamper his life in any other way. His is more active than many men with two good eyes. At one point Shamsie describes helplessness faced by Vivian Rose, "But what could she do about it? She was just a woman with no authority on either side of the city walls" (204).

The stereotype of gender role is quite clear from these lines, 'being just a woman' means a woman cannot exert her authority. At another point she follows Qayyum Gul wearing a Burqa, but she has to take tiny steps as she cannot walk in that garment. Constructed role of gender is obvious when his mother fails to find a bride for him, he tells her to find no more as he would marry after the battle for independence is over, "men did not age as women did." There is an ideal age for women to get married otherwise they grow old; the same rule does not apply to men. Aging for two genders is constructed differently benefiting men only. For satisfying his needs he visits the Street of Courtesans. There is a lady whom he visits often. In the depiction of Qayyum Gul's activities there is

complete absence of any shame or guilt. He goes there just as he goes to his garden. There is no judgment passed on him by his family or by the state as was passed in the case of Zainab. His needs are acknowledged not criticized and punished. Zainab and Qayyum are members of the same society. The society allows a man to satisfy his needs the way he wants to, but a woman has to prove her chastity otherwise she would be stoned to death. Equality of gender seems a joke here. Socially constructed gender role and role as a disabled woman make Zainab an embodiment of helpless victim. Many disabled women get education and earn for themselves, it is not that all of them live a helpless life like Zainab. Hanif has portrayed Zainab as a helpless victim in all fields of life. Socially she is alone and at the mercy of men like her rapists and General Zia; politically she is nothing before a powerful autocrat; economically she is totally dependent and belongs to unprivileged segment of the society. Political, social, cultural, economic and gender constructs put Zainab in a very restricted role. Intersection of her weak identities marginalizes and silences her.

*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* gives a very brief account of mentally challenged men in Charya Ward. Once again, Hanif has given a very stereotypical representation of their disability. They are described as threat by everyone in the hospital. Noor tries to stop Alice from visiting them although as a nurse it is a part of her job. There should have been a properly trained nurse and other staff, but the hospital has no one to deal with those men. Sweeper takes their medicines to them and does not clean their room that's why Alice finds a nest of human hair with a live rat in it. It seems that the use of force is common to discipline them. An old man with a swollen tongue may have been a victim of thrashing. Perhaps Teddy's services are hired to reduce them to order when they get out of control.

Alice is afraid of unwanted attention of men. She dresses up in a way that may not send wrong signals to wrong persons. She behaves and talks in a calculated manner so that no one may misunderstand her. In crowds she keeps looking out as if somebody is just about to appear for her help. She wants people to think that she is not alone. She moves to a side when she sees a boy half her age walking towards her (79). The same careful and cautious Alice goes alone to visit a group of mentally challenged men in Charya Ward. She

does not perceive them a threat although Noor sends Teddy to bring her back. When Junior's men come looking for her, she hides in Charya Ward to escape the armed men.

Another thing that comes to light through this research is the depiction of opposition of marriageability and disability. Disabled characters are not considered fit for marriage and normal family life. Even in fiction, disabled people face difficulty in finding life partners. Gosh says that disabled girls learn about their "unacceptable" and "undesirable" bodies. Through subtle messages of socialization, disabled girls are made to understand that they do not deserve male gaze or attention. Some parents negate their disabled daughters' femininity and sexuality: they tell them from very early age that they are not fit for marriage and responsibilities of married life, or they may not get married because of their disability (112).

Lenny Sethi is a very young girl, but she faces social stigma of marriageability. She has already imbibed social standards of beauty and ableism. She says, "I'm dark enough. Everyone says, it is a pity Adi's fair and Lenny so dark. He's a boy. Anyone will marry him" (76). One of her aunts asks her who will marry her. When they are talking about a kidnapped woman and Lenny makes a comment. Her aunt adds, it will be difficult to find a husband for Lenny as it is. Lenny repeats what her mother has told her that her husband would search with a candle to find her. In response her aunt says that "poor fellow.... will clutch his head in his hands and weep" when he gets to know Lenny, clearly implying her impairment. She tells her aunt that her cousin wants to marry her. This thought seems comforting to her. Cousin's mother replies to this, "He has not seen any girls besides our Lame Lenny, Three For a Penny. Wait till he sees the world!" (184-185). The conversation between her aunts and Lenny clearly indicates that the elders are telling her about her impaired body and the socially acceptable and desirable body from early childhood. Their words upset Lenny and she starts crying as if she would never stop. She feels sorry for herself, her cousin, lame, senile, hurt people and fallen woman. She feels sorry for the condition of the world. The elders' words have their effect, and she bursts out, "No one will marry me. I limp." The cousin tells her that her limp makes her look attractive and sexy, but she is not willing to believe him. In response to cousin's question about marrying him, she tells him that she will think about him when she grows up (185-186).

Her outburst demonstrates the process of internalization of disability which Ghosh and Gai talk about. Disabled girls are made to internalize their ‘inferior’ position from the early childhood. When elders pour such words in their presence, sensitive minds of girls imbibe their thoughts and frame a world accordingly. Lenny has internalized her unacceptable and undesirable body with a limp.

Hanif has not mentioned the subject of marriage when he introduces Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* as if it were something out of question. She can be raped but not married, is the paradox in the novel. Zia says about her that “The woman wasn’t much to look at” (128). No one not even Zainab talks about this subject. It can be deduced that she is not considered fit for marriage by anyone. Her parents who have accepted her misfortune as a child perhaps made no effort to get her married. Being alone and blind, she falls into hands of rapists.

Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* was married but the text is silent about the whereabouts of her husband. No answer is to be found about who he is? Where is he? Is he Noor’s father? As he has no function to serve in the plot development, he has gotten just a passing mention. His presence would have made Zainab less vulnerable and imperfect victim for exposing ‘cruel patriarchal’ society of Pakistan, so Hanif makes him disappear from Zainab’s life and from the plot of his novel. Zainab has a very loving and caring son, the only hope of her life. Motherhood proves a blessing for her. When they are in jail, Noor used to sell cigarette butts to the prisoners and come back to his mother “with half a banana or a piece of toast with a little butter on it” (28). Each insisted the other to eat forgetting her/his hunger. He is the one who finds a job and thus secures a roof, a bed and treatment for Zainab in the Sacred Heart Hospital. During his work hours, he keeps visiting his mother whenever he finds time. He shoos away flies, sprays Finis around her bed, wipes dribble from her mouth, massages her feet, gives her food and medicine. Alice also takes care of Zainab and tries different herbal remedies to cure her cancer. Noor is worried more about disturbing his mother’s sleep than fighting for his own life when Teddy comes with guns and pistols to interrogate him in his mother’s room. Teddy twists his fingers with his pistol, but Noor stifles his scream as he does not want his mother to wake up and see all this. He obeys every command given by Teddy so that he may stop him from firing a shot



near his mother's bed. He knows that loud bangs scare her and give her headache that lasts for days. Zainab in this condition is not spared violence despite the best effort of her son. Teddy snatches the pillow from under her head. She sits upright for a moment and then lies and goes back to deep sleep (156).

Qayyum also faces the same issue of marriageability. His partial disability obstructs plans of his family for his marriage. Although his mother is confident that his pension will help in finding the most beautiful bride for her son. No one will refuse his marriage proposal, but reality is different. When she finally finds a girl after some struggle, the girl dies before marriage and Qayyum is declared as an ill-fated fellow. People fear that if they give their daughter's hand in marriage to 'glass eyed man', their daughters will die too. So, in spite of financial security, active role in politics, job as a teacher and a tenant farmer, being a very loving and caring brother and son, he cannot secure a bride. The stigma of disability and its association with bad luck keeps Qayyum Gul single.

It is clear that people prefer able bodied life partners in real life and in literature. The disabled people have to lead life alone or their partners do not stay with them for longer time. The disabled characters in the selected novels are living fully functional lives. They take care of themselves, fulfill their responsibilities and are capable of fairly normal life yet the social stigma never leaves them alone. They find hurdles in finding life partners and having a normal family life. Literature can shape people's attitudes. It not only reflects but also affects a society. The portrayal of disabled characters as single, lonely beings should be challenged so that people may consider them capable of living a normal family life. Zainab has given birth to and brought up her son Noor in spite of her visual impairment, but she is denied the right of getting/staying married both by the social set up and by the writer.

### **5.3 Othering of Disabled Characters in Literary Representation**

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson says, "literary representation tends to objectify disabled characters" thus depriving them of their subjectivity and power. The plot of fiction benefits from the presence of a disabled character. The disabled character remains other to the reader-- equally human but different. Writers portray disabled characters in a way that

they behave differently from the actual disabled persons in real life. If they portray them like the real ones, the power of stigma and stereotype would be lost (21-22).

Hanif has presented Zainab as Other in both of his novels. The process of othering starts with her arrival in the plot, Zainab is visually impaired, the writer calls her blind (with capital b) many times in the novel, writing her name as *Blind Zainab*; thus, making her impairment a part of her being and identity but he has not presented Zia or Shigri in this way: for example, nowhere Zia is paranoid General or Ali a scheming fellow.

She is a stereotypical blind woman in a stereotypical male dominated society who suffers every atrocity without any resistance. The writer does not give any detail about her age, family, education, or any other thing that may help a reader to relate with her character. She is alienated and othered from the very beginning of her role in the plot. Readers may feel sympathy for her, but they cannot identify themselves with her. She is an Other from the very start of her introduction. Her impairment is used to objectify and other her from the rest of the society. She is different and her difference is portrayed in such a way that it puts her at a disadvantage.

Muhammad Hanif's novels *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* have Blind Zainab as a minor character. Hanif does not clarify anywhere whether it is the same Zainab, or these are two different women with the same name, suffering from the similar circumstances. Her identity remains ambiguous. The interesting thing to note is that he mentions "Blind Zainab" more than eight times in the novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* as if her disability were a part of her name and thus identity (116,128,131-3,161,233). All other character qualities of Zainab are not made a part of her identity: nowhere he calls her caring Zainab or neat and clean lady or a brave lady or resilient Zainab. These are parts of her personality just as blindness is, but they are not mentioned. Zainab is othered when we compare her with Ali Shigri, Zia and the first Lady, able bodied men, and woman. They have well developed personalities with all positive and negative aspects, details of their families, houses even rooms and routine life is given; on the other hand, Zainab is just a blind woman suffering all atrocities without offering any resistance; such depiction objectifies her and deprives her of any agency in her life. The character portrayal others Zainab and every reader knows that Zainab is other with whom s/he cannot

identify: people may have impairments but they have families, source of direct or indirect income, skills and adaptability with their environment in a way that their lives never become a complete tragedy like Zainab's, we have the real-life example of Safia Bibi to illustrate that visually impaired people do not lose all control over their lives and they fight back just like people with normal bodies.

Not only does the society other and marginalize disabled women but also literature pushes them to the periphery of representation. Zainab has been added as a character in both the novels only to highlight the plight of women in patriarchal Pakistani society. She does not seem to be there in the novels for her own sake but only to expose brutal patriarchal society of Pakistan. Zainab's disability is used to evoke resentment and anger against General Zia, pathos, and pity for poor disabled woman thus, helps in achieving writer's aim. Ria Cheyne says that disabled characters are often sacrificed at the end to enhance effect of the narrative. Disabled victims are "erased" through death. For Zainab, even worse fate awaits, she is thrown in the dark cell and is forgotten by the writer. Hanif does not mention her again when he releases Ali Shigri and Baby O' from the cell. The reader is kept in darkness about origin or end of Zainab. Othering is done by the writer and by the characters: when she is brought to the Lahore Fort, soldiers are in no hurry to take her to the cell, just leave her in the van and she herself comes out and stands on the road when she senses that the van is no longer moving, the soldiers not only objectify and other her but treat her as if she does not exist at all. There is no one to guide her and when she asks a man, he considering her a beggar, gives her two- rupee note that disgusts her (163), thus, imposing an undesirable identity on her. The act of identifying oneself as one wants to be one of the basic human rights, but Zainab does not have it: the writer calls her blind, people call her blind, old woman and such words which are used in an insulting way not as a matter of fact.

Another technique which helps in othering a disabled character is the addition of mystery and superstition to their character portrayal: Hanif says that when she was born there was talk of bad omens, but she was accepted as an unlucky child as her face was radiant and she had all her faculties except eyesight (159). In her childhood a crow kept her company for many days. According to villagers it was a bad omen, but it provided her

good company. Again, it is a crow that carries the curse uttered by Zainab and actually acts upon the curse by hitting Zia's plane, killing him in a way that his children cannot see his face; thus, Zainab's supernatural power is revealed. Such details remove a person from normativity and make him exceptional and thus other him/her from the rest of the people. Ali Shigri has no such power, neither does Zia, his officer nor the first lady; only Zainab has such supernatural powers. Mystery and supernatural power make her different and other her from common men and women.

Hanif very briefly and precisely shows the attitude of society to a blind woman but the portrayal of her character lacks substance. Her looks, words, actions, and gestures are very briefly mentioned if at all. She is polite, has fortitude, teaches children the holy Quran in the jail, feeds sparrows, takes care of two pregnant women in jail, gives interview to a newspaper and people who ask her about her story, and she kills a baby snake with her slipper that is all about her role in the novel. There are many blanks in her portrayal, but the writer is silent about them. His aim seems to be arousal of sympathy and pity for a poor blind woman thus proving Zia a merciless dictator and Pakistani men brutal to women. The president of sweeper's union smells presence of a woman in the neighboring cell and starts dreaming of different obscene possibilities, the judge is lecherous, and her three rapists had 'soft hands and smelled of petrol'. Not only Hanif presents a very gloomy picture of Pakistani able bodied and disabled women but he presents a very stereotypical picture of patriarchal men in his novels.

Ria Cheyne says that the disabled characters are portrayed as "vulnerable victims or potential victim" (27). This type of portrayal helps in producing feelings of fear for the vulnerable disabled character thus producing other associated feelings of restlessness, uneasiness, pity, anxiety, and repulsion. Another type of portrayal shows the disabled person as a villain who commits heinous acts (27 &28). Both types of depictions help in othering the character: no reader wants to identify with the victim or the villain, no doubt, this type of depiction helps in producing intended feeling in readers, but it removes them from identifying with the character, they realize that the character is a human being but different from the rest of the society. Binary of us and them is produced by the writer in such portrayals.

The character of Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is othered at multiple levels when we compare her with the character of Alice. There is a complete detail about Alice's parents, their house, economic condition, life as a Christian minority in a country of Muslim majority and their hardships as poor, untouchable people. Alice's character is well developed, we are told about the streets of her area, the shops she visits are mentioned, the attitudes of people to Alice and her parents, details about her mother's death, her childhood and adulthood with her father, her hardships as a student and later on a nurse, unwanted attentions she gets, lust of men around her, her all struggles and fights, her feelings, autonomy...each and every detail is mentioned in the novel. All the researchers call her a subaltern who cannot speak for herself but compared with Zainab she is a warrior and Zainab is the real subaltern. Alice knows how to avoid unwanted attention and gestures of men, she has her strategies; she fights against the Muslim girls who harass her for her religion in her student life, attacks the man with a razor blade who tries to rape her in hospital room, runs away from potential killers, marries Teddy and leaves him when marriage does not turn out according to her expectations, is brave enough to adopt an orphan and has courage enough to become a spiritual healer. Alice is ambitious, she wants to build an identity for herself not to be known only as Joseph's daughter, she gets her wedding dress stitched by the famous tailor, gets a job in the Sacred Heart Hospital without hiding her real name while the successful Christian nurse Hina Alvi has adopted a Muslim name. These are some of the details about Alice, when we compare Zainab with her, we realize that Zainab is not only othered, but she is the real subaltern: readers are kept in dark about Zainab's parents, her home and her early life, reason of imprisonment, her husband and his whereabouts, her strategies of fighting life and her feeling. Besides her disability and bed ridden existence, only one aspect is well detailed: her motherly love for Noor and how her son takes care of her; all other aspects of her personality are erased. When Alice appears for the interview, there is a great detail of her feelings, it covers almost eight pages comprising the first chapter but when Zainab stands outside the hospital for two days and two nights it takes only six lines to describe her situation. Zainab's feelings and reactions to the outside world or her own condition are mentioned nowhere: she is a woman in the same society which makes unwanted advances to Alice, must have suffered the same

situations many times in life. Her experiences and feelings cannot be less important than those of Alice, but the text proves the contrary.

Character of Zainab is othered by the past researchers as well: everyone talks about Alice, and nobody talks about Zainab. Both the characters live in the same society, both struggle for their survival and both are marginalized and oppressed but no one talks about the oppression that Zainab has faced.

In the selected fiction, there is representation of Charya ward in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* where the mentally challenged patients are kept who are seen as potential threats and feared to behave aggressively towards visitors, when Alice goes for a round of their ward, she is rescued by powerful Teddy; no one wants to visit their ward. They face extreme form of othering and the social set up has denied their status as living human beings. They are 'non-people'. Forced to live in filth and neglect, all twelve of them get the same medicine which the sweeper brings, their lives are worse than that of animals.

Hanif's novels depict disabled characters as homeless and without any family. Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* has no home. She lives in the black cell "as if it was her home". She does not behave like other inmates of the dark cell who file petitions, follow their cases, pray and when their appeals are rejected, turn their attention and energies to afterlife and forgiveness (158). Zainab lives quite comfortably in her dark cell. She does not mention her home and her family. South Asian societies have a very strong concept of home and family, but Hanif erases it from Zainab's life without giving any suitable explanation. For a reader, especially in the East, it is impossible to think of a woman without any member of her family: if they have estranged or abandoned her even then they are part of gossips. Ali Shigri had a father, a house in Shigri valley and a past which he can recall, Zia has a family, a house and a past but Zainab is denied all these details. She comes, exposes Zia, curses him and is thrown in the cell. Her curse is as important as Ali Shigri's all plans to kill Zia but the whole novel is about Zia and Ali, because they are ideal bodied males in a male dominated society? Zainab is othered in her portrayal by Hanif. The men in Charya ward, legless woman and legless man are also presented in the same way: they have no name, no identity, no home, no family, no relative visits them and they are left on their own to survive.

Having a look at the review of past research shows that researchers have also othered Zainab. Everyone talks about Zia, his rule, or his practices but Zainab is nowhere. In *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, every study focused on Alice, no one talked about Zainab. Was she not a woman who was marginalized and othered by her society? She did not suffer less than Alice, did not perform lesser role in exposing patriarchy than Alice but she is nowhere in any research.

The same is the case with Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*: she has no family, no house, and no past except the fact that she had been in prison. There are many questions which are left unanswered, there is not even gossip or speculation about her relatives, what happened to her and why she was imprisoned. When she and her son are released from the Borstal Jail, they have no home to go back to. They arrive at the gate of Sacred Heart Hospital to find a roof over their heads. Once again, there is an Eastern woman without any home and relatives except a son whose details are not given anywhere, as in real South Asian families things are not like this. People keep contact with their relatives in prison, they try to hire lawyers and keep visiting them. If there are no such visits, there must have been some explanation which is not given. Hanif puts Zainab in the plot to expose dark side of Pakistani jail for women and children where rape and molestation is common but there is no other detail; she is in the plot to bring to light the condition of hospitals and general attitude of the society, doctors, and other medical staff. Mainly, she is there as Noor's mother, and he is portrayed as a dutiful and kind son who takes care of his mother.

All the other disabled characters in the selected fiction are represented as victims of their circumstances. The depiction of disabled people as victims reinforces the typical thoughts about disability as helplessness, lack, loss, misfortune, and vulnerability. Rosemary Garland-Thomson says that disabled bodies are wrapped in otherness as signaled by the texts in which they appear. The texts stigmatize one attribute disability and omit other normalizing factors (10-11).

Lenny as a child is othered when she is denied innocence of her childhood. Living among adults, she has gained the knowledge of adult world earlier than she should have. Her disability and her parents' response to it has helped in othering her. They pamper her to the extent that she is not allowed to live like other children. She does not go out

unattended, Ayah or some other servants are always with her. In their constant company, she has become an adult child. Lenny does not play, does not go to school, does not compete for candies and love like other children. Social set up has taught her that she is lame, and she has internalized the fact and all its implications: it is normal for her to be treated differently by others, although it is out of kindness and sympathy but it Others her from the rest of children. She is the narrator of the novel; the readers see the world depicted in the novel through her eyes. Her experiences of othering take place on two levels: her gender and her disability. She is not treated like her brother and cousin who are able bodied males: they swear and get off with it but when Lenny tries it, someone is always there to admonish her that it does not suit her. The boys go to school and get an education; she stays at home with servants and learns from them. From a very early age she has been taught about her unacceptable body by different people resulting in internalization of her position as Other. Able bodied girls like her maid's daughter get married early in their life while it would be difficult to find a husband for Lenny as her aunt tells her.

All the female disabled characters of the selected fiction face marginalization and othering because of their gender and disability. In a male dominated society, they already occupy a position of other, where a man is privileged and a woman is marginalized, then comes their disability as another cause of othering.

Qayyum Gul faces process of othering to some extent, most of the time he is accepted as a member of patriarchal society and allowed to perform his role without any hindrance. He is othered because he is a subject of English people, and they consider themselves superior and the Indians inferior. Qayyum Gul fights for the English and at Ypres he loses his one eye resulting from an injury and he is retired from the army although another white man is in the battlefield with impaired body; he is othered for his subject position and partial disability. In the earlier days of his stay at hospital, he yearns to be among his friends on the battlefield but gradually he accepts his position. His own people occasionally remind him of his impaired body but most of the time he is considered one of them not different.

Stereotypical representation reinforces the social construction of disability as something that does not allow people to have a normal life. The representation others and



alienates disabled character from the rest of the society. Hanif's portrayal of disability and disabled characters fails to challenge the existing concepts, reproduces the old concept with great vigor and strengthens the binary of able and disabled bodies thus othering the people having some impairment. Sidhwa tries to break free of stereotypes at some points, but Lenny is a stereotypical disabled girl despite belonging to a rich family who can afford everything to alleviate her condition. Qayyum Gul is also portrayed as a stereotypical disabled male although at times he can break himself free of social constructs and lead a fulfilling life.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

Getting insight from Cheyne's analysis of different novels and using theoretical framework provided by Garland- Thomson and Ghosh, the study finds that Muhammad Hanif's representation of disability draws heavily on stereotypes of disability and disabled bodies. His selected works rule out any possibility of positive or even neutral portrayal of disability. The depiction of disability in his works seems to say only one thing that life with disability is "full of suffering and hence not worth living." The disabled characters in his novel are portrayed as helpless victims who are completely passive and have no agency in life. They are natural victims: voiceless, helpless, and isolated beings. The life with impairments is shown as a lack, loss and complete tragedy. The disabled characters have no family, friends, roots, and relatives. There are homeless disabled women suffering at the hands of patriarchal society, there are mentally challenged men living in condition worse than those of animals and a legless man who is attacked by kite. The only purpose of their presence in the plot is to present a picture of sheer helplessness of disabled people especially disabled women and how they suffer atrocities at the hands of able bodied, patriarchal society. Hanif has reproduced and reinforced traditional conceptualization of disability as a lack and loss. The only purpose of their presence in the plot seems the arousal of sympathy for disabled people and anger at the authorities. His characters cannot and do not live normal life. Outside forces and heartless social set up deprives them of a life worth living.

The portrayal of disabled characters by Sidhwa and Shamsie conforms with stereotypical and stigmatized image of a disabled person, constructed by the society although their depiction of disability is not as disabling as is done by Hanif. Shamsie and Sidhwa allow their disabled character to live an almost happy and contented life as far as disability is concerned. Qayyum Gul has multiple sources of income, has a very active social and political life. At times, he has to suffer some setbacks on account of his disability but most of the time it does not obstruct his life and activities. Lenny experiences impact of disability as a child but its effect is reduced by the presence of Ayah and servants who

take her to different places despite her mobility impairment. She feels the sense of lack and loss when people comment on her condition, or she compares herself with other children, but Sidhwa has given her will power and agency. Lenny manipulates her elders to get her wishes fulfilled.

So, there is a variety of representation of disability and disabled characters in Anglophone Pakistani fiction. Ranging from extremely stereotypical and stigmatized to mildly stereotypical and stigmatized depiction, Anglophone Pakistani literature has male and female, rich and poor, partially disabled to completely disabled characters. Depiction varies from writer to writer, but the thing is that they have internalized socially constructed images to the extent that education and Western exposure cannot erase them, and we find Anglophone Pakistani writers reproducing socially constructed disabling images of disability and disabled persons. They have not tried to challenge the socially constructed images through literature; none of these writers has tried to produce a disabled character on printed pages which may help in producing a new and different image of disabled person.

The present study finds that the intersection of gender and disability marginalizes women. Men with impairments may live normal or almost normal life but for disabled women there are many problems. In the third world countries, majority of disabled women are not educated properly. They are not taught any skill that may help them in earning money to meet their expenses. In many cases, they are considered a financial burden which their families must bear, and if there is no family, then the situation becomes quite hopeless for a disabled woman. No one is willing to carry her responsibility, but many are ready to exploit her as it happens with Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Lenny who belongs to well off and well-educated family is deprived of formal education on account of her impairment although her impairment does not stop her from visiting different places of her city. Her doctor's decision that she is not going to be a professor is accepted without any objection by her otherwise very liberal and modern parents. The doctor tells them that Lenny will live a happy married life as a housewife thus eliminating any chance of job.

In the South Asian societies, most of the families do not encourage their daughters to get higher education and adopt any profession. So, women are mostly dependent on men

for money. Men are admired for their role as bread earners and they are expected to earn for themselves and their family as soon as they can but girls are taught to depend on male relatives for their financial needs. Noor is a teenager, but he is the earning member of his small family. He gets a job in the hospital which is a home to him and his ailing mother Zainab. Although a teenager yet he knows that he must carry the responsibility. He does every sort of work in the hospital and in return he and his mother are provided a roof over their heads, food, and the best possible medical care. Social construction of gender roles is quite clear in Noor's mind, and he is alive to his responsibility. Zainab as a mother has brought him up with love and devotion. She has been in jail for a long time and thus has no money or house of her own. Her son is determined to change their life and he works hard for it. He accepts every responsibility given by Dr. Periera and is quite ambitious. Zainab is shown without any agency in life. She is too helpless to shoo away flies from her face while her son fights against circumstances without accepting defeat. The little education he got from the jail helps him in paving his way in life. The words "excuse me, Sir and Excuse me, Madam" draw Dr. Periera's attention to him and he picks the boy and his mother from the road and brings them in hospital. When Noor is seventeen years old, he is the one who is practically running the hospital (19). He is an able-bodied male. He is the ideal figure to climb up the ladder of social hierarchy on the other hand his mother is an ailing disabled woman, an icon of helplessness and vulnerability.

The comparison of disabled characters through the lens of gender shows that intersection of femaleness with disability puts women at a greater disadvantage. Compared to passive and helpless Zainab who is treated as beggar in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, bed ridden Zainab in *Our lady of Alice Bhatti*, Qayyum Gul lives a better life. He earns for himself and his family. His family looks up to him in time of need whether it is illness of his father or search for his missing brother. He is a letter writer and reader, a local political activist, a teacher and a farmer. His sexuality has not been denied. He visits prostitutes and no one judges him for this, it is taken as a routine matter. While female disabled characters are portrayed without acknowledging this aspect of their human existence. Zainab was a desirable victim for gang rape but unthinkable as a life partner in *A case of Exploding Mangoes*, Zainab in *Our Lady Bhatti of Alice Bhatti* was married once but what happened to that marriage is not clear. Lenny although a child, has been denied the chance to get

education. The way her family pampers her, may prove detrimental in her future when she will have to face the world on her own. In this tender age, some elders voice their concerns about her marriage loudly thus imprinting a social construct of marriage and femaleness in her mind. No doubt, Qayyum Gul remains unmarried till the end of the novel, but he is able to satisfy his needs while eastern women carry the honour of their family on their shoulders and relations outside marriage is very disgraceful and unthinkable. Zainab has been sentenced to stoning for fornication which was actually a rape. Intersection of gender and disability marginalizes her to the extent that no one is willing to believe her statement, no one acknowledges the implications of her visual impairment and she is forced to identify her rapists or provide four eye witnesses of the crime or provide a male relative (husband) to attest her good character. All these things are impossible for a visually impaired, unmarried and lonely lady. It shows the gender difference in the South Asian societies what is somehow acceptable for a man, is a punishable sin for women although in Islam anyone who fornicates is punishable but society punishes only women. If the woman also has some impairment, people take her as a natural prey.

So, the disabled women are more marginalized than disabled men in all fields of life whether it is domestic, political, social, economic or educational. A close reading of the selected fiction and analysis of depiction of disability and disabled characters has brought some other aspects of disabled people's life to light. Some of these have been discussed here briefly.

It becomes clear through this study that the role of families in supporting disabled member is very crucial. Qayyum and Lenny have very supportive and strong families; with the help of their relatives, their lives do not turn into complete tragedies rather they are able to live with their disabilities and outsiders cannot exploit them on account of their physical impairment. Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* has her son Noor and friend Alice. She gets medicines, a bed and some care because of her son and Alice, she can rest at least after a life of hardships. Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* suffers a lot at the hands of men because she has no family or friends to protect and fight for her, so it is easy to target her. The portrayal of all these characters shows that life with disability can be easier with the help of supportive families.

It comes to light through this study that one's economic condition plays a significant role in making impairment a disability. Economically stable families and individuals can withstand any impairment better than the less well off or poor people. Lenny's parents can afford every type of medical treatment for her impaired leg. They have servants who take care of her and take her to parks, hotels, and other places. She does not suffer from mobility issues even when her leg is in plaster. A servant takes her to his village when she insists. Her status as a daughter of rich people minimizes the impact of her impairment. She enjoys life, witnesses, and describes different events, makes mischiefs, and plays with other children. No doubt her disability has impact on her life and personality, but it is not as damaging as it is in case of Zainab. At the end of novel, Lenny has totally forgotten to mention her disability and the other characters do not mention it too. It appears her impaired leg had healed in a way that she was left with negligible impairment. Qayyum's life seems quite comfortable when he gets used to his disability. He is the earning member of his family. His strong financial position grants him a status and authority in his family and society. He moves around the city, makes decisions, defends his family, fights for his rights, and lives an active life. On the other hand, Zainab is poor, homeless, and penniless. When she is taken from jail to Lahore Fort, she has only two pairs of clothes and a pair of cheap sunglasses. She owns only this much. She is the weakest and most vulnerable victim in Zia's regime who cannot fight for herself, cannot defend herself and cannot buy justice. Ali Shigri's family background and his rank help him in getting out of cell, but Zainab has no such background to help her. Her poor economic status makes her an easy victim for all predators. She is raped because her rapists know very well that her visual impairment will let them free: she will never be able to identify them. She is too poor to buy police or judges. She has no links and connections with powerful people of the country thus, cannot hire a good lawyer. She has no money to buy any device which may help in reducing the impact of her disability. She can read the Holy Quran but has no formal education, has no way of earning money. So, she is at the bottom of social, economic, and political hierarchy and calls the jail her home.

In the light of the above discussion, we may conclude that disability intersects with class, gender and culture and pushes poor women to the margins of existence. The analysis of the selected fiction also shows complete absence of the role of state for the disabled

people. When state is present as in case of Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, it is only there to oppress her. Zia is a despot and Zainab is a victim. Zainab in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is released from prison to go wherever she wants to. The jail authorities are well aware of her three types of cancer, her disability and homelessness yet they let her go and face the world on her own. There is no policy of welfare in such cases. Lenny belongs to a well-off family who take care of her. There is no role of government in her case as well. Qayyum Gul gets pension from British Army, but he is not given any special privilege on account of his disability. Whether it is British government in India or Pakistani government, there is no welfare policy for the disabled people. No one thinks of their social, political, educational, and economic rights. It is clear that life with impairment is their own fight, and they must fight it.

Another aspect of disability revealed through the study of depiction of disabled characters in the selected fiction is the othering of disabled characters. The character portrayal others the disabled characters in the works of fiction. Most of the minor disabled characters have no names: Men in Charya Ward, legless woman and legless man sufficing for their identity; and when they have names, their disability becomes a part of their identity; Blind Zainab and at times blind Zainab, glass- eye instead of Qayyum Gul, Lame Lenny, three for a penny instead of Lenny Sethi. The portrayal of visually disabled characters highlights disability and ignores all other aspects of their personalities. When disabled characters are added as minor characters, they are given an incomplete portrayal, highlighting only those aspects which may prove helpful in achieving writer's aim. Compared with major characters, portrayal of disabled characters suffers from many omissions and erasures: they suddenly jump into the plot and suddenly disappear, play their role and are forgotten by the writer.

The study finds that the selected fiction has reproduced stereotypical images of disabled persons and stigmatized perception of disability, the selected writers fail to challenge the constructed social images and add some positivity in portrayal of disabled persons. The study suggests that instead of reproducing the enhanced image of stereotypical disabled man/woman, literature can perform a better service of humanity by producing a new image of a person with some impairment. Impairments are not as disabling

as are the social constructs of disability. Given an inclusive and understanding society, most of disabled people make the best use of their faculties and prove useful citizens and they know how to make up for the impairment they have.

### **6.1 Social Contribution of the Study**

The study is concluded with the hope that it will be helpful in inspiring a different representation of disability. The disabled people can live a life just like everyone else if they are provided with all those facilities which are provided to able bodied people. Providing education, skills, and ways of earning to disabled people can prove very helpful in making them useful members of the society. Fair job opportunities may mitigate the concept that disabled people are financial burden for their families and state. Here the role of the state and families is very important as they are the caretakers and trend setters. If they demand and provide self-respect to their disabled members, no outsider can deny it; if families and state provide the disabled persons their basic human rights, no psychopath will dare violate them; and if literature and other medias of representation refuse to produce blindly stereotypical, misguided and misleading images of disabled people, it may make life easier for many people who live with some sort of physical or mental impairment.

### **6.2 Recommendation for Future Research**

Owing to the constraint of time and space, the present research is limited in scope. For future researchers, I would recommend studying the representation of disability and disabled characters, intersection of disability and gender, disability and role of state, disability and role of families, disability and its social construction, intersection of disability and economic condition, in detail in Pakistani context, as very little work has been done in these fields. Representation of disability in postmodern literature and other genres can also be further explored. Almost 16% of our population needs a positive and encouraging representation and for this purpose, researchers in medical, social, economic, political, and literary field must explore the real-life experiences of disabled people. We all need to look around and find the people who are living good lives with disabilities. I have two colleagues who are visually impaired. One of them is having the job of attendant in the college and the other one is assistant professor of Pakistan Studies. Both ladies



support their families financially and do household chores. The writers should also add such characters in their fiction so that people's attitude to disabled persons may be reformed. Positive and inclusive representation may help in mitigating fear of disability and help the people having some impairment in living a normal life and achieving their full potential.

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