

FULFILLING SPECIAL NEEDS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WITH REFERENCE TO SELECT NOVELS DEALING WITH DISABILITY

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Abstract:

The people with Disabilities Act (1987) plays a significant role in the promotion of education for the people with disabilities. In the ancient days, disabled people were educated in a special school and were trained by special teachers. Though there are many advantages of special schools, many barriers prevent these schools to reach to the maximum people with special needs. The most important threat is that the special schools are available only at specific areas. People from far away places could not avail education from those schools. In addition to this, many disabled people are not aware of the existence of such special schools. Moreover, the disabled people fail to mingle with the non-disabled due to the segregation in the educational systems. Therefore, people with disabilities prove to be less sociable when compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

Since 1960s, many scholarships have been provided for the people with disabilities due to their increase in number. Inclusive education is a significant development towards the promotion of education of people with special needs. "Inclusive education happens when children with and without disabilities participate and learn together in the same classes." The aim of inclusive education is to connect people with and without disabilities. It also increases the number of disabled people who gain education, the main reason being that the availability of integrated schools in their nearby areas.

Research shows that when a child with disabilities attends classes alongside peers who do not have disabilities, good things happen. For a long time, children with disabilities were educated in separate classes or in separate schools. People got used to the idea that special education meant separate education. But it is clear now that when children are educated together, positive academic and social outcomes occur for all the children involved. It should also be noted that simply placing children with and without disabilities together does not produce positive outcomes. Inclusive education occurs when there is ongoing advocacy, planning, support and commitment. These are the principles that guide quality inclusive education. Inclusive education is based on the simple idea that every child and family is valued equally and deserves the same opportunities and experiences. Inclusive education is about children with disabilities - whether the disability is mild or severe, hidden or obvious.

The present paper throws light on the special needs for the disabled people in the inclusive education system with reference to the novels 'The Seeing Summer' written by Jeannette Eyerly and 'Things Not Seen' by Andrew Clements.

Key Words: *Inclusive education, special needs, visual impairment, technology, assistance.*

Literature is the mirror of the society as it brings to light the things that happen in the world. It is indeed true that literature does not ignore the changes that take place in the society. It is a forum which allows to discuss political, social, economic and cultural issues. Though a flavor of imagination is added to the social realities, it generates curiosity among the readers and sometimes the literatures instigate the

readers to act against the social evils.

The literatures of the marginalized have attained a significant abode in the twenty-first century as the people who belong to the marginalized sections began to upsurge their voices and this leads to the escalation of the subaltern literature. As the feminist and queer studies, disability studies have been emerging since the 19th century. It should be emphasized that education is the key vigor which has the potential to assist the people with disabilities to fight for their rights.

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, the word education means: “the action or process of educating or of being educated.” Education plays a crucial role in any society. It shapes the behaviour and attitudes of a man. The importance of education has been realised by the governing and non-governing agencies and they try to implement various programmes in order to promote the status of education. 'Education For All' is an important step which has brought about a tremendous change in the field of education resulting in the development of the nation. It is significant to note that educational qualification is a basic requirement to obtain a job.

The People with Disabilities Act (1987) plays a significant role in the promotion of education for the people with disabilities. In the ancient days, disabled people were educated in a special school and were trained by special teachers. There are many advantages of a special school where the special children are treated equally. They are given special training by their teachers according to their requirements. For instance, the blind students are taught Braille letters. Similarly, the people with deafness and dumbness are trained to use Sign language in order to communicate with others. All India Confederation For the Blind (AICB), National Institute for the Visually Handicapped (NIVH), Little Flower Convent Higher Secondary School For The Deaf and Blind, Kilpauk Medical Hospital for people with mental illness etc are some of the instances for the special institutions which aim at educating the people with special needs.

Though there are many advantages of special schools, many barriers prevent these schools to reach to the maximum people with special needs. The most important threat is that the special schools are available only at specific areas. The people from far away places could not avail education from those schools. In addition to this, many disabled people are not aware of the existence of such special schools. Moreover, the disabled people fail to mingle with the non-disabled due to the segregation in the educational systems. Therefore, people with disabilities prove to be less sociable when compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

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Research shows that when a child with disabilities attends classes alongside peers who do not have disabilities, good things happen. For a long time, children with disabilities were educated in separate classes or in separate schools. People got used to the idea that special education meant separate education. But it is clear now that when children are educated together, positive academic and social outcomes occur for all the children involved. It should also be noted that simply placing children with and without disabilities together does not produce positive outcomes. Inclusive education occurs when there is ongoing advocacy, planning, support and commitment. These are the principles that guide quality inclusive education.

Inclusive education is based on the simple idea that every child and family is valued equally and deserves the same opportunities and experiences. Inclusive education is about children with disabilities - whether the disability is mild or severe, hidden or obvious - participating in everyday activities, just like they would if their disability were not present. It is about building friendships, membership and having

opportunities just like everyone else.

Children learn in different ways. Inclusion is about providing the help children need to learn and participate in meaningful activities. Sometimes, help from friends or teachers works better. Other times, specially designed materials or technology can help. The key is to give only as much help as needed. It is every child's right to be included. Inclusive education is a child's right, not a privilege. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act clearly states that all children with disabilities should be educated with non-disabled children of their own age and have access to the general education curriculum.

The present paper throws light on the special needs for the disabled people in the inclusive education system with reference to the novels, *The Seeing Summer*. Written by Jeannette Eyerly and *Things Not Seen* by Andrew Clements.

Jeannette Eyerly was a writer of young adult fiction for girls and was also a columnist. She was a pioneer in dealing with controversial topics in novels for young people. Among the themes that appeared in her books were teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse. She penned eighteen novels, starting with *More Than a Summer Love* in 1962, though she had published many short stories before that. Her 1977 novel, *He's My Baby*, forms the basis for an ABC television movie. She also wrote two books of verse.

The plot of the novel, *The Seeing Summer*, goes like this. "Hopping on one foot," (1) as the mechanical first sentence begins, Carrie fights back tears of disappointment that the house next door is still vacant, not sold to a family with another ten-year-old girl as she had dreamed the previous night. The sign SOLD stuck over replaces FOR SALE sign, and when the new family arrives there is a ten-year-old girl Jenny. The trouble is that she's blind, and prickly about being gingerly handled, and at first Carrie wants nothing to do with her new neighbour. But soon she and Jenny become the best of friends, laughing together at the silly folks who think blind kids cannot do normal things. Reluctantly at first, Carrie even learns braille so that she and Jenny can pass messages from window to window on the rope-and-pulley rigged up by their fathers. As Eyerly's opening demonstrates, this is a flat and routinely constructed story, but it has two features well calculated to hold the attention of young readers: first, the ordinary details of how blind children not only cope but prevail; and second, an thrilling but serviceable adventure in which the girls are kidnapped for ransom (because Jenny's grandfather is rich and famous) and Jenny leads the way to escape through the pitch-dark warehouse where they are held.

The novel *Things Not Seen* is written by Andrew Clements, one of the famous American writers and editors. He is known for his children's fiction. Moreover, he is the winner of the Phoenix award in the year 2016/.

Things Not Seen is about a 15-year-old boy, Bobby Phillips. One night, Bobby goes to bed snuggling under his electric blanket in his Chicago home. He wakes up the next morning to find himself turned into an invisible person. Bobby tells his parents that he is invisible right away. His mom, a literature professor and his dad, a physicist, try to figure out how this could have happened to their son, but have no clue left for them to start searching for the solution to what seems an impossible problem.

Until the parents could figure out how it happened and what they could do to reverse it, they instruct Bobby to stay at home and not to tell anyone about what is going on. Bobby uses his invisible state as an opportunity to explore the world from a different point of view. One day, while exploring one of his favorite places, the library, he literally runs into a girl. The girl turns out to be blind and so she does not realize that Bobby is invisible and simply a bundle of winter clothes, which is the disguise he uses to get around the town in the Chicago winter weather. Eventually, Bobby and the girl, Alicia, form a bond and Bobby tells her that he is invisible. Not only do Alicia and Bobby come together as close friends, but also their parents. Alicia's father happens to be an astronomer. When he becomes aware of Bobby's situation, he helps Bobby's father figure out what could have caused Bobby to become invisible in the first place. Once he figures out what causes it, he is hopeful they can determine a way to reverse the invisibility. The novel ends with Alicia's suggestion in retrieving Bobby's visibility and Bobby becoming visible.

There is a common thread that runs through in both the novels mentioned above. It is that the main characters in these novels are visually impaired people: Jenny in *The Seeing Summer* and Alicia in *Things Not Seen*. These two characters try to procure special needs both from their families and their respective schools. It should be noted that all the visually impaired people do not get special support. This becomes a sharp contrast between these two novels.

The novel *The Seeing Summer* portrays Jenny with all the special support. Her parents are patient to teach her to be independent. For instance, Jenny's mother learns Braille which is a writing pattern for the visually impaired people like Jenny. This helps Jenny to learn Braille from her mother. In addition to this, she goes to school and takes her lessons in the integrated school with the normal children. This renders her an optimistic view of life, allowing her to become more sociable when compared to Alicia.

Carey becomes Jenny's close friend. Though she hesitates to accept Jenny as her friend in the beginning, she understands the capacities of Jenny as she does her works like cooking, going to shops and other places on her own, carrying out academic works etc independently. The novel also brings out Jenny's talent in running. She is guided by Adam, a coach, to participate in the running competition in the summer vacation. It is clear that special supports have been given to Jenny in order to participate in the running competition. This could be understood through the following lines. "It was going to take a lot more work, according to Adam, as well as hours of Saturday practice, before Jenny could run without bumping into kids running on either sides of her" (120). This quotation showcases the special assistance given to Jenny. Apart from the extra practice, Jenny has been provided with a special device which consists of a headphone and speaker. Carey will give the directions through the speaker and Jenny will hear it through the headphone while running. This would prevent Jenny from colliding with the other kids who run along with her.

From the novel, it is clear that Jenny uses talking book machine to read. Moreover, Carey reads books and magazines for Jenny. They discuss about the books they have read.

The case of Alicia is quite different from Jenny's. Though she is bold and brave, she is unable to be successful as Jenny due to the lack of external supports from her peers. Alicia suffers from loneliness to a great extent. When she enjoyed the pleasure of eye sight, her peers considered her as one among the popular girls and therefore, she was surrounded by a decent number of friends. But the scenario has changed to a greater degree soon after she became blind. Nobody cares for her or empathise with her feelings. Therefore, she feels isolated and excluded from her peers. This could be witnessed from the following lines: Alicia tells Bobby: "No one ever asks me about being blind or how it happened or anything. Most people just try to avoid me, especially other kids. It's like they pretend not to notice" (7-8). Alicia's isolation projects the lack of support from the society.

Is it wrong to have wishes and dreams during the childhood? Kids generally enjoy dancing, playing with the other kids and going for recreation to have fun. The same sort of dreams would have been dreamt by Alicia. She wanted to dance, go to college and become an archaeologist in the future. But the power above had its own plans for her and makes her a blind person who would rely on others to survive. But all the others, except her parents, fail to render her adequate support. This is one of the reasons that makes Alicia take her lessons part time. The lack of special support leads to her inability to mingle with the society unlike Jenny who is more sociable.

From the above analysis, it is clear that Jenny becomes successful due to the availability of special assistance and support in the form of human beings and technologies. To the contrary, Alicia is unable to achieve victory due to the lack of special assistance. Therefore, it is obvious that if people with visual impairment are given essential training and assistance, they will be able to achieve success and the lack of which may result in their failure. To conclude, special support and assistance are of crucial importance in the lives of people with visual impairment, particularly in schools, and these special supports are the key forces in the implementation of inclusive education.

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