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## ***Silent Sufferers: Disabled Women's Portrayal in Subha and Vision by Rabindranath Tagore***



Dr. Preeti M. Gacche

Associate Professor

Department of English

Aryabhatta College, University of Delhi

Email: [preetigacche@aryabhattachcollege.ac.in](mailto:preetigacche@aryabhattachcollege.ac.in)

### **Abstract**

Disabled women occupy significant space in the Disability Rights Movement across the world. Yet, the issues of disabled women scarcely get sufficient representation and recognition. The lack of recognition of disabled women's issues arises out of the fallacy of regarding disability as a singular identity and that the issues of disabled men and women are the same. The disability studies scholars have strongly emphasized on the fact of disability being an intersectional identity which in combination with the identity markers like gender, race, class, sexuality, and castes, produces a unique subjectivity of a disabled person. The feminist disability studies is premised on the idea that disabled subjectivity is intersectional and always multiple. The scholars of feminist disability studies accuse the disability studies being overtly masculine as it accounts little for the embodied reality of living with impairment. Therefore, they suggest an articulation of the body apart from focusing on material exclusion in the social and physical environment.

In the Indian context, disabled women experience the sense of disenfranchisement and invisibility owing to

patriarchy, ableism, caste oppression, and poverty. Even the feminist spaces remain notoriously closed for the representation of disabled women. The disabled feminist scholars identify the three phases of the project of disabled feminism namely recovery, retrieval and reimaginings, in order to recover, retrieve and reimagine the female disabled subjectivity in all its complexity.

In a small attempt to recover disabled women's subjectivity in Indian literature, I venture to critically read into two short stories by Rabindranath Tagore namely *Subha* and *Vision* in order to understand the portrayal of disabled femininity so as to draw inferences about the perception of women in particular and disabled people in general in pre-independent India. I read these short stories as the instances of disability memoirs in compliance with the definition proposed by Paul de Man (1979) as well as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2010). My reading of the short stories as disability memoirs will also allow me to investigate the agency as well as the practices self-representation.

**Keywords:** disability studies, feminist disability studies, ableism, inter-sectionality, impairment effects, disabled feminism, disability memoir