

**REPRESENTATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF
THE VISUALLY CHALLENGED IN SELECTED FICTION**

**Thesis submitted to the
University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH**

by

HABEEB C

Under the supervision of

**Dr. T.V. PRAKASH
Associate Professor of English (Rtd)
Department of English, Farook College (Autonomous), Calicut**



**CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FAROOK COLLEGE, CALICUT**



**Affiliated to the University of Calicut
August 2017**

DECLARATION

I, **Habeeb C**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Representation and Construction of the Visually Challenged in Selected Fiction** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by me under the guidance of **Dr. T.V. Prakash**, Associate Professor of English (rtd) Farook College and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles.

Calicut
23-08-2017

HABEEB C.

Dr. T.V. Prakash
Associate Professor of English (rtd)
Department of English
Farook College (Autonomous)
Calicut

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Representation and Construction of the Visually Challenged in Selected Fiction** submitted by **Habeeb C** to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by him under my supervision and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles.

Calicut
23-08-2017

Dr. T.V. Prakash
Research Supervisor

Dr. T.V. Prakash
Associate Professor of English (Rtd.)
Center of Advanced Studies and Research
in English Language and Literature

CERTIFICATE

I, Dr. T.V. Prakash, Research Supervisor, Farook College, hereby certify that my Research Scholar Habeeb. C. has incorporated the changes suggested by the adjudicators of this Ph.D. Thesis *Representation and Construction of the Visually Challenged in the Selected Fiction.*

Calicut
21.3.2018

Dr. T.V. Prakash
Research Supervisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge all those who helped me in the preparation and completion of this work. First of all, I thank God, the Almighty, for the grace and Blessings that he showered upon me and the courage and determination that he bestowed on me to accomplish this mission.

I express my profound gratitude to my Research Supervisor, Dr.T.V. Prakash, Associate Professor (Rtd), Department of English, Farook College, for his constant guidance, support and inspiration throughout this project. He has been offering me suggestions, encouragement and guidance ever since the selection of my topic. He has taken special care to avoid the troubles that I faced with reference to the formatting of my thesis and other difficulties that arose in the course of my study due to my impairment. But for his dedication and support, I would not have been able to complete this project in such a short time. I will always remember the love and dedication that he showed me in the course of my study.

I thank my dearest teachers, Dr. Asha Mohammad and Dr. Yaseen Ashraf for their suggestions and directions in the course of my study. I owe special gratitude to Dr. Basheer Kotta, Head of the Department of English, Farook College and one of my mentors, who has been a source of motivation and inspiration to me in completing this attempt. But for the commitment and dedication that he has shown in proof reading my thesis, I would have found it very challenging to arrange my study in such a neat and discernible way.

I thank my colleagues Dr. Sajitha M. A, Mrs. Rizwana Sultana, Mrs. Aysha Swapna, Mr. Abdulshafeek C.H, Dr. Zeenath Muhammad Kunji, Mr. C.Ummer, Miss Hamna Mariyam, Mrs.Dilara, Mr. Abdulsathar, Mrs. Hashmina Habeeb, Mr.Muhammadali E.K and Mrs. T. Mufeeda for various degrees of help that they offered me in the midst of my study. Had it been not for their assistance, I would have found it very difficult to arrange the documents required, proof read my writings, prepare my bibliography, format my thesis and so on. I owe them all immense gratitude for their cooperation, encouragement and dedication. Since mine was a topic that required a lot of additional information with regard to the field of disability and visual impairment the service and guidance given to me by my well wishers, Mr. C.K. Aboobacker and Mr. K. Satyasheelan are very much valuable. I convey my heartfelt gratitude for their guidance and help. I also place on record my gratitude to my Principal, the Chairman and members of my Doctoral Committee and the members of my PQE assessment board who had given me valuable suggestions. I also thank my student Mrs. Brinsy for her assistance as the scribe during my P.Q.E.

I thank my student Mr. Vineed NV for his assistance in editing this project. I further thank my friend Dr. Anil, my teachers, Mr. M. Aboobacker and Mr.H. Muhammed Haneefa and Dr. K.K. Kunhammad, one of my well wishers for the guidance and directions that they offered me in the course of my study. I am also grateful to Mr. C. Ramakrishnan, who has helped me with the formatting and designing of my thesis. My brother Akbar C has always been a constant source of support for me in all my endeavours. It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I remember his motivation and suggestions in the midst of my study. I thank my friend

Dr. Mamatha for the pains that she took in finding out the text Star Gazing at Ireland. My wife Ruksana has taken great pains in proof reading and editing this work. But for the patience and love with which she was managing our family affairs, it would not have been possible for me to complete this work with such speed. Thus, I owe her special gratitude and love for her dedication and commitment.

My parents have always been a constant source of energy to me. I thank both my father and my mother for the help and assistance that they have given me throughout this work. Many of my relations, my teachers, students, friends, and family members have helped me in various stages of this work. I remember all of them with great gratitude on this occasion. Finally, without the boon of Technology, I might have found it very difficult to complete this work. So, I thank all those who helped me by giving guidance on various aspects of Technology which were useful to me in the accomplishment of my mission.

Habeeb C.

CONTENTS

	Introduction	1-19
Chapter 1	Theorising Disability	20-54
Chapter 2	Visual Impairment: A Macrocosmic Analysis	55-114
Chapter 3	Visual Impairment: A Microcosmic Point of View	115-183
	Conclusion	184-195
Appendix I	Interview with Mr. K. Satyasheelan	196-213
Appendix II	Interview with Mr. Georgekutty Karepparampil	214-224
	Works Cited	225-238

A Note on Documentation

The Researcher follows *MLA Handbook Eighth Edition* for the purpose of documentation in this thesis. Maximum care has been taken to make this thesis faultless in terms of documentation.

INTRODUCTION

As human beings move through more dynamic and revolutionary spheres of development, their ability to penetrate into the multitudinous incarnations of life may also undergo a tremendous and significant change. The myths and feelings of a society are supposed to be enshrined in its literature. Literary culture in all its forms constitutes possibly the main transmission belt of a society's beliefs and values, more important even than the educational institutions, the religious institutions, the press or social institutions like family. So when a community feels like being wrongly represented in popular literature or media, its members have to strive to change such stereotypes, tropes and constructs by creating an alternative literary tradition of their own.

Disability has always been found to be a recurrent theme in literature of all times. It is also interesting to notice that among the various kinds of impairments, the most conspicuous and persistent one in the context of literary environment is 'visual impairment.' It can be the fluidity and flexibility that it offers to the literary practitioners to stretch it into far-fetched levels that makes visual impairment an all-time concern of our authors. The visually impaired despite their lived experience were powerless to question and substitute the stereotypical images and constructs that the mainstream authors created. As a result, the images and constructs thus created were often taken for reality. Thus, what is striking about the representation of the visually impaired in literature is

the confrontation between the actual experience of the challenged and the imagined and more often enforced experience of the literary world. The novelists whom the researcher attempts to study in this thesis are also using visual impairment as a motif extending it to far-fetched levels and most often glorifying them or nullifying them. It is mostly their fictional necessities than their commitment to the challenged that may have tempted them to invent characters like Lucilla, Karl and Marianne. Their ignorance or lack of awareness about the original experience of the visually challenged can be perceived from a close reading of the texts. What emerges finally is 'narrative prostheses' or in a broad level the 'metanarratives' about visual impairment as conceptualised by different theoreticians.

In this global era of multifaceted technological manifestations, the term 'identity' acquires new and revolutionary dimensions along with the human quest for power and survival. In accordance with the universalisation of the so-called intellectual properties, one of the immediate and visible effects of the dynamic information explosion can be the prominence gained by the marginalized sections in expressing and asserting their identity. The newly emerging genres such as Postcolonial Literature, Feminist Literature, Cultural Studies, Dalit Literature etc, are to be examined with reference to this transformation. However communities such as those of the visually challenged have not yet consciously thought of the panorama of this identity struggle, though they have been socially well organized for nearly the last few decades.

To understand the need for such a sensitization among the visually challenged, one must make a thorough analysis about the ways in which they have been represented in literature. The kind of social constructs which are woven into literature around the visually challenged really shocks a member of the challenged community who is aware of all his potentials and rights.

The researcher in the present study entitled “Representation and Construction of the Visually Challenged in Selected Fiction” aims at analyzing how Wilkie Collins, Susan Glaspell and Linda Gillard represent and construct the different visually impaired characters in their respective works. Collins’ *Poor Miss Finch* and *The Dead Secret*, Glaspell’s *The Glory of the Conquered* and Linda Gillard’s *Star Gazing* have been chosen for this purpose. While *The Dead Secret* was published in 1856, *Poor Miss Finch* was published in 1872. *The Glory of the Conquered* and *Star Gazing* were published in 1909 and 2008 respectively. The long passage of time that elapses between the publication of these works give the researcher an opportunity to see, whether there has been any significant evolution in the pattern by which the visually impaired are featured in the works concerned.

Though there were a few attempts in the past to discuss the position of the visually impaired in literature, they were very limited in many respects. Almost all the earlier researchers in the field subscribe to the fact that visual impairment had been an all-time concern of our authors. As specified earlier, it could be the flexibility and fluidity that it offered to the literary craftsmen to stretch it into

far-fetched ranges that made visual impairment such a repeated theme in popular literature. However, such studies were either periodic or with specific reference to certain theoretical patterns. They seem to be rarely successful in making an evolutionary approach to understand the position of the visually impaired in literature. Such studies have also rarely examined how the authors concerned had tried to address the technical difficulties caused by visual impairment such as its 'losses' emotional and psychological consequences and mechanisms for survival. Besides, such studies mainly emphasised the negative stereotypes that our authors created and never inspected whether there were any positive outputs from our literary personnel. Along with a reading of the texts from the already established theoretical perspectives, the researcher also proposes to examine whether the authors selected were able to highlight any positive traits of the visually impaired in their respective works. One of the fundamental objectives of the study is to see how the authors concerned understand and address the different technical aspects related to visual impairment in their works. The question of mobility and evolution with respect to the status of the visually impaired in literature, make this study quite relevant and significantly different from the earlier attempts of this kind. In addition to elucidating revealing the negative stereotypes that dominate the selected works, the researcher also aims to figure out the positive images and constructs that the authors have attributed to their visually impaired characters, if there are any.

Wilkie Collins' novel *Poor Miss Finch* is primarily the story of Lucilla Finch, who is totally visually impaired by birth. The novel is essentially about her attempts to marry Oskar Dumerg, the confusion and difficulties posed by the rivalry between Oskar and his brother Nugent to win her and her final decision to remain in her state of visual impairment forever, aborting a second chance for regaining her sight. Collins' use of a totally visually challenged as the protagonist of the novel gives the researcher ample opportunities to analyse how the visually impaired were perceived and constructed by the authors of his time. Irrespective of the clash of claims about the originality in his representation, Collins exhibits significant insight in representing Lucilla in his work.

Though *The Dead Secret* lacks the vitality and fecundity that *Poor Miss Finch* can boast of, it does give enough space to comment on the status of the visually impaired in literature through the presence of Lenard Frankland, an adventitiously impaired character who is the husband of Rosamend Treverton, the protagonist of the novel. This passive and rather inert character offers enough ground to articulate, how the authors occasionally use the visually impaired characters as instruments for establishing and valourising their main characters. It is very often the presence of such impaired characters that gives the protagonists an opportunity to grow, expand and to evolve as their full self.

Susan Glaspell's *The Glory of the Conquered* is a work fundamentally about the tragic halo with which our authors deal visual impairment. The death-

like stereotype that the author projects in the novel gives ample space to analyse the different moods with which the authors associate visual impairment. The work also acts as an adequate platform to understand how ocularnormative, ocularcentric and ophthalmocentric perspectives control our mainstream intellectuals. This novel also opens up issues related to the adjustment with visual impairment and the psycho-social consequences of impairment.

Linda Gillard's *Star Gazing*, the most modern among the novels is also a very fruitful resource in completing this study. The partial space it offers to the visually impaired Marianne Frazer in narration, the zest with which Gillard discusses the often ignored needs of the impaired such as sex and marriage and the various nuances of experience that Marianne goes through, all make this work a very potential material in the study. The works offer opportunities to discuss even some of the most exclusive zones like the aesthetics of the visually impaired and the authors needs to be commended for the variety and spontaneity with which they have built their narratives. Since most of them lack any direct contact with the visually impaired, it is likely that they suffer from many fallacies with regard to their representation.

Being a totally visually challenged person by birth, the researcher is outraged to see how the representation of the visually challenged is greatly at variance with the real experience. It is understood that these representations play a significant role in defining and constructing the visually challenged in many societies. Since very few authentic studies have been conducted in this realm, the

researcher believes that such a study can bring into light many of the fallacies that exist around the visually challenged. Such a revelation will not only create a radical shift in the general society's perception of the visually challenged, but it will also lead to a radical sensitization within the visually challenged community and it may in turn lead to a theorization process from within the community.

The thesis aims at attaining goals such as understanding what visual impairment is, what are the challenges that emerge out of it and the misperception of it. It also aims at analysing how different authors have perceived the visually challenged in different ages and examining how the fallacious representations of the visually challenged play a significant role in determining their identity and social space. The researcher also proposes to study how the authors concerned, Wilkie Collins, Susan Glaspell and Linda Gillard differ in representing the visually challenged. In doing so, the researcher purports to bring to light how the authors try to misuse the stereotyped representation of the challenged communities to satisfy their fictional needs and how they damage the identity of the community.

A discussion on the selected authors' attempts to highlight an evolutionary perspective in accordance with the changing social norms about the challenged communities in general, in representing the visually impaired people also is a major objective of this study. Such a study should also examine how the recent theoretical perspectives on the question of disability can be effectively applied to understand various patterns of social constructions in the selected

works. Along with the tropes and stereotypes, understanding what all are the positive outcomes of the attempts of the authors is a relevant part of this study.

Since visual impairment is a topic that is very rarely addressed by the mainstream academia, there is a scarcity of secondary materials to conduct effective research on a topic of the selected kind. Even though there were a few relevant materials on the area of research in the developed countries, it was very difficult for the Third World scholars to access them in the past. However, after the information revolution, there seems to have a fluid flow of such resources among different nations. Besides, technology has given the visually impaired an accessibility that their predecessors could never dream of, to produce and distribute resources. So, the present era witnesses the emergence of some good materials with respect to the question of disability, where the original experience of the challenged acts as the main foundation of such articulations. Textual materials, both printed and electronic as resources are used to complete this study. Since there are many grey areas to be discussed in this research, interviews with resourceful persons is also used. Being a campaigner in the field of disability for the last one decade, the experience, knowledge and pragmatic wisdom that the researcher had acquired through his blunt confrontation with the sordid realities also help him to solve and analyse many of the complicated puzzles that the fiction concerned opens up.

It was in the mid decades of the twentieth century that those who were involved in the welfare of the visually impaired began to record various

impressions about different aspects of the life of the visually impaired. Initially they were mostly about socio/psycho and physical aspects related to visual impairment; its causes, losses, mechanisms for adjustment, various apparatuses that help them in their survival and so on. Such resources were mostly produced by the sighted who were acting as teachers, trainers or rehabilitation professionals. They were mostly from the developed countries. One such author is Rev. Thomas Carroll. His 1961 publication *Blindness: What It Is, What It Does, and How to Live With It* is an oft quoted work in researches and studies about the visually impaired. Though the book is criticized for its length and farfetched ranges into which Carroll stretches the different aspects related to visual impairment, he was very expressive about many innermost aspects related to the visually impaired that he had acquired through his experience in various educational institutions. Gabriel Farrell's book, *The Story of Blindness* published in 1956 is another important and relevant book in this category. He tries to analyse the different aspects related to visual impairment from a historic and scientific point of view in this illustrious book. However, the most impressive scholar of that age was Berthold Lowenfeld. In his two famous books, *Our Blind Children* and *The Changing Status of the Blind* and hundreds of papers and speeches he had delivered, Lowenfeld tries to incorporate a modern and scientific outlook to discuss the various challenges of the visually impaired. He approaches the issues from a research point of view and proves many of the findings of his predecessors wrong and disagreeable.

After the social movement of the visually challenged gained momentum, many of the activists have delivered some insightful and revolutionary speeches as a part of their annual conferences and agitations and meetings. One of the striking organizations in this regard is National Federation of the Blind, America. Two of its activists, Jacobus TenBroke and Kenneth Jernigan were exceptionally noted for the excellence, variety and originality that enriched their speeches. Flويد Matson incorporates those speeches such as “Blindness, Is Literature Against Us?”, “Within the grace of God”, “Cross of Blindness”, “Blindness: new insight on old outlooks” and “Blindness the Lessons of History” in his 1990 book, *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. Though it is primarily a record of the Federation’s activities, one can see the changing perspectives of the visually impaired in the different speeches and documents that Matson includes in this work. There were various other books such as Louis S. Cholden’s book, *A Psychiatrist Works with Blindness*. But, most of them are severely criticized by various modern scholars from among the visually impaired for the damaging and problematic point of view that they impose on the visually impaired without giving primacy to the actual feelings or experience of the visually impaired.

One of the earliest critics who meditated and deliberated on the place of the visually challenged in literature could be Jessica L. Langworthy. Her article, “Blindness in Fiction: A Study of the Attitude of Authors towards their

Blind Characters,” in *The Journal of Applied Psychology Volume XIV*, No. 3 June 1930, is a precursor to the researches in this area. Though her study lacks theoretical insight or a comprehensive analysis, the article written almost in a New Critical perspective could inform the scholars and the academic society about the presence of such a very isolated and alienated category like the visually challenged in canonical literature. Visual impairment in literature before that was either Milton or Homer: the first one a sentimental overflow of death like existence and the second, a series of doubts and uncertainties about the existence and associated impairment of the author itself.

One of the main findings she makes in this particular article is that even in that age the writings about the visually challenged were not so limited. May be, the potential that it offered to the mainstream writers, to conjure up easy, unimaginable and attractive fictitious tales made it a favourite of the authors of all times. In all civilizations, either East or West, Literature, Mythology or Folklore would not be seen without a few stories on visual impairment. The Christian stories of the visually challenged, either during Jesus, or before him, Dhrutharashtra of *Mahabharatha* or the visually challenged follower for ignoring whom, God chastised Prophet Mohammed, all belong to this category.

Jessica Writes: “In the special library of blindiana at the Perkins Institution for the Blind, there are 311 titles of straight fiction, besides magazine articles, religious stories, old comedies, poetry, and the like, in all 442 titles, each containing a blind character. They were written by seeing people out of

their belief of what non-seeing people should be and do” (Langworthy 271). These number of books in a single library about visual impairment is a significant, fact considering the social advances in that age. It definitely gives us a glimpse into how the disability of the visually impaired had tempted, motivated and induced the mainstream authors to use it in their fictional universe. Since, the originally experienced were not competent enough to question the veracity of such representations, what such writers created remained as the unchallengeable Gospels of the society about the visually challenged.

Jessica’s classification of the visually challenged in literature as the idealised and abnormally good, the repugnant and abnormally bad, the extremely clever and normal and well described, is also not a comprehensive one. Later she adds the ‘Newly blinded’ to this, especially with reference to the ‘war blinded’ of that particular age. She further says that the lines drawn between these classes are very thin, since, the characteristics of one can be found in the other as well. Even the later scholars like David Bolt or Kenneth Gernigan makes the same observation about the status of the visually challenged in literature. She identifies works like *Blind Sight* by B. Y. Benediall, *Rosary* by Mrs. Barclay, *Cricket on the Hearth* by Charles Dickens, *House of Windows*, by Isabel Mackay, *Deliverance* by Ellen Glasgow and *Falaise of the Blessed Voice* by William Sterns Davis as some of the popular ones where visual impairment mostly of the stereotyped and wrongly constructed kind appears as a major concern of the author. (Langworthy 270-275)

One of the earliest original, authentic, concrete and assertive source of analysis where a visually challenged person discusses the status of the challenged in literature on a formal occasion, is likely to be Kenneth Jernigan's 1974 *Banquet speech* "Blindness: Is Literature Against Us?" It could be considered the best of his Banquet speeches on account of its novelty, subtlety, comprehensiveness and methodology. Before formulating his observations, Jernigan seemed to have been through the entire literary works written about the visually challenged in all major European languages. Some of his pronouncements about the position of them in Literature are still unchallengeable. He establishes very clearly that much of what the literature does while representing the visually challenged are only farfetched constructions which bear no relationship to the reality.

He categorically reveals the apparent contradictions and conflicts that are visible in the representation of the visually impaired in literature and cites examples to the different varieties of visual impairment that he identifies.

Jernigan identifies works like *The Blind Ship* by Gene Barreyre, *The Scapegoat* by Caine, Hall, *The End of the Tether* by Joseph Conrad, *The Planet of the Blind* by Paul Corey, *Sir Nigel* by Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Man who Laughs* by Victor Hugo and *The Blind Girl of Wittenberg* by John G. Moris as some of the important creations where visual impairment becomes an important focus of the authors. He clearly explains how the authors concerned fail to give any traceable figments of reality in their works and make their attempts fully

harmful, unbearable and problematic to the visually impaired community. He also cites examples where many of the authors under the pretention of doing service to the visually impaired do profound disservice to the visually impaired by making them what they never can be in their works.

David Bolt's book, *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Re-reading of Twentieth-Century Anglophone Writing*, tries to give a theoretical clarity to the strategies of representation and construction that the mainstream writers practice with reference to visual impairment and the visually challenged. He tries to analyse some existing patterns of representation in the context of modern sociological, psychological and cultural theories and subsequent perspectives. Even though this work is a very limited study in several respects, it can still be treated as a pioneering attempt in the context of the theoretical ambiance that the researchers can adopt while deconstructing and demystifying the existing images about the visually impaired in our literature and films. The fact that Bolt is a challenged person makes this study more important from a research point of view. This transformation from an outsider's limited point of view like that of Mrs.Langworthy to a more inclusive and experience oriented study like that of Jernigan and finally to a more comprehensive and competent inclusive theoretical framework like that of Bolt, has to be understood along with the intellectual, cultural and socio-political advances that the visually impaired made during the last century.

One has to consider a few important autobiographical writings of the visually impaired as well, when an analysis of literature about the visually impaired is attempted. One of the most significant and earliest voices in this category is Helen Keller. Her 1903 autobiography *The Story of My Life, The World I Live in*, 1908, her 1913 collection of essays, *Out of the Dark* and her spiritual autobiography *My Religion* published in 1927 and then in 1994 revised with the title *Light in My Darkness* are some of the relevant ones among her books. Though various critics have raised doubts on the authenticity of many of Keller's works, they all have played a significant role in changing some of the basic premises of the general public about the visually impaired and creating a barrier free environment to them. Her contributions in making awareness about the state of the deaf-blind are also beyond comparison.

On sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness, by John Hull which was published earlier under the title *Touching the Rock*, is also a significant work in this regard. As a memoir of an adventitiously afflicted individual, it infuses positive courage and confidence in many of the readers as several other books of its kind. Though there had been many isolated attempts by the visually impaired to produce a literature of their own, one of the recent and established authors who had gained recognition and identity in our times is Ved Mehta an Indian born expatriate and a visually challenged writer. His books include, *All for Love, Fly and the Fly-bottle, John is Easy to Please, A Family*

Affair and the Ledge Between the Streams. He has written both fiction and nonfiction about different political and social aspects of the Indian State.

Another relevant and valuable work of our times written by a visually impaired is the novel, *The Sight Sickness* by Christine Faltz Grassman. He has written this novel to express his anguish over the dehumanization and nullification to which the visually impaired were put in the Nobel prize winning novel Jose Saramago's *Blindness*. The author from the perspective of a sightless tries to show how fallaciously Saramago had dealt with the theme of visual impairment, though his claim was against what he practised. There are many recent souvenirs, booklets, works of fiction and poetry and anthologies like *Eye Vs I*, released by the Centre for Advanced Studies and Research in English Language and Literature, Farook College, Calicut, where the visually impaired tried to produce literature of their own kind with authentic experience and dedication.

This Thesis is divided into three Chapters along with an Introduction and Conclusion for the convenience of arranging the available materials and perspective in a logically coherent manner. The introduction explicates the context and relevance of the topic along with its objectives and methodology. A brief survey of the available literature on the visually impaired is also presented here. The first chapter entitled "Theorising Disability" is an attempt to know what all are the major theoretical perspectives that are being developed around the question of disability in general and visual impairment in particular.

Emphasis is given to the terminological and conceptual inconsistencies and the counter constructions that such perspectives offer to the critical investigators. The researcher also discusses representation and construction from a theoretical point of view in this Chapter. A history of the growth of the visually impaired is one of the key elements of this chapter.

In the second Chapter entitled, “Visual Impairment: A Macrocosmic Analysis” the researcher approaches the issue of representation of the visually impaired from a societal point of view. By explaining the ‘Nominal displacement’ and ‘Normate reductionism’ along with the various cultural and linguistic tropes and stereotypes that are visible in the selected works. An attempt has been made to bring out the ambiance of prejudice that is evident in the literary environment. The apparent contradictions and conflicts visible in the selected fiction with reference to the visually impaired along with a few types of visual impairment that are generally manifest in literature are also studied. A few theoretical perspectives are elucidated in this chapter, emphasising how they are relevant in the present study.

In the third Chapter entitled “Visual Impairment: A Microcosmic Point of View”, is an attempt to analyse how far the authors succeed in giving expression to the various challenges that the visually impaired go through as individuals. The chapter also deals with the differences that those protagonists suffer owing to their distinctions as a result of the nature of their impairment, gender, the

visual acuity they have and so on which are instrumental in defining their personality.

The “Conclusion”, presents the valid observations on each of the topics discussed in the second and third chapters. A few solutions are also suggested with regard to some of the issues discussed, especially highlighting the potential of the movement- Literature of the Visually Impaired. The researcher also aims at knowing, whether there is any change or evolution in the representation strategies of the visually impaired by the mainstream writers over the time. Two pertinent interviews are appended at the end of this study. Both the interviews have helped him in solving many of the complicated areas that emerged during his study. As explained at the beginning, these interviews have contributed in explaining many grey areas, since there is a scarcity of resources on this topic. The first one is an interview that the researcher has exclusively conducted for accomplishing his mission. It is with Mr. K. Satyasheelan, one of the most established, informed and competent experts from among the visually impaired in Kerala. His philosophical vision and innovative thinking coupled with his exposure to many modern developments in this area make this interview a very fruitful and effective document to be referred to. The second interview with Mr. Georgekutty Karepparampil again conducted by the researcher is taken from the book *I vs Eye: an anthology of the visually impaired* that the Department of English Farook College published in 2014. Being one of the stalwarts among the visually impaired in Kerala, Mr. Georgekutty’s life is parallel to the advancement

of the visually impaired community in Kerala. So, this interview is both a personal narrative and a historical record. It convinces one of the fact that, if someone has got proper training and skill, he or she can do the most challenging things despite the hurdles posed by the sudden and unexpected impairment that seizes him or her. The researcher quotes from both these interviews to prove some of his most essential arguments in the course of his study. Despite its limitations at various levels, being a pioneering attempt in this area, the researcher is of the hope that, this study can trigger of many subsequent studies in the future in this area.

Chapter 1

THEORISING DISABILITY

The very term 'disability' itself seems to be in a kind of wilderness today. This is so since it is not possible to identify a unilateral perspective, comprehensive understanding or unanimous agreement either among the activists in the community of the disabled or among the scholars in the field as to how to define or conceptualise disability. The large variety of terminological constructions used in this regard, especially in compliance with the general stereotyped perception of disability, and the consequent ambivalence and vagueness created by the prevalence of these diverse terms make any analysis of this kind quite problematic. However, a significant change in the postmodern era is manifest in the conscious effort of the physically inconvenienced to articulate their problems and to develop a theoretical perspective of their own. It needs be analysed in the context of the larger theoretical perspectives on identity and marginality facilitated by the postmodern environment. This new development, in fact, results from the socio/political awareness and the subsequent consciousness of the disabled community. This phenomenon, obviously, evolves from the new inclusive paradigm advocated by the international conventions, national/regional documents, laws and pronouncements that targeted the general uplift and streamlining of the class in the general community.

From the receiving and requesting end, the disabled are now endeavouring to develop a firm, assertive and definitive perspective. The

theoretical model thus evolved is called 'Disability Studies.' Lennard J Davis in His preface to the first edition of *The Disability Studies Reader*, opines that Disability studies is a field of study or discipline which is significantly contemporaneous. He writes,

For centuries, people with disabilities have been an oppressed and repressed group. People with disabilities have been isolated, incarcerated, observed, written about, operated on, instructed, implanted, regulated, treated, institutionalized, and controlled to a degree probably unequal to that experienced by any other minority group. (xv)

He considers Disability Studies both as a field of inquiry and an area of academic activity. Constructing such a body of knowledge by the disabled community against what has been already constructed, internalized and very often enforced by the general community is a highly challenging task. However, borrowing from other such perspectives and giving emphasis to the panorama of the experience of the disabled, Disability Studies is gaining momentum and establishing itself as a powerful and unchallengeable area of study.

Though there were many scattered responses and attempts to understand and conceptualise disability across the world from time to time, both within and outside the disability community, the first organized and structured move in this regard could be the publication of *The Disability Studies Reader* by Lennard J

Davis in 1996. The second edition to the Reader again edited and published by Davis himself in 2006 also adds to the concepts and perspectives on disability. Following this, a wide range of writers such as Linn Rose, Douglas Bayntan, Ruth Hubbard, Michael Davidson, Erving Goffman, Susan Sontag, Simi Linton, Tobin Siebers, Shelley Tremain, Tom Shakespeare, David Mitchell, Sharon Snyder, Rosemarie Garland Thomson and Bradley Lewis published their books and concepts in this area. Most of them borrow from the new theoretical perspectives such as The Freudian/Lacanian Psychoanalysis, the Poststructuralist theory of Derrida, the historical and cultural paradigms introduced by critics like Foucault and Althusser and various feminist theoretical perspectives that are articulated from Woolf to Judith Butler.

As a body of knowledge, Disability Studies not only articulates the real problems, feelings and aspirations of the disabled community, but it also tries to voice the concerns, traumas, anxieties, handicaps and stereotyping attitudes that really pose questions on the very existence of the community as a result of the wrong social model and obsolete patronizing discourses prevalent in both developed and developing countries in different ages. It aims at clarifying the difference between various terminologies such as Impairment, Disability, Handicap and Different ability which are indiscriminately used by the scholars and activists while referring to the disabled. It invalidates many existing perspectives and suggests many autonomous alternatives to conceptualise and theorise disability.

One of the most advanced formats of disability studies is the quite recently emerged paradigm of 'Cultural Disability Studies.' The key point about cultural disability studies, according to Ria Cheyne's *Theorising Culture and Disability* (2009), is that it "seeks to contribute" to our "understanding of disability and its role in wider culture," as well as to our "understanding of the particular cultural form or artefact under consideration" (101). Critics like Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell expand this idea further through their concept 'Cultural Location of Disability.' The Cultural location of disability aims to explain how the Cultural model of disability provides opportunities to re-imagine the landscape of impairment and the social consequences that follows it. Lynn Rose's essay, "Deaf and Dumb in Ancient Greece", also discusses how the disability studies recognizes the importance of culture in constructing the concept of disability and that other than the culturally constructed arbitrary implications, disability does not have any inherent meaning of its own. She also elucidates the futility in applying the medical model to analyse and understand the concept of disability in ancient societies. The Medical model tries to categorise people as 'abled' and 'disabled' with reference to Medical definitions and categorizations. Instead of viewing disability as an inherent aspect in an individual, it should be viewed in relation to one's culture and age, and such a practice can avoid the fallacy of contaminating the ancient evidences with modern cultural assumptions. Thus Cultural Disability Studies considers experience as a key factor to analyse and demythify the various aspects of

disability, since disability is more cultural and social than emotional, psychic or physical. It borrows heavily from the modern paradigms of Cultural studies to accomplish the mission of breaking the cultural stereotypes and suggesting believable and authentic alternatives. (Bolt 12: Lynn Rose 170)

One of the main challenges as well as tasks of the Disability studies critic is to define Disability. The indiscriminate use of words such as Disability, Impairment, Handicap, Different ability and so on by the scholars both within and outside the community without Political correctness and conceptual clarity often results in fissures and anomalies in policies and programmes that are thus planned and produced. In her essay entitled “Reassigning the Meaning” Semi Linton tries to analyse how the terminological abundance and lack of clarity complicates the discourses on disability. She holds the view that many terms such as disabled or crippled have been used across time and centuries to designate the desperate group of people, who suffer from multiple challenges owing to their impairments. The main objective in arranging such terms is to facilitate the Political and Economic convenience of the society. However, most of such labels are externally imposed by the society than created by the group inclusively. The disabled groups have very limited roles in formulating the nomenclatures that are commonly used with reference to them. So, such terminologies have damaging consequences to their identity and survival. (Linton 161)

The World Health Organization's in its International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps: A Manual of Classification Relating to the Consequences of Disease, tries to distinguish between Impairment, Disability and Handicap in a more or less convincing way. It suggests the following definitions.

1. Impairment: a loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function.
2. Disability: any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of the ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.
3. Handicap: a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or a disability, that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal (depending on age, sex, and social and culture factors) for that individual. (Un. 1983 1.C. 66-67)

It further states that impairments and disabilities may be temporary or permanent, reversible or irreversible, and progressive or regressive. The situation people find themselves in may determine to what degree a disability is handicapping for them. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson in her article "Integrating Disability, Transforming feminist Theory" identifies four important aspects of disability such as its capacity to remain as a system for interpreting and disciplining bodily variations, its potential to act as a relationship between the

bodies and their environment, its production of the binaries the able bodied and the disabled and its functional ability to describe the inherent instability of the embodied self. (Thomson 259-260)

With reference to the complex nature of the terms Disability and Impairment, Semi Linton observes that,

a glance through a few dictionaries will reveal definitions of disability that include incapacity, a disadvantage, deficiency, especially a physical or mental impairment that restricts normal achievement; something that hinders or incapacitates, something that incapacitates or disqualifies. (162)

The legal definition of disability highlights the legal incapacity or disqualification of an individual due to impairment and the subsequent disability while the Medical definition of disability as elucidated in Stedman's Medical Dictionary gives more emphasis to the functional aspect of disability. From a medical point of view, one must distinguish between disability and disablement. While disability, a medico legal term signifies the loss of function or earning power, disablement is another medico legal term which refers to the loss of function without the loss of earning power. (Stedman 400: Linton 162)

Shelley Tremain in her essay "On the Government of Disability Foucault, Power, and the Subject of Impairment" identifies impairment and disability as the two most exclusive terms in the discourses on disability. While the former

signifies the loss of an organ or mechanism resulting in the defect of the body, the latter is the disadvantage which is imposed on top of one's impairment. Some other critics like Michael Oliver are of the view that although disablement has to do nothing with the body, impairment is nothing less than a description of the body. Tremain considers impairment as a historic artefact of the regime of biopower. Such historic constructions of the impairments are with a view to facilitating contingent power relations of the culturally structured societies. Thus such constructions are given universal significance and validity and are produced more with a view to underscoring the culturally constructed wisdom or epistemology and not to give expression to diverse bodily statures that demand a difference of approach from an individual. (Tremain 185-186-191)

After examining the definitions of Impairment, Disability and Handicap, Susan Wendell in her essay "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability" argues that

handicap is a function of the relationship between disabled persons and their environment. It occurs when they encounter cultural, physical or social barriers which prevent their access to the various systems of society that are available to other citizens. Thus, handicap is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others. (Wendell 243)

Handicap can thus be perceived as the psycho-social consequences of the disability. It could be both the society's prejudices, stereotyped attitudes and

rejection of a person with disability as a result of his/her impairment or Disability and the subsequent inferiority complex, psychological depression or the withdrawal tendencies that are produced in such an individual as a result of the disability or the wrong treatment he or she receives. According to Wendell, the primary cause of a disabled individual's failure to do certain things could be social such as denial of opportunities, lack of accessibility, lack of services, poverty and discrimination; an oft repeated reason. She critiques the WHO definition for trying to define impairment and disability in physical terms and handicap in social and cultural terms. She is of the view that in doing so, the U.N. document seems to be making a shaky distinction between the social and physical aspects of disability. The normal structure, function and ability of an individual to perform depend on not only the normal roles for one's age, sex, society and culture, but also on the society in which the standards of normality are generated. (Wendell 244)

The most misunderstood, problematic and a frequently wrongly used term in the contemporary scenario is 'Differently abled' with reference to the disabled. There is a very strong debate among the disabled on whether it should be validated as a legitimate expression to refer to them. Many of them reject it as an attempt of the mainstream to appease them. Such people consider it as a politically incorrect expression. They argue that it is not in the terminological practices that progressiveness should be counted, but it should be there in the policy formulations and in socio-political spaces. Such people are more

concerned about the negative potentiality of the different ability to be a term to segregate and glorify the disabled.

The researcher as he explains in his “Preface” to *I vs Eye: An Anthology of the Visually Impaired*, with special implications to the visually challenged holds the view that, “Different Ability does not refer to an extra ability or an extra sensory development, but a different strategy by which a challenged candidate can accomplish to do a task otherwise naturally done by a sighted candidate” (9). People, in general, define the euphemistic expression ‘different ability’ as an additional ability or skill attained by a challenged candidate, that is when one sense is weak, there is a compensation in the form of an additional enrichment of other senses. Thus it is said that a totally visually challenged person can identify people through voice, smell or touch and that is a different ability. In reality, such skills are there even in a sighted candidate, he does not use it since his sight helps him to minimize the use of such faculties. The ideal definition of different ability is ‘doing something in a different way.’ A disabled person can do many of the things that an able bodied person does, provided there is a little difference in the strategy followed. It could be duplication, modification and adaptation, substitution or some other techniques coupled with an increased sensory development that will enable him to do the things differently. Omission is applied only in those regions where the missing sensory perception is a compulsory requirement for the accomplishment of the task at hand. Thus when a sighted person uses computer with the aid of a screen, a

visually challenged person uses a computer with the aid of a screen reader where everything shown on the screen will be read out to him. When a sighted person reads a book looking at it, a challenged person reads the same in a Braille print by touching the dots. These are different abilities to a visually challenged candidate. Mr. K. Sachidanandan underscores this view about Different Ability, when he observes in his “Introduction” to *I vs Eye: An Anthology of the Visually Impaired* that,

This battle against 'othering' is also a battle against exclusions of different kinds including the distancing involved in a patronising and 'sympathetic' attitude to the visually challenged and the wrong understanding of the term 'differently abled' as just a politically correct circumlocution for the 'disabled' while it really refers to the different strategies the visually challenged use to obtain the same results the so-called 'normal' people do through other means. It is more about 'difference' than about 'lack', a point people often miss even when they use the new terminology. (2)

Tobin Siebers' essay “From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body” is another important text in Disability Studies which offers very constructive insights into the field. He mainly tries to analyse how the body as an image is constructed by the general society and how this construction of the perfect body complicates the existence of the disabled. He writes,

Disability offers a challenge to the representation of the body—this is often said. Usually, it means that the disabled body provides insight into the fact that all bodies are socially constructed—that social attitudes and institutions determine far greater than biological fact the representation of the body’s reality. The idea that representation governs the body, of course, has had enormous influence on cultural and critical theory, especially in gender studies. (173)

He critiques the perspective that is popularized by ‘Social Constructionism’ and suggests ways to represent the new reality and to create an inclusive paradigm where the mythical illusions about the body can be neglected and the body as it exists can be respected and legitimized. He explains how as an unchallengeable theoretical model in the academic space, the body theory of ‘Social Constructionism’ exists in both a strong sense and a weak sense. In a weak sense, it presumes that the dominant ideas, attitudes and customs of a society influence the perception of the body. As an example, he compares the case of the blacks in a racist society to that of the disabled in an ableist society. While the black people get generally uncomfortable on looking at a mirror, in a racially prejudiced society, in an ableist society, passing social legislations to provide better access to persons with disabilities is thought unnecessary, since the reigning myths explain that they do not understand or desire to enter the normal society. Thus, in a weak sense, Social Constructionism as a common sense approach tries to explain, how people victimize those who are not like

them. Even though people easily acknowledge the difference that they notice in another's body, they fail to understand what degree of violence their perception can cause to the other. Unlike the weak sense, the strong sense does not rely on human ignorance or misunderstandings to explain prejudices related to gender, sex, race or ability, but it highlights a linguistic model that describes representation itself as a primary ideological force. According to the strong sense, the body does not determine its own representation since sign precedes the body in the hierarchy of signification. In fact, it is the political ideology and culture that exert great powers, when they anchor their authority in natural objects such as body. (Siebers 174)

Michel Foucault defined biopower as “the force that constitutes the materiality of any human subject; it forms, secures, and normalizes human subjects through a process of subjection” (History of Sexuality 14041-14344 Tobin: Siebers 174). Siebers is of the view that to Foucault, biopower determines the way that human subjects experience the materiality of their bodies. The human subject does not have a body nor does the subject exist, if there is no question of its subjection as representation. Bodies are primarily linguistic effects constructed first by the order of representation itself and secondly by the entire array of social ideologies dependent on this order. The central issue in the Politics of representation, according to Siebers, is not whether bodies are ‘infinitely interpretable’ but whether certain bodies should be demarcated as ‘defective’ and how the people in these marked categories can

represent their interests effectively in the public sphere. Though there is a general consensus that the disabled bodies should not be denominated as defective any more, in practice, the disabled are still a long way from where they actually should be. They have no role in deciding the scales of their representation and perception. The only way to change this vacuum is to develop a more inclusive, creative and autonomous model to represent the disabled and their interests. (Siebers 174-175-176).

A few recent critics related to the Disability studies, who have got greater orientation to feminism argue that the present discourse on disability is more masculine oriented and there is a vacuum for a feminist theory of disability. They also try to identify the common links that exist between Feminism and Disability studies as discourses of the marginalized. In her article entitled “Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability”, Susan Wendell argues that,

Any deep understanding of disability must include thinking about the ethical, psychological and epistemic issues of living with disability. This theory should be feminist, because more than half of disabled people are women and approximately 16 percent of women are disabled. (Wendell 243)

The critics like Wendell are of the view that the feminist thinkers have raised the most radical issues about cultural attitudes to the body. While explaining the mutual relationship between Disability Studies and Feminism she observes that,

the attitudes that are instrumental in the oppression of the women are visible, in a similar or slightly different way in the disability studies or theory as well. The feminists are 'grappling' with issues that the disabled face in a different context. Even if it is with reference to the relationship between the dominant group and the subordinate group or the complimentary linkage between the two exclusive epistemological constructions of the marginalized, even if it has to be the independence that they both have to secure from the clutches of the dominant culture and their articulations, even if it is with reference to the questioning of the value systems which distrusts and devalues dependence on other people and vulnerability, even if it is regarding the goal of the discipline, facilitating integration with the male/able bodied society, seeking equal power with men/able bodied in that society or even with the specific emphasis on a separate cultural identity, in which, the ability, knowledge and values of women/disabled are specifically honoured and respected, there is an inseparable linkage, a mutual give and take and sharing between the two; Feminism and disability studies. Such critics also underscore the multiple layers of colonization that surround the disabled women. As Wendell further argues, disabled women have to struggle with the patriarchy on being in a male oriented society and with the abled bodied on being disabled. They bring the knowledge of Feminism into Disability studies and the disability studies into Feminism. Hence, along with a rare kind of fusion, the kind of give and take is also very productive and insightful. Other than the

similarity of ideas and strategies, there could be a much better assimilation in terms of terminological and linguistic aspects as well. (Wendell 243-244)

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson in her article “ Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory” tries to show how Disability studies and Feminist theory are interdependent and how the presence of one makes the other more comprehensive, solid, meaningful and original. She tries to establish that Feminism and Disability studies are complimentary to each other. She says that, since many of the disability studies scholars are not fully aware of the history, strategies and issues of the Feminist movement, much of what they do is a kind of ‘wheel reinventing’. Ideally, the issues that disability studies has to address are what feminism has been questioning and trying to resolve for centuries. This is not to conclude that the feminist theory can be transformed and synthesized into disability studies in its totality, whereas, it is to say that feminism can offer profound insights, methods and perspectives, that can make disability studies more comprehensive. According to her, the most genuine Disability Studies critics are those with adequate exposure to the different nuances of feminism and the best of the feminists are those who have got a clear cut awareness about the complex and challenging aspects of Disability studies. She writes, “The most sophisticated and nuanced analyses of disability, in my view, come from scholars conversant with feminist theory. And the most compelling and complex analyses of gender intersectionality take into consideration what I call the

ability/disability system--along with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.” (247-257)

Certain scholars in Disability studies are critical of the categorization ‘Physically challenged’ with reference to persons with disabilities. They argue that it is not the physical impairment or challenge that acts as an obstacle to one’s participation in the socio-cultural activities, whereas it is the wrongly constructed social mechanism with its failure to give an inclusive and reasonable accommodation to the challenged that keeps them away from the mainstream. It is also proven that if proper assistance and accommodation are given, persons with disabilities can be effectively functional except where the contribution of the organ where the impairment prevents them are necessarily needed. Even there the possibilities of technology can be a great alternative to solve the challenge. Semi Linton in her essay “Reassigning the meaning” argues that,

Physically challenged is the only term that seems to have caught on.

Nondisabled people use it in conversation around disabled people with no hint of anxiety, suggesting that they believe it is a positive term. This phrase does not make much sense to me. To say that I am physically challenged is to state that the obstacles to my participation are physical, not social, and that the barrier is my own disability.

Further, it separates those of us with mobility impairments from other disabled people, not a valid or useful partition for those interested in coalition building and social change. (165-166)

Such critics are of the view that rather than using the term Physically challenged, one can use the term 'Persons with disabilities' where the common thread of experience of marginality at least among the disabled is highlighted. Such a term gives more importance to the identity of the class than to the nature of the individual's impairment.

As any other experience of impairment or disability, visual impairment is also a very complex idea today, since it is not possible for someone to define and conceptualise it in a unilateral dimension. Many conflicting and often confusing terminological prevalence to refer to it makes it highly complex. Besides, it is not possible to reduce visual impairment into a single frame of experience due to the degree of variation that different candidates go through in their visual acuity. Imposing a common definition can be very problematic in such a context. Imagining the experience of visual impairment is also a highly complex issue. Since the sighted very often identify what they feel in the absence of light, darkness and its related anxieties as visual impairment, all representations and constructions created in such a perspective fail to give any colour of reality to the common discourses on visual impairment. It is from all these erroneous practices and multitudinous challenges that one needs to discuss the what, why and how of visual impairment.

The use of the terms like visually impaired, visually challenged, visually inconvenienced or visually handicapped with reference to the sightless is a relatively new practice. The most common practice was to use the term

'Blindness' to refer to various states of visual deficiencies. However, a search into the etymological background of the term reveals that it is developed or used more often as an imposed adjective to describe the sightless than a suitable term identified by the visually impaired inclusively. One understands the fallacious elements here, if he or she can enlist the various meanings that are ascribed to the term blind and blindness in the prevailing dictionaries. David Bolt in his book, *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Re-reading of Twentieth Century Anglophone Writing*, makes a thorough analysis about the prevalence of the term blindness.

Through Bolt's analysis one understands that the use of the term blind with reference to visual inconvenience is problematic, since all such contexts where the term 'blind' occurs, there is a synonymous association between not seeing and not knowing. In his essay on Normalcy Lennard J Davis points out that the word blind contains "moral and ethical implications" (5). In order to explicate his idea further, Bolt enlists the different meanings that the Encarta World English Dictionary (EWED) 1995 attributes to the term blindness and the blind. In the thirteen definitions that the Encarta attributes to the adjective blind, only the first one concretely refers to visual impairment/blindness. Though some of the other definitions in that series allude to some characters who were portrayed as visually challenged in literature or myths, they all connote to the general current in the society to associate visual impairment with darkness or abnormality. It is also significant that wherever the term blind is used as in blind

rage, blind admiration or blind worship, either in the common language or in literature, it is negative. Our language and idioms are very much dominated by visual metaphors and images. The term blind can also be etymologically connected to window blinds which are curtains that conceal light. (Bolt 17-18-19)

While the term visual impairment refers to the physical defect or damage that occurs to the eyes and causes disabilities to an individual, the term visually challenged in general refers to all who suffer from some kind of limitation or challenge in the context of vision. Thus, the former is a term with a scientific outlook, signifying the experience of an individual or a group, but, the latter is a more generalized expression that can function as an umbrella term for a wide variety of people. Both are very current in the contemporary discourses on the visually impaired. In short, the modern scholars are very confused on whether the term blind should be retained to refer to the sightless. Those with leanings to conventional wisdom are of the view that there is nothing revolutionary in changing the term without changing the basic patterns of societal space and inclusion and blindness being a term with a long currency, no other term would be adequate enough to fulfil the function of acting as a nomenclature for the sightless. But those with a more radical and theoretical inclination claim that the terms like blindness should be replaced with more constructive and potent terms like visually impaired, visually challenged or visually inconvenienced, and the move towards integration and assertion should begin by erasing the unacceptable

linguistic prevalences from the common vocabulary. Since visually challenged and visually impaired are more relevant and significant in the current theoretical ambiance, the researcher uses these terms in this thesis with reference to the experience of sightlessness. (Jernigan 591-592)

Dr. N.K. Rai in his book, *Visual Handicap and Personality Dynamics* examines the large variety of terms that were used for about the last 150 years to refer to the visually challenged and argues that while describing visual impairment, even within each discipline there existed a variety of terms and this resulted in a subsequent confusion. He considers this terminological abundance as an obstacle to gather precise information through research. Now the most competent terms that are used in order to refer to the visually inconvenienced/ blind are visually impaired or visually challenged. (N.K. Rai, 5-6-7)

It was not an easy task to decide who all should be considered the visually challenged in the past, since, there were no rigorous criteria or proper tool to measure and classify the range or standard by which one could decide a person's degree of impairment. In the dictionaries the word 'blind' meant simply 'sightless.' So, from this point of view one could conclude that a visually impaired person was one who could not see. However, in the modern times this concept got totally invalidated. The category visually challenged includes people with various visual acuities and this state mandated the development of adequate tools and devices to measure the visual acuity. Besides, visual impairment is not simply assessed from the medical point of view alone, it is also defined and

assessed from legal, economic, functional and many other perspectives. Though there were many attempts to measure the visual acuity of a person using lenses and instruments like ophthalmoscope. The most successful of the investigators in the field was the Dutch Ophthalmologist Herman Snellen. According to Snellen's principles visual acuity is measured or assessed almost in the same way as tactile sensitivity is assessed, that is by giving emphasis to the minimum distance at which two simultaneous impressions give rise to two independent sensations. Snellen developed a chart for this purpose, to measure the visual acuity of a candidate and this chart which is commonly known as 'The Snellen chart' is the standard tool used today across the world for the measurement of sight. So in any standard definition of visual impairment, one would see 'in Snellen' meaning according to the Snellen chart. For measuring the sight, the Snellen chart is placed in the Ophthalmologist's Lab at a distance of twenty feet, with the twenty foot line at the eye level, since normal eyes can be practically at rest, when they view things at that distance. The testing usually begins, when the tester directs the testee to read the larger letters and continues till he reaches the lines that he cannot read. As Gabriel Farrel explains,

A person with normal vision should be able to distinguish clearly the 20-foot line at a distance of 20 feet, and if so, his visual acuity is rated as 20/20. If he cannot read clearly the letters of the 70-foot line, he is rated 20/70 and comes within the category called the partially seeing. If he can see only the large letter E) his visual acuity is 20/200, and

he is on the threshold of being considered blind according to the present American definition. (202-203)

While assessing vision, one must also distinguish between visual acuity and visual efficiency. While visual acuity is referred to as the exact assessment of the remaining sight, visual efficiency signifies the competence of the eyes to accomplish their physiological purposes. So if a person has 20/20 or 200/200 visual acuity, his visual efficiency is 100 percent and if a person's visual acuity is 0/20, his visual efficiency is 0 percent. The Snellen computations are originally cited in meters, but the Americans use feet to define the same since they are more used to express the measurements in feet. It is on account of this reason that Farrel uses feet instead of metre while referring to the measurement of vision in Snellen. So, 20/200 in feet is 6/60 in metre. Whereas the American standard measurement for considering someone visually impaired is 6/60 meters, the British standard measurement is 3/60 meters. Another factor worth noticing while assessing vision is restrictions in the field of vision. In all standard definitions of visual impairment, we see the field of vision specifically mentioned along with the visual acuity. (Farrel 206-207)

From this perspective, the right to persons with disabilities act 2016 refers to visual impairment/blindness in the following terms.

(a) "blindness" means a condition where a person has any of the following conditions, after best correction -

(i) total absence of sight; or (ii) visual acuity less than 3/60 or less than 10/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with best possible correction; or (iii) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of less than 10 degree.

(b) "low-vision" means a condition where a person has any of the following conditions, namely: (i) visual acuity not exceeding 6/18 or less than 20/60 up to 3/60 or up to 10/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with best possible corrections; or (ii) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of less than 40 degree up to 10 degree. (The schedule of disability RPD act, 33-34)

One significant change that we see in the act referred to, in comparison with the definition of visual impairment in the PWD act of 1995 is the change in the standard to signify the visually impaired. Whereas the PWD act specified the American standard of 6/60 as the standard visual acuity, the new act considers the British 3/60 for the same. Thus here, those between 3/60 and 6/60 will also go into the category of low vision.

When a theoretical analysis of visual impairment and its related aspects is attempted, one cannot ignore how they had been treated and dealt with in history. In general, the history of any disability community can have many phases like Annihilation phase, Ward phase, Rehabilitation phase, Inclusive phase and an Assertive phase. There could be minute differences in the

chronological assessment of these stages in different communities, since the nature of disability, the attention it received and the issues it creates differ slightly among different disabled groups. However, it is obvious that all such communities had to strive and struggle a lot before they reached the current phase of assertion and rights. In a 1963 article entitled “The Role and Status of the Blind Person” Berthold Lowenfeld states that “In an abbreviated way, let me repeat that society has regarded and treated the blind in three distinct ways: as liabilities, as wards, and as members. We find ourselves in the third phase of this development, that of integration of blind persons into society” (112). While analyzing the history of the visually challenged in the West, Lowenfeld in his article, “Integration the Challenge of Our Times” identifies four different stages in the growth of the impaired community such as separation, ward status, self emancipation and integration. Regarding the first stage, since many primitive societies treated the visually impaired and the other disabled as a burden or liability, they were mostly separated from the mainstream society. In the Tribal communities, the one who was not competent enough to fend for himself was always considered a burden. As Lowenfeld says, “The two extreme forms of separation are annihilation and veneration” (130). As elucidated in many studies, the people of Sparta, Athens and Rome had practiced annihilation by either casting away the deformed children in the wild forests or throwing them into rivers. It is interesting to note that in all these places special baskets or vessels were sold in the markets for this purpose. Since man’s fitness was the most

important thing that decided his value in that age, the ancient kings and even theoreticians like Plato and Aristotle gave sanction and legitimacy to these practices. However, in the midst of these inhuman atrocities there were a few extraordinary ones who had shown unusual talents in Poetry or Theology. They were very much respected by their contemporaries. Most often they were given divine status and uncommon powers. Homer the Greek poet, Demodocus the Bard divine, Tiresias and Phenius the Prophets and many others belonged to this category. From a close analysis, it could be concluded that this veneration was a different kind of separation. Either through annihilation or through veneration the common dictum imposed was that such people were essentially different from the others. At its foundation, it removed the visually challenged from the normal life of the society where they lived. (Lowenfeld 130-131-132)

With reference to the second stage, since the beginning of the Semitic religions, the visually challenged and the other disabled were regarded as the wards of the society and they were given the right to beg. The Old Testament abounds with such maxims as "Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way," (Deuteronomy 27:18). This called for a protective and charitable attitude towards the visually impaired, disabled and other needy. The biblical law gave emphasis to the individual's responsibility to the society and the family as a structure had the obligation to look after all those who belonged to it. Lowenfeld observes that "Christianity always considered children, the aged, and the blind as special wards of the Church. It is interesting to note that these three

groups are still distinguished as special categories in modern social welfare legislation” (131). Though many asylums and hospitals were founded for the visually challenged such as the one by St. Basil in Caesarea-in-Cappadocia, the visually challenged were mostly left to beg and to receive alms from the Churches and common people. There were also different brotherhoods of the visually impaired under different Churches which received the patronage of different Saints. Quinze-vingts built by ST. Louis in 1254 to give shelter to 300 visually impaired crusaders was one such brotherhood. (Lowenfeld 131-132)

The ward status had given the visually challenged and other disabled people right to live. But, along with it, they were also protected and assisted in various ways. This, as Lowenfeld observes, gave space to some of them to achieve excellences in their fields. So there emerged bards, singers and musicians. Following this, there emerged a few visually impaired individuals in Europe who could not only prove their talents in education alone, but had earned outstanding accomplishments in their respective fields. Lowenfeld calls such outstanding individuals who later gave significant contributions in developing adequate models to challenge disability as self emancipators. The collective efforts of such extraordinary talented beings culminated in the origin of Educational facilities for the visually challenged. Nicholas Saunderson (1682-1739) a mathematician at Cambridge during Sir Isaac Newton, John Metcalf (1717-1810) a well-known Engineer, Francois Huber (1750-1831) a Swiss Naturalist with his unchallengeable expertise on bees, Thomas Black Lock

(1721-1791) a poet, preacher and an ordained Minister and Maria Theresia von Paradis (1759-1824) a musician with extraordinary talent and matchless accomplishments are some of them. (Lowenfeld 132)

Lowenfeld defines integration as "The mutual acceptance, based on equality of opportunity and before the law, between groups which differ in some important characteristic, may it be racial, religious, physical or otherwise" (133-134). From the contemporary angle, inclusion can be a more accurate word for this process. One of the phenomena which played a pivotal role in the process of integration that the disabled enjoy today is the aftermath of the world wars. Since many most able bodied fell into the category disabled by the wars, the Governments were compelled to rehabilitate them, both to compensate for the leakage in the human resource potential of the country and to fulfil their national obligation to those who were ready to sacrifice themselves for their country. The nongovernmental organizations and charitable trusts that were launched across the world both by the disabled and by their well wishers also were instrumental in creating the present inclusive paradigm. Along with these social changes, the invention of various equipment like 'the Braille' by Louis Braille, white cane by Richard Hover, the invention of the braille typewriter and the invention of other educational and leisurely possibilities also contributed their share in this process. At present we have the most powerful convention, 'UNCRPD', United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 to guide the nations towards a comprehensive perspective of inclusion of the disabled. In fact, one of

the reasons why the Government of India was forced to amend the act of 1995 in 2016 was to give full expression to the principles enshrined in the UNCRPD.

The new era of accessibility, expression and a subsequent paradigm of equality created by technology also plays a great share in solidifying the present ambience of inclusion and security. Now, the visually challenged can do almost everything due to the help of technology, except experiencing what is called sight. Even for that there are umpteen researches conducted across the world. Today, any discussion on disability or visual impairment must mention accessibility and assistive technology. Most of the statutory provisions either in the National level or in the International arena underscore the importance of technology for the visually impaired and disabled and direct the governments to facilitate the same in all walks of their life. This technological explosion has provided the visually challenged with many areas that were totally denied to them. Now, one can see programmers and computer engineers from among them. It has also given them access into many employment sectors such as I.T. related employments, higher level administrators, and even business process executives. It has also enhanced the standard of living of the visually impaired by considerably reducing the degree of dependency that impairment creates in them. Even though, most of the Software applications were proprietary at the beginning, now almost everything is available free of cost to people across the world. The expensive nature of the hardware is yet a threat to a large number of

the end users. However, the governments are always ready to forge new schemes to distribute equipment to the blind through their social empowerment schemes.

There are two major after-effects that the technology has created in the life of the disabled. The first one is that it has replaced the concept of rehabilitation, a much depreciated word in the context of disability, with the word empowerment, a more agreeable word of the modern era. Technology has created a better level of integration of the disabled through a new paradigm of equality and by sanctioning autonomy, independence and respect of the challenged individuals. Similarly the technological research present concentrates on two major areas in the context of visual impairment or disability. If the first one is with regard to reducing the impact of disability by expanding the horizon of different ability by substituting the impaired zone with alternative experiences through various applications, the second one is to erase the very experience of disability itself by providing them with new possibilities of experiencing the missing sensory perceptions. Though the second one is not yet fully accomplished, the initial signs are competent enough to give one a very positive hope that even such a possibility could be a reality in the near future. The role of technology in preventing the instances of disability and curing disability is also worth mentioning. To conclude, one can argue that among all other disabled groups who are empowered and energized by technological aid, by increasing their performative capacity, the visually challenged are the most benefited, fortunately, unusually blessed and unimaginably assisted.

An often debated question raised by the recent critics of Disability Studies in general and by the visually impaired in particular is whether the problems of a physically challenged category can be treated as the problems of a minority. In an interview that the researcher conducted on 2nd July 2017, Mr. K. Satyasheelan one of the professionally recognized resource persons among the visually impaired in Kerala agrees with this idea. In order to explain his idea, he takes the analogy of how an individual with normal height may come across strange challenges in a land of people with less than average height. The challenges faced by the visually impaired in a world structured for the sighted is equal to the difficulties of the visitor in a country which is structured for the short people. He further adds that

the mainstream often fails to realize the fact that at any moment, a non challenged can come across a challenge like visual impairment and such people should not be put into an asylum as Saramago shows in his novel *Blindness*. We must give them proper accessibility and confidence. So, any development measure that is done for a challenged community should be considered as a preparatory move to accommodate such adventitiously challenged people. (Satyasheelan)

He emphasizes the idea that instead of treating the visually impaired as a separate category who always beg for charity and who are incompetent to contribute in any effective way to the society, the society should consider their problems as that of the general structure and should give them adequate

opportunities and assistance to expand and flourish into their full selves. The administrators and policy makers lack this insight very often. The challenges of the left handed people in dealing with instruments such as scissors that are specifically designed for the right handed people can also be considered as another apt instance of how the experience of marginality is closely related to a wrongly structured world.

The words, 'representation' and 'construction' are frequently used in the contexts of Literature and Films, especially with reference to the question of marginality. While the term representation refers to the reproduction of a reality, object, situation, group etc., either overtly or covertly, the term construction refers to the interpretation or explanation given to a statement, a state of affairs or a state of representation. Though there could be subtle differences between the two, essentially any representation can be a process of construction as well. In both cases, the author's imagination plays a great role in the formation of the image along with his experiencing of the reality or situation that he tries to represent.

An article, entitled "Representation," published in 1995 in the collection, *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, discusses the subtle aspects of representation in general. The term representation in the contemporary scenario has two meanings, political representation and literary representation. While political representation refers to systems where certain individuals stand for the interests of groups, constituencies or nations, literary representation as mentioned earlier

stands for a replication of a reality in accordance with the ideological, social and cultural requirements and strategies of the producers. Semioticians identify three types of literary representations, 'icon', where a form and its concept are associated as a result of the element of resemblance, 'symbol', where such an association occurs due to a mere arbitrary relationship forged by the author and 'index', where the relationship is cause and effect based. Though man has been known as the 'homosymbolicum,' an animal with a distinct ability to create and manipulate signs,' things that stand for or substitute something else, the patterns of representation and the response of the represented go through more complex dimensions in the new socio/cultural paradigms. (Representation)

The idea of construction can be also understood from a theoretical point of view with reference to social constructionism or social construction of reality. Social constructionism as explained in the Encyclopedia of communication refers to the jointly constructed views and understandings about the world that acts as a foundation for the shared assumptions about reality. As elucidated in the article "Social Constructionism Facts, Information, Pictures" published in the Encyclopedia.com the theory is mainly based on the idea that human beings have a tendency to rationalize their experience through models of the social world. People share and ratify these models through language to create some commonly agreeable patterns and images. Such a construction considers the meaning, notion or connotation placed on an object or an event by a society and adopted by the citizens of that society in accordance with what is their approach

to or perspective about the object or even under consideration. In that respect, a social construct will be accepted by most of the people in that society. But, it will not be fully acceptable to the people outside the community and sometimes such constructions originate purely from the imagination of the producers and bare least resemblance to the experience of those to whom they are attributed.

With reference to the question of disability, social construction is thus instrumental for the patterns of representation that it receives in the social, cultural and political discourses that rule such a society. A society always creates frames of representation in accordance with ideas it has already acquired through conventional wisdom and conditioning. Only a crude approach from the targeted community can rupture and substitute the images that are thus created. Thus, though the concept of representation and construction are closely related to one another in its essence, in the context of disability one can argue that the patterns of social construction are instrumental in creating various and often conflicting or contradictory frames of representation. However, it is highly difficult for a researcher to distinguish between the two in the textual circumstances or actual instances of oral or visual communication. The main reason for this dilemma is that the essence, strategies effect and the target of both are the same, preferably something around a marginalized group in most situations.

Theorising disability, as pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, is a very challenging task on account of the multifarious nature of the theoretical environment. However, one cannot deem any of the perspectives thus created as

inferior to the other. It is thus a synthesis of all such perspectives that makes the discourse on disability a very vibrant and expanding one. That more and more varieties are being added on to it evinces that it is being enriched every day. However, the present theoretical awakening offers to the visually impaired only a very limited share in the epistemological formulations about disability. The visually impaired community is yet to make an unorthodox attempt to establish a comprehensive and convincing perspective in this direction. May be, the studies similar to the kind attempted here at least raises a demand for such a serious move with academic and pedagogic implications.

Chapter 2

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT: A MACROCOSMIC ANALYSIS

Visual impairment or in common parlance, ‘blindness’ has been an all-time concern in literature. It is seemingly the potential it offers to the authors to convert it into highly colourful and wild stretches of the vista of imagination that makes it a frequent theme of literature with universal appeal and currency. That the common people do not discern the actual state of visual impairment creates more or less an unquestioned acceptance among them to these farfetched constructs and negative images. However, when such representations are tested in the light of the genuine experience and real knowledge of and about the visually impaired, most of these constructs and images get destined to lose their credibility. This chapter, seeks to analyse how our mainstream writers turn out to be a far cry from the reality attempting to give colours to the actual experience of visual impairment and the visually impaired and also while they frame the common strategies and methods to be employed while giving space to such experiences in their works.

One of the most interesting aspects to begin with is to examine what is the terminology that the selected authors follow while referring to the visually impaired characters. All the writers under consideration, Wilkie Collins, Susan Glaspell and Linda Gillard follow the conventional practice of referring to the visually impaired by the adjective ‘Blind’. Even in the most modern work among them, *Star Gazing*, published in 2008, there seems no difference in this

strategy. The problem cannot only be limited to the use of this dated adjective, but they simply reduce the identity of their visually impaired characters into a nominal existence. David Bolt in his book *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Re-reading of Twentieth-Century Anglophone Writing*, reveals how the society in general puts the visually challenged into a nominal displacement by using the strategy of normate reductionism.

It is Rosemarie Garland-Thomson who coined the term Normate in her book *Extraordinary Bodies*. As Bolt explains, she coins the term normate, thereby designating the "veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries" (Thomson 8: Bolt 6). This relatively new and widely adopted term, 'Normate' thus refers to the constructed identity of those who by their bodily configurations and cultural capital enforces authority and wield the powers it grants. The sense of an elevated status is a ubiquitous one and people always aspire desperately to acquire the normate subject position fitting themselves into a prohibitively exclusively ideal status. In her essay Semi Linton also makes a few noteworthy observations on the conceptualization of 'Normate'. According to her, the term Normate designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings. While retaining many of the ingredients of normal, normate questions and challenges the very identity of it as well. At the same time, its ironic twist gives normate, a more flavorful acceptance and significance. The term normate thus

refers to the extra control, enforcement or authority that the abled bodied tries to impose, socially or psychologically over the disabled on account of their bodily difference and superiority and the power and authority that it provides to them.

In most literary works, if a character suffers from visual impairment, all further references to him or her in that book will be by pointing to his or her impairment such as ‘the blind man, the blind boy, the blind girl’ or any similar adjectives. Here when people are reduced to mere types through their disability, their individuality, tastes, preferences and peculiarities are totally invalidated. By the term ‘nominal displacement’, Bolt signifies this reduction or invalidation of an individual by using the nomenclature of his disability.

At the very outset of his novel *Poor Miss Finch*, Wilkie Collins, knowingly or unknowingly establishes the fundamental attitude that he has towards his visually impaired heroine, Lucilla, who is indicated by the title *Poor Miss Finch*. In introducing the different characters and the mood of the story in general, Madame Pratolungo, the narrator and the mouthpiece of the author, makes the following observation. “You are here invited to read the story of an Event which occurred in an out-of-the-way corner of England, some years since. The persons principally concerned in the Event are:--a blind girl; two (twin) brothers; a skilled surgeon; and a curious foreign woman” (Chapter 1). The difference in treatment is evident in the adjectives that she uses to designate each character. While most others are indicated by their social or personal traits,

Lucilla is singled out by emphasizing her biological limitation ‘blindness.’ This reference to blindness proliferates throughout the work and such adjectives often play a significant role in sentimentalizing the entire narrative. There are enough examples such as ‘blind girl’, ‘Blind Lucilla’, ‘Blind face’, ‘Blind creature’ and so on to this effect in the novel concerned. Even when Lucilla’s face is referred to, it is described as ‘blind face’. For example, Madame Pratulungo, once says that, “I looked at Lucilla. She was standing, with her blind face raised to the sky, lost in herself, like a person wrapped in ecstasy” (Chapter 4). Even when an organ of the protagonist is referred to, the culture of nominal displacement that Collins had acquired through his conditioning becomes functional here.

Collins’ other novel *The Dead Secret*, is also not free from this fallacious practice. Doctor Chennery in introducing Leonard Frankland, says that “Poor blind young Frankland is a happy man at last—I have married him to our dear Rosamond Treverton this very morning!” (Book 2 Chapter 1). Here again, when Rosamond Treverton is simply introduced as their dear friend, Mr. Frankland, is shown as the poor blind Frankland. The epistemological and social underpinning is evident in this single instance itself. The novel abounds with other such coinages like, ‘Blind man’, ‘blind Bridegroom’, ‘blind fellow’, ‘blind gentleman’, ‘blind master’ and so on. Even when Rosamond herself refers to her husband on a few occasions, she uses the term ‘blind husband’. For example, on one occasion she says that, “It was the sight of my blind husband that made me conquer the temptation to destroy that letter in the first hour of discovering it”

(Book 6 Chapter 1). Here the individuality of the husband is simply limited to his impairment and irrespective of the consequences that the letter can have, the letter is not designated by any other adjectives as fatal, doomed or so on, which could have been very accurate on this occasion. Primacy is given to the state of the husband to increase the emotional aura and to nullify his individuality.

Susan Glaspell's *The Glory of the Conquered* is a work where 'visual impairment as worse than death' stereotype is forcefully exposed. This novel is also not free from this conventional attitude. Dr. Karl Hubers the well-known Scientist and researcher all of a sudden becomes simply the blind man, when he loses his vision. Karl the victim himself internalizes this notion very much, so that very often, instead of referring to him in first person pronouns, he refers to him as the blind man. For example, Karl asks Ernestine, "Ernestine—think of it! How are you going to go on forever loving a blind man?" (Chapter 28). Here again, his focus is on his impairment. The adjective blind occurs frequently in the second part of the novel where the central idea is the visual impairment that befalls Karl the scientist in an accident. The kind of nominal displacement could be considerably less here, but the emotional ambiance is quiet disturbing.

Irrespective of the progressive attitude and flexibility that the author has taken in exposing the nuances of the visually impaired, particularly revealing their often neglected sexual requirements, Linda Gillard is also not free from the shackles of convention. Even in a 2008 novel *Star Gazing*, written at a time when serious debate was going on in the academia, about the suitable term to

describe the experience of sightlessness, she uses the term blind to refer to Marriane Frazer's disability. Here again, the term blind and blindness appear in the novel repeatedly, that rather than the emotional part of it or the thrill of the romance, the tragic aspect of Marianne's visual impairment constantly disturbs the reader. For example, she "Blind motherhood would always have been a tough option, but I didn't even get beyond the vetting process" (37). Here 'motherhood for the blind' could have been the right expression. However, the author is so preoccupied with the idea of impairment, that she makes it the blind motherhood. Again, expressions like 'Blind woman', 'Blind lady', 'blind mother' are repeatedly used by the author. The degree of nominal displacement, either on the part of the society or from the protagonist's own side is not less in degree. Thus in these novels as in many established ones, the term blind, a culturally unacceptable one in the modern scenario, is indiscriminately used by the authors. In the case of Collins or Glaspell, it does not seem to be a great mistake, since the discourse on the visually impaired was at a very early stage when they composed their works. However, repeating the same by a recent author shows either her ignorance or her indifference. Besides, other than the cultural question of having recourse to an outmoded term, it is the normative reductionism and the subsequent nominal displacement that is more significant and valid in the contexts referred to above. In all these instances, the idiosyncracies, emotional temperaments, tastes, preferences or likings of these

individuals go unnoticed, since they are simply put into the cocoon of their impairment.

Even in some of the works that are written by the visually impaired themselves, this practice of referring to the visually impaired by the term 'blind' is prevalent. For example, even the novel, *The Sight Sickness* by Christine Faltz Grassman, which has already been mentioned in the introduction, follows this pattern in describing the experience of visual impairment. It is interesting to note that as explained earlier, his main intention in writing the novel is to critique the novel *Blindness* by Jose Saramago. In his preface to *The Sight Sickness* he makes it very clear, when he says that,

Consider this work my personal arsenal against the omnipresent, ongoing literal and figurative fear of blindness. It is time to rip the latest literary fashions off the age-old manipulations of blindness. To actors and directors who make fools of themselves trying to "simulate" blindness, who believe they are being sensitive and politically correct when they seek a "psychology of blindness," who believe that, while there is a seventy percent unemployment rate among working-age blind people, it is appropriate for them to learn to "act" like us and make money while doing it, I say, enough! If the sighted world really wants to see, then do so. Do not insult my intelligence and that of my blind brothers and sisters. Do not grasp at awful metaphors that fail because of the fallacy of their comparisons,

and do not profit from your ceaseless quest to do so. (Preface to *Sight Sickness*)

It is strange to note that though he makes it very clear that the literary writers and practitioners are quite inaccurate with reference to their treatment of the visually impaired, why he is using a politically inaccurate term like 'Blind' in his work so constantly. Though some of the visually impaired critics like David Bolt are highly critical of this practice, that criticism may appear quite unconvincing to many readers, when they see this kind of a practice from an author whose main intention in designing this book is to critique the practice of a writer in dealing with visual impairment. If his use of the term blindness within the main body of the work can be sanctioned as a part of his effort to create an environment of parody, even in his preface, acknowledgement or note, he follows the same convention.

There could be at least two reasons for this practice from a conscious visually impaired activist. The first one could be that being used to the term blind in all major discourses, he might be of the view that by changing the terminology simply, he is not gaining any advantage in communicating his ideas and he, like many other modern activists among the visually impaired, would be considering it as the most suitable word to refer to the visually impaired. Such people do not agree with the pejorative meaning and connotation that the critics associate with the word blindness. The second reason as Jernigan pointed out in his essay "Blindness: Is Literature Against Us" is the fact that the visually

impaired often tend to see themselves as how the society view them. It is felt that from a modern perspective the author is seriously faulty in retaining the term blind to refer to the experience of visual impairment and it is high time that the visually impaired stopped using such obsolete and unacceptable idioms more often enforced by the society than consciously discovered by them inclusively.

A very unhealthy and mythical illusion that all the selected works establish forcefully is the erroneous perception that ‘blindness is darkness’. This illusion is as old as the origin of civilizations and it is fundamental to all our major perceptions and constructs about the visually impaired in our common idioms and popular literature and films. It has struck such a very deep root in our cultural mind that even after constant sensitization people are not ready to part with this notion. Many scholars have attempted to unearth the foundation of the illusory association between visual impairment and darkness. In his 1984 *Banquet Speech* of The National Federation of the Blind, America, entitled “Blindness the Circle of Sophistry”, Kenneth Jernigan gives a very convincing explanation in this regard. Floyd Mattson in his book, *Walking Together and Marching Alone* quotes this speech, while discussing the history of the national Federation of the Blind, America. Jernigan attributes the dark light binary associated with visual impairment to the hunting ages. He elucidates how light was equated to purity and virtue and darkness was associated with evil, danger and fear. In the primitive tribal societies the ability to hunt was a superior skill and since, the visually impaired could not hunt, they were equated to darkness. It

could be the failure of the sighted to hunt in darkness that made them think that the visually challenged who could not hunt were also in darkness. Besides, the feeling of the sighted when they close their eyes: the anxieties, fear, alienation, the horror and other frustrations are mostly considered by the sighted as the experience of visual impairment. Since they cannot experience the original state of visual impairment, (where a person who suffers from total absence of sight by birth cannot understand darkness, as he does not know what is light) they often try to carry forth the illusory association that they have somehow imbibed to the extent of visual impairment. Many visually impaired do not have any feeling of darkness in their eyes and even for a candidate who loses his or her sight in the midst of life, having been through darkness for a considerable period makes the question of darkness irrelevant. However, in the case of those with limited vision, they may perceive, light, colour or even shape in accordance with their visual acuity.

Even before, Madame Pratolungo met Lucilla, she had formed the idea that Lucilla was living in a dark world. She says, “At the lower end of the corridor, a solitary figure in a pure white robe was bending over the flowers in the window. This was the blind girl whose dark hours I had come to cheer” (Chapter 3). This dark/ light binary appears in the novel in many other instances as well. On another occasion, Madame Pratolungo again says that “the blind are, by cruel necessity, forced inward on themselves. They live apart from us—ah, how hopelessly far apart!—in their own dark sphere, of which we know

nothing” (Chapter 6). Here again, the misunderstanding and the subsequent sympathetic response acts as a catalyst in maintaining the emotional ambiance that the author wishes to sustain. However, one can see many contradictory statements in the novel from Lucilla herself to prove that she does not go through apparent darkness and she has got limited perception of light. During a later interaction, she tells Madame Pratolungo, "Go away with your candle," she said.

The darkness makes no difference to me. I can see him in my thoughts." She nestled her head comfortably on the pillows, and tapped me saucily on the cheek, as I bent over her. "Own the advantage I have over you now," she said. "You can't see at night without your candle. I could go all over the house, at this moment, without making a false step anywhere. (Chapter 11)

There is yet another passage where the German Physician Herr Grosse questions Lucilla about her feeling of light and darkness and her replay is in all respects contradictory to the dark world that the narrator had forcefully imposed on her.

To quote the passage:

“Now! now! now! You be nice-goot, and tell me this first. When you are out in the garden, taking your little lazy lady's walks on a shiny-sunny day, is it all the same to your eyes as if you were lying in your bed in the middles of the night?” "No." "Hah! You know it

is nice-light at one time? You know it is horrid-dark at the odder?"

"Yes." "Then why you ask me if you are blind for life? If you can see as much as that, you are not properly blind at all?" She clasped her hands, with a low cry of delight. (Chapter 30)

Thus, though the adjectives associated with darkness permeate throughout the novel, there are very contradictory statements within the work itself. Besides, rather than giving expression to the authentic feelings of Lucilla, it is Madame Pratolungo's imagination and that of the other characters that limit Lucilla into a dark horizon or world. From the Narrator's recordings about Lucilla's past life, one understands that she had lost her sight before she was a year old. It is pretty conclusive that one cannot form impressions in his or her mind about colour, before they at least become one or two. So, there is a total confusion about her perceptive abilities as shown in the novel. However, the darkness imposed on her is more out of the conventional attitude that the author had internalized than his awareness about the original experience of the visually impaired.

Collins' novel *The Dead Secret* also consists of the illusion of visual impairment as darkness in abundance. There, the potency of such an image has a higher reliance, since the impairment under consideration is an adventitious one, something that befell the candidate at a very later part of his life. For example, when Rosamend speaks to Leonard about their child, she refers to the dark world he is in. She says:

Oh, Lenny! I tell you everything I can—I do my best to lighten the cruel, cruel darkness which shuts you out from that lovely little face lying so close to you! But can I tell you how he looks when he first begins to take notice? Can I tell you all the thousand pretty things he will do when he first tries to talk? (Book 3 Chapter 3)

Rather than his disability and the consequent difficulties, it is the reference to the darkness that envelopes him, that makes the emotional tempo of the situation very much heightened. However, reference to darkness can be legitimate here to a great extent, since this conversation takes place not so long after he had been hit by visual impairment. The weight of that darkness will persist and torment him so strong, as long as he remains unwilling to attend proper counselling or rehabilitation.

This horror and reserved view of visual impairment and darkness reach its peak in Susan Glaspell's *The Glory of the Conquered*. There one encounters Karl Hubers afflicted with total absence of sight in an accident, groping for a direction in his life and almost succumbing to death as the ultimate sanctuary for him to escape. For example, in the novel, there is a passage where Karl expresses his fear of darkness.

“Oh, Karl!”--not able to contain it a minute--"I want to tell you--" and then, startled as he stumbled a little, and going down a few steps to meet him—“but isn't there too much light up here? Shouldn't you stay

down in the dark? ” “I don't want to stay down in the dark!..!”

(Chapter 17)

The fear of darkness and the subsequent restlessness is very evident in this passage. More than the actual darkness, it is his imaginary conception of it which makes it more unbearable.

It is the same mistake that makes Leonard Frankland think about visual impairment in such horrific terms. Like Karl his experience might have played a significant role in making him so frustrated and disappointed. However, both the victims and those around them are also carried away by the images and constructs that make visual impairment a dark and horrible experience. Linda Gillard's *Star Gazing* also contains metaphors of darkness. But the force of the imagery is comparatively lesser in degree. Besides, Marianne is a more positive and competent lady in confronting her impairment head-on and the consequent disability.

One of the strong foundations that constructs the stereotypic attitudes towards the visually impaired is the social attitude. From a quick glance, one can conclude that the authors selected are prejudiced against the visually impaired. What they virtually do is enforcing the deep rooted tropes, figures and stereotypes in their respective works. When one refers to the social attitude towards the visually challenged, he or she must distinguish between the attitude of the society towards the visually challenged and that of the challenged towards

the society. As specified in the former chapter, the term handicap denotes the Psycho/social consequences of disability. Thus, while the attitude of the society towards the visually challenged is more social, theirs towards the society is more psychological. In fact, the latter is the consequence of the former.

Akbar C. in his article, “Othering as a Part of Social Behaviour and Its Impact on The Existence of The Visually Challenged,” says that

One of the serious discriminations suffered by the visually challenged from the mainstream society is the social phenomenon called 'Othering'. 'Othering' designates the treatment of a particular social or ethnic group as being distinct or inferior on the basis of certain physical, social or cultural factors or traits. (42-43)

One of the most visible forms of social prejudices that questions the very existence of the visually challenged is hasty generalization. Generalisation refers to the attribution of the characteristics, behavioural patterns or skill-based specialities of an individual to all the members of that community. Georgekutty Karepparampil and Father Jose Murican SJ., in their book, *Persons with Disabilities in Society* observe:

Man cannot resist the temptation to generalize or to spread. He always tries to judge a situation or a person by one most obvious characteristic. He sees that a person is physically handicapped and he believes what he sees, or rather more than what he sees. The

disability that he sees in the physical sphere is immediately spread to other areas --psychological, social and moral. In order to prove that man's negative reaction to the physically handicapped is instinctive, some people even try to relate comparable instances in the animal world showing ostracism of those with a typical physique. But their hypothesis cannot be proved by one or two stray instances. Ignorance of the primary causes of disability is also responsible for negative social attitudes. (115)

The range and effect of this hasty generalization is of a higher degree, if it is related to a negative aspect of the particular community and the disability under observation is of an intensive degree. The society in general keeps many beliefs about the visually challenged such as, they are all pure, they cannot commit evils, and they are all singers and so on. This generalization denies even the competent among the visually challenged, their accomplishments or dignity since they are frequently measured with the features of the less talented among them.

Reservation is a most poignant social attitude towards the visually challenged. While in the ancient days, reservation had a pejorative meaning, as it denoted the policy of keeping some people away, due to wrong perceptions and practices, in the modern era, it signifies the extra preference or priority that people like the visually challenged receive as a part of the policy of protective discrimination. Thus now, it is a strategy for social empowerment and inclusion.

Glorification and nullification the binaries exist side by side in our social perceptions and subsequent literary and filmic representations about the visually challenged.

Exclusion or granting exception is also a frequently visible social attitude towards the visually impaired. There are different strategies to adjust with visual impairment such as modification, adaptation, substitution and omission. The fourth one is to be practiced only when it is not possible to replicate the experience in question into the experiential realm of the impaired. However, the society in general tries to grant exception to the visually impaired even in those instances where they can perform effectively with minute adaptations or modifications. The visually impaired usually receive them with great happiness without understanding that the real strategy in giving unwanted exception is to exclude them. Over protection and disguised rejection are the two conflicting attitudes that the parents mostly exhibit towards the visually impaired. While the former refers to the denial of an opportunity due to unnecessary protection and fear of danger, with reference to the latter, their ostensible claim is love, protection and fear of danger, while the real objective is rejection.

In a very peripheral analysis itself, one can make out that the selected works contain many stereotypes, generalizations and differentiations that are detrimental to the visually impaired. One such obvious instance of exaggeration is the prejudice about the abnormal and irrational fear or inhibition that Lucilla keeps towards dark colours. Again, it reaches a most absurd level, when the

author claims that she can identify the same through her touch. In one of the early chapters, for example one comes across the following passage.

As I rose, she put her arm round my waist--then instantly drew it away again, and shook her fingers impatiently, as if something had hurt them. "A pin?" I asked. "No! No! What coloured dress have you got on?" "Purple." "Ah! I knew it! Pray don't wear dark colours. I have my own blind horror of anything that is dark. Dear Madame Pratolungo, wear pretty bright colours, to please me! "She put her arm caressingly round me again--round my neck, however, this time, where her hand could rest on my linen collar." "You will change your dress before dinner--won't you?" she whispered. "Let me unpack for you, and choose which dress I like". "The brilliant decorations of the corridor were explained to me now! (Chapter 3)

Later in the novel, one sees that both the Ophthalmologists Herr. Grosse and Mr. Sebright agree that such a prejudice is inalienable to the born visually impaired and it is very difficult to cure it by convincing them about its irrationality. In fact, this prejudice is instrumental in creating many of the confusions and chaos in the novel which make Lucilla's life a dramatic and horrific one. One sees Lucilla giving an explanation for this irrational fear, when her aunt was very much displeased with her for mistreating and insulting a dark Hindu guest in a party. She writes of that incident to her father in a letter. In the letter she narrates how she had tried to convince her aunt of the fact that, being a

visually impaired since she was one year old, she had no idea of what any person looked like. The only possible impressions were what her imagination could produce. She might have depended on other's description or her own experience of touch for drawing such imaginary pictures in her mind. She also tells her aunt that, considering the situation she is in, her fancy is liable to play tricks on her and she had no eyes to see with or to show her as other people's eyes showed them, when they had taken a false view of things or persons. Since her aunt was not satisfied with that, she stood firm on her views and went on scolding her. So, in order to justify her position and to convince her aunt, Lucilla further discusses a particular antipathy of her aunt, the logic of which she questions at that time. Her aunt had an antipathy for cats just as Lucilla's antipathy for dark colours. Even after knowing that cats were harmless, she could not feel comfortable in the presence of a cat. Lucilla concludes her letter by asking her father, when her own senseless fear of dark colours is set against her aunt's senseless fear of cats, which of them had more right to be angry with the other.

Even if one applies the most modern logic in this case, he or she can understand that this fear of Lucilla is an impossible one in a visually impaired individual, especially if they are impaired by birth. As explained in the earlier part of this chapter, there is a confusion regarding Lucilla's potential to identify light or darkness. However, never does she say in the novel that she can identify colours, either dark or light. So, how is it possible for a candidate who had lost her sight when she was one year old to form such impressions? This strange and

irrational fear which plays a crucial role in the novel is only a figment of Collins' imagination, which he might have primarily constructed to fulfil his fictional necessities and to retain the adventurous tempo of the novel. Lucilla's response on seeing the disfigured face of Oskar, which emerges as an extension of this fear is also something impossible and irrational created by the author's imagination. It is beyond any doubt that one can never recognize colours by touch.

A similar instance of generalization is the mistrust that Madame, Pratolungo bestows on the visually impaired as a whole, when Lucilla asks her servant to read out the letter in secret that was earlier composed by Madame Pratolungo. The following passage is a significant example to understand how prejudiced the author is towards the visually impaired in general.

I pursued my way along the passage--very slowly, I own--and I heard the first sentences of the letter which I had written under Lucilla's dictation, read aloud to her in the old nurse's voice. The incurable suspicion of the blind--always abandoned to the same melancholy distrust of the persons about them; always doubting whether some deceit is not being practiced on them by the happy people who can see--had urged Lucilla, even in the trifling matter of the letter, to put me to the test, behind my back. She was using Zillah's eyes to make sure that I had really written all that she had dictated to me--exactly as, on many an after occasion, she used my eyes to make sure of

Zillah's complete performance of tasks allotted to her in the house. No experience of the faithful devotion of those who live with them ever thoroughly satisfies the blind. Ah, poor things, always in the dark! Always in the dark! (Chapter 11)

This is again a baseless argument. The visually impaired may be a little bit doubtful about the behaviour or intentions of the people whom they meet for the first time or on limited occasions, till they understand them better. However, once the trust is properly established, they will not keep such stupid suspicions in them. The argument that nothing done to the visually impaired in good faith satisfies them is a terrible insult to the community. That in a deeper level stands for not only a social defect but also for an intellectual defect which has to be there as a result of visual impairment. Here Berthold Lowenfeld's observation that the visually impaired as a homogenous community do not suffer from any psychological maladies or defects is worth noticeable. It is again strange that Lucilla does not trust any of her servants and she always needs a second person to spy on those who help her. Thus this notion is obviously something that Collins might have acquired either through his imagination or his social conditioning.

The way Lucilla tries to know Madame Pratolungo is quiet unbelievable and absurd from the point of view of the visually impaired. When she meets Madame Pratolungo for the first time, she asks her permission to feel her face and her body. However, since the visually impaired are not so concerned about

the physical appearance of the people in general, owing to lack of visual exposure, what they usually take into consideration is the voice and other features related to accent, clarity, pitch, volume, beauty of voice and so on. They might show a desire to feel the other person intimately, if it is their partner, children, parents or someone so close. Here, Lucilla repeats the same behaviour even when she meets Oskar and Nugent and it seems to be a trait that the author has attributed to her out of his imagination than any original experience in this regard. Feeling by touch cannot be an adequate substitute for visual perception. In the case of an adventitiously visually impaired person, they may conjure up an image of a new individual they encounter, since they already might have got a clear cut idea about the physical appearance of a person. However, even such people will not perform the kind of ordeal that Lucilla does so frequently.

Another great generalization that the author imposes on the visually impaired is the claim that they lack propriety in behaving on certain situations. One sees Lucilla feeling Oskar and even kissing him against the constant warning of Madame, Pratolungo that there is external presence. She still remains adamant on her behaviour. Madame Pratolungo makes an explanation for the lack of modesty and propriety that Lucilla fails to express. She says,

Remember, in the case of a person of unusually sensitive and impulsive nature: quick, on the most trifling occasions, to feel and to express its feeling in no ordinary degree. What did it mean? It meant that here was one strange side shown to me of the terrible affliction

that darkened her life. It meant that modesty is essentially the growth of our own consciousness of the eyes of others judging us--and that blindness is never bashful, for the one simple reason that blindness cannot see. The most modest girl in existence is bolder with her lover in the dark than in the light. (Chapter 11)

Here again, the bare minimum reality is that one acquires senses like modesty, propriety and control through one's socio-cultural contact and not through one's eyes or ears. Primarily, the claim that Lucilla is always in darkness is not true. Secondly, even assuming while not conceding that she is in darkness, still she might have already acquired enough wisdom on how to behave on public platforms and on private platforms. If one accepts this idea suggested by the author, one has to argue that the visually impaired people are terribly emotionally disturbed and challenged and they lack even the competence to decide and discern the standard of behaviour that they should adopt on different situations. However, in reality the sense of propriety, modesty, sense of control are all culture specific and not vision specific. On another occasion, Madame Pratolungo again says,

The minds of the blind are, by cruel necessity, forced inward on themselves. They live apart from us--ah, how hopelessly far apart!--in their own dark sphere, of which we know nothing. (Chapter 6)

This can be easily understood as a case of abnormalisation, differentiation and to a far extent dehumanization. The age old relationship between the visually

impaired and music is visible in this novel as well. In fact, the only thing that gives Lucilla solace and in which she involves for an extra aberration is playing piano. Maybe, in that age, the scope of involvement for a visually impaired could have been very limited. Yet, this age old association continues even in the present era. The kind of comparison that Madame Pratolungo makes on meeting Lucilla is yet another example of glorification and divinization that people usually attribute to the visually impaired. She says,

She lifted her head--and advanced quickly to meet me with a faint flush on her face, which came and died away again in a moment. I happen to have visited the picture gallery at Dresden in former years. As she approached me, nearer and nearer, I was irresistibly reminded of the gem of that superb collection--the matchless Virgin of Raphael, called "The Madonna di San Sisto." The fair broad forehead; the peculiar fullness of the flesh between the eyebrow and the eyelid; the delicate outline of the lower face; the tender, sensitive lips; the colour of the complexion and the hair--all reflected, with a startling fidelity, the lovely creature of the Dresden picture. (Chapter 3)

Nugent also makes the same astonishment when he sees Lucilla for the first time. In reality, this construct agrees well with David Bolt's observation of how the visually impaired are glorified and made extraordinary by certain writers. Pointing to the extra glorification that people usually attribute to the visually challenged, Bolt writes, "Extraordinary senses constitute the most

obvious example of ostensibly positive stereotyping that, even in our own century, is often aimed at people who have visual impairments” (67). All these are instances of hasty generalization or other such social attitudes that existed at the time of the composition of the works.

Though not in the same degree, Collins’ other novel *The Dead Secret* also consists of instances of ostracism and differentiation. The visually impaired hero of the novel is almost made a muted, dependent, and invalid presence by reducing him into a parasite or a non-existent entity. One such instance of nullification takes place when the bridegroom and the bride are described on entering the Church for their marriage. The narrator says,

Otherwise there was nothing remarkable to observe in them, until they came to the wicket-gate leading into the church-yard; and there the conduct of the young gentleman seemed, at first sight, rather inexplicable. Instead of holding the gate open for the lady to pass through, he hung back, allowed her to open it for herself, waited till she had got to the church-yard side, and then, stretching out his hand over the gate, allowed her to lead him through the entrance, as if he had suddenly changed from a grown man to a helpless little child.

(Book 2 1)

This image of ‘the little child’ who seeks protection is repeated in the novel, highlighting how the grownup man all on a sudden becomes a totally

submissive entity, when he loses his vision. Besides, the fact that the marriage was conducted as a clandestine affair itself tells upon the ignominy and shame that visual impairment was creating among the public in those days. Being in the elite circle, neither the girl nor the boy might have wished to confront such social stigma and sympathy. Here an interpretation befitting to the Dhritarashtra Gandhari myth in *Mahabharata* is worth quoting. The original story is that Gandhari the Princess of Kosala Desha, on seeing her visually impaired husband for the first time on the occasion of her marriage decides to cover her eyes for ever with a scarf, since she does not want to enjoy a pleasure which her would-be husband is denied of forever. However, one is of the view that she might have done so as a result of her frustration in marrying a visually impaired person. It is most likely that she would not have been told in advance that she was to marry a visually impaired person. This argument has more validity when one understands that, if she had kept her eyes opened, there could have been significant changes in the course of many incidents in Mahabharata. Her intervention could have been a great help to her husband in understanding and tackling many situations. Above all, this anecdote tells very clearly that even after being the supremo of the land, how difficult it was for Dhritarashtra to get a suitable spouse.

It is again worth noting that Collins who exhibits much understanding about the visually impaired in *Poor Miss Finch* fails to show the same commitment, in *The Dead Secret*. For example, Leonard Frankland remains as

an invalid and dependent individual throughout his life. He does not attempt any kind of rehabilitation and training. He never uses a cane or Braille in the novel. It is this misery and failure that puts him at the mercy of others to move in and out, when they rest in an Inn for convalescence after Rosamend's delivery. Again, as usual, here also the girl who was ready to marry a visually impaired person is praised in extraordinary terms. "'Bless me!" said Mr. Phippen. "What an extraordinary wife for a blind man!"' (Book 2 Chapter 1). Whereas Rosamend is referred to as an extraordinary wife, Mr. Frankland is simply considered as the blind man. Irrespective of his aristocratic status he has to be satisfied with that casting and objective labelling. Collins also tries to expose how people often stare at the visually impaired people as objects of curiosity. For example, one comes across the following description in the novel.

Certainly not!" interposed Rosamond sharply. She had noticed with her usual quickness of observation that Mr. Munder wanted the delicacy of feeling which ought to have restrained him from staring curiously at his blind master in her presence, and she was unfavourably disposed toward him in consequence. (Book 5 Chapter 3)

The final part of this description clearly demonstrates how the prejudicial and eccentric behaviour of the society towards the visually impaired puts those who accompany them at risk and discomfiture. Rosamend had no other ways to follow except to take her husband out of such situations. On a closer analysis,

one understands that *The Dead Secret* was published in 1856 and *Poor Miss Finch* got released only in 1872. May be within the big gap that elapsed between these publications, Collins might have acquired a more positive view about visual impairment through his social or literary exposure. That could be the reason why he presents such a regressive view about the visually impaired in *The Dead Secret* in comparison with the dignity and identity that he gives to Lucilla of *Poor Miss Finch*.

Since the focus of Susan Glaspell's novel is the agony of adventitious blindness, its prejudices can be simply summed up in the saying that to live as blind is worse than to die. However, in Linda Gillard's novel, one comes across many instances of social prejudice and imagination. In fact, the title *Star Gazing* itself is an extension of a glorified attitude. The novel reveals that the main intention why Keir takes Marianne into the island of Skie is to show her the stars. This seems to be a totally strange and impossible idea from the perspective of a visually impaired person. Being a visually impaired person by birth, Marianne has no clues to the experience of vision. So, how can she be shown the stars? No other experience, either tactile or descriptive could be an adequate substitute to visual perception and sensation. There is an occasion in the novel where, Keir Asks Marianne, whether she had seen any films in her life? Her answer is that she had not, since she was visually impaired by birth. "Have you ever seen any film?' 'No. I've been blind since birth.'" (11). How problematic is it to think that in 2008 a novelist says that the visually impaired cannot see films

since it is primarily a visual medium. Films have other aspects as well, like sound, dialogue, music and so on. The visually impaired can seek external help for clarifying their doubts on visual aspects. Besides, these days, descriptive movies, where everything shown on the screen is described to the visually challenged viewer through an additional voiceover is a reality, though it is yet to gain momentum. So, this dialogue from an educated visually impaired in a developed country, that too in a pretty advanced age only reveals how ignorant is the author about the life of the visually impaired.

As a positive note, however, Gillard exposes a problem with the language that we use, when she refers to seeing. “‘I’ll see you around, maybe.’ ‘Well, you might see me, but I definitely won’t see you. Goodbye’” (6). This passage reveals the difficulty of the visually impaired to identify the presence of a known individual, unless and until they give them some familiar clues, in the form of smell, sound, touch or footstep. As a continuation of this Marianne says,

Has it ever struck you how language favours the sighted? (Of course not, because you can see.) I don't just have a problem seeing, I have a problem talking, trying to find words and phrases appropriate to my experience. Just listen to how people go on: Oh, I see what you mean ... Now look here ... The way I see it ... Reading between the lines ... I didn't see that coming! ... It depends on your point of view. (11)

Here again, Marianne became easily conscious of using the word seeing, since her own consciousness and intellectual makeup has been shaped by the social conditioning she lives in. There are people who ask a visually impaired person, how he or she could see, if they accidentally use the word see. The word see from a technical point of view may have many aspects in it such as establishing your familiarity, relationship, knowing an individual, identifying someone and so on. The sighted society mostly limits it to the aspect of visual identification, when they corner the visually impaired pointing to this linguistic issue. What Marianne tells is nevertheless a reality. In a world which is structured for the sighted, even the language is strongly built by visual metaphors. A sensible visually impaired person finds it very difficult to find out adequate terms to substitute such visual images and visual metaphors.

Gillard also keeps the faulty notion like Collins that the visually impaired are problematic with reference to their imagination and they are more controlled by their imagination than an understanding of reality. Louisa, Marianne's sister, for example, makes the following observation about her sister.

I feel I should explain about my sister Marianne. What you need to understand about Marianne is that, despite the fact that she's blind - perhaps because she's blind - she's always had a very vivid imagination. So certain allowances have to be made, were always made by our parents, doctors, teachers and so on. It was always understood that Marianne lived life in her head - well, what else could

she do, poor thing? She was blind - and the boundaries between fantasy and reality were a little hazy for her at times. (15)

A close reading of this passage can convince any reader of the fact that this illusory association between fantasy and visual impairment is farfetched and product of the imagination of the sighted. One's imagination is always in close contact with the reality he or she experiences. Admittedly, the visually impaired have difficulties with reference to the range and variety of experiences. But that does not mean that they are not discerning to distinguish between reality and imagination and that they lack imagination as opposed to the sighted. The second part of this observation about the tragic fate is yet another extension of the first, which conceives visual impairment as an inescapable doom and destruction. There is yet another passage where the exaggeration again goes almost to the extent of bringing about a dehumanization effect. The Passage goes like this:

“What did you smell? I'm fascinated.' 'Oh, hawthorn blossom, I think.' 'You're kidding me? 'No. It's a good masculine smell. Sharp. Exotic, in an understated way.' She lifts her head and he watches her profile as her delicate nostrils flare, like an animal scenting danger.”

(22)

It is a mythical belief as old as the civilizations that the visually impaired have better smelling ability, memory, hearing and discerning ability, touch sense

and so on. The reality, however, is that all human beings have almost the same kind of abilities with a little individual difference. Since the sense of sight dominates the perception of the sighted, they do not have to use the other senses. But, the visually challenged, being denied the luxury of sight, have to take maximum capital out of the other senses. In fact, the sighted never take into consideration the potential of a sense like kinaesthetic perception. Besides, it is also worth recording that, as mentioned in the previous chapter, people always consider such extra abilities they attribute to the visually impaired as the manifestations of different ability, whereas it is only a different strategy used to accomplish a task. The image of the animal scenting danger comes from the social ostracism and differentiation that lies deep in the author's mind. In all such instances the public fails to acknowledge the view that disability is only a kind of human diversity. Thus, what is visible in all these instances is the gap between the self and the other. The authors concerned use different strategies as observed above to construct the visually impaired as the others. They always try to establish that the visually impaired are different from them in most respects. This othering is similar to the kind of practice that is visible in the case of any other kind of marginalized such as Postcolonial, Dalits, Black, social minorities or sexual minorities.

The understating and stereotypic view that is associated with visual impairment and the discursive strategies of representation are visible in some of the most contemporary works as well. One can read Arundhati Roy's latest

novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* to understand this idea clearly. In the novel, she introduces a visually impaired Imam, to whom she refers to by the term 'The Blind Imam'. This Imam is very close to the protagonist Anjum who is a transgender. She argues that it is their loneliness and lack of companionship which bring them together. However, the most eccentric idea of hers is the discovery that the feeling of the visually impaired due to lack of visual perception is equal to the ignominy and tension faced by a transgender in a traditional society. The following passage from the novel makes it clear.

Then he narrowed his blindgreen eyes and asked in a slygreen whisper: 'Tell me, you people, when you die, where do they bury you? Who bathes the bodies? Who says the prayers?' Anjum said nothing for a long time. Then she leaned across and whispered back, untree-like, 'Imam Sahib, when people speak of colour – red, blue, orange, when they describe the sky at sunset, or moonrise during Ramzaan – what goes through your mind?' Having wounded each other thus, deeply, almost mortally, the two sat quietly side by side on someone's sunny grave, haemorrhaging. (Chapter 1)

It is very interesting to observe that Anjum is able to take her vengeance on the Imam for insulting her by referring to the abandonment and crisis of the transgender after death to receive a proper burial by questioning him about the visual experience that he is badly missing on many occasions including the new

moon of Ramzan. From Arundhati's description one can easily guess that the Imam has been visually impaired for a long time and he is totally isolated on account of that. One does not need extra sensibilities to understand that a visually impaired candidate who continues in that state for a long period is not at all concerned about the impressions he is missing through the absent visual powers. So, such a reference will create no gloom or pessimism to any visually impaired except in the early days of impairment in the case of an adventitiously impaired. Even that feeling gets destroyed once the candidate accepts it as a reality. Hence, it is obvious that this illogical comparison is only a byproduct of the author's imagination, or more precisely an extension of the occulardominant perspective of the intellectual world.

It is again significant that when many of the outcast people like transgender or prostitutes die, it is the same Imam who does the prayer for them. He establishes in fact a special funeral service for them. Thus, the author visualizes the visually impaired only as the share holders of the outcast world and the only people who can have a relation with them is the other outcast like the transgender. It is striking to note that Arundhati Roy makes this caricature at a time when the visually impaired are acting as programmers, engineers and civil servants of various kinds. Even the loneliness that she forcefully imposes on the visually impaired is a reality of the past and at present even the most underprivileged among the visually impaired get a lot of companionship from the society around them.

Here comes the question, what makes the author represent the visually impaired in such an extremely negative way? The answer could be that, being exposed to the most extreme condition of the visually impaired through literature, social conditioning and sometimes a few instances of estrangement and poverty of the visually impaired which she might have directly encountered on the streets, the author's mindset is so fixed that she is not able to portray them in any decent circumstance. It is sure that the modern development and status elevation that the visually impaired enjoy today might not have caught Roy's imagination. Again, the tragedy of this forceful negation is redoubled, when one understands that this is done by Arundhati Roy, one of the most established champions of the marginalized. Thus, as long as people keep the idea that vision is the dominant mode of perception, the gap between the actual visually impaired and the imagined visually impaired and the ostracized visually impaired and the normal visually impaired can never be bridged.

One striking element that wins the attention of a researcher in reading the selected works is the apparent contradictions and conflicts that permeate throughout them while representing the visually impaired. This conflict is of many levels that it is very difficult for even a very comprehensive research to unearth them and to analyse them. It is Kenneth Jernigan who made a valid statement for the first time about these contradictions and conflicts in delineating the features of the visually impaired in his famous speech, "Blindness: Is

Literature against us?" The 1974 Banquet Speech of National Federation of the Blind America

Literary record reveals no single theme or unitary view of the life of the blind. Instead, it displays a bewildering variety of images--often conflicting and contradictory, not only as between different ages or cultures, or among the works of various writers, but even within the pages of a single book. (Jernigan 356)

Here, the idea that even within the pages of a single book, there appears contradictions and conflicts in the representation of the visually impaired deserves special mention. A close reading of the strategies of representation that Collins, Glaspell, and Gillard do makes one accept this statement without much hesitations.

With reference to *Poor Miss Finch*, there are conflicts of many kinds. The first one is regarding Lucilla's ability to perceive light or colours. At one level she is shown as a poor girl utterly devoid of any light and locked in the clutches of darkness. As quoted in a former passage, she herself acknowledges that she has no idea of what is darkness and what is light. But, later in contrary to this, she tells Herr Grosse that she has the ability to identify light and its shades. Similarly, even though she suffers from total absence of sight, she keeps impossible afflictions like the fear of darkness and makes her life very complicated. In one part, she expresses her strong desire to get sight to see her

lover and to come out of her dark world. But simply because of her irrational fear, and the damage that the trifle of the brothers, especially Nugent had done to her, she rejects Grosse's second prospect to regain her sight. It is significant that any impact that Nugent could have made is rendered invalid with their marriage. Even if he is alive, he cannot disturb them anymore and Lucilla can definitely recognize Oskar on all occasions. Besides, Oskar and Madame Pratolungo had already cleared her inhibitions and misunderstandings. So what prevented her from accepting this second offer? From her diary entries, one can understand that she had already been to the experience of sight and she was competent enough to discern things, and even write with her own sight. It is not proper to believe that someone, who had the luxury of sight, would reject a prospect of getting it back at the cost of any trials and tribulations. Here again, it is the fictional necessity of the author and the zest to retain the adventurous tempo that makes him say that Lucilla accepted visual impairment over the prospect of getting her sight back.

A major conflict is visible in portraying Lucilla's character. Madame Pratolungo describes her as the purest creature on the earth. However, what she shows is an utterly irrational, foolish, stubborn and anguish temperament. Even though she is very rich, optimistic, familiar about her ways, educated to some extent, energetic and young. She is always at the mercy of others, lonely, disappointed, confused and helpless. May be it is the society and her circumstances that make her so, then, the other part of her as a competent and

optimistic one has no place in the novel. Lucilla's claim that she wanted to get her sight simply to see Oskar is also not convincing. Though at one part she expresses her confidence that even as a visually impaired person she is confident enough to live, almost in the next instance, one sees her mourning over the cursing and unbearable fate of the visually impaired. Finally, though Lucilla claims that she can easily identify people by touch, she fails constantly to understand the pranks that Oskar and Nugent play on her by impersonating each other. Irrespective of the physical similarities it is possible that there could be very subtle difference between them in terms of their voice, articulation, accent and so on. If Lucilla was as sensible as the author claims, she should have been able to identify such tricks so easily without a second. Here, a complex area is her argument that the sensation that she experiences while holding Nugent and Oskar are different. That can be considered as a valid one. For, even before getting her sight back, she had known Oskar, and his touch or holding can definitely raise the passion in her. Nugent being his brother can never invoke the same feeling, unless and until Lucilla develops such a taste for him consciously. However, the tragedy lies in the fact that till Madame Pratolungo had cleared her inhibitions, she was not able to decide whether her suspicion was right or wrong. This also stands as a valid objection in front of the glorified status that the author gives her. Though the title of the novel is *Poor Miss Finch*, what the author tries to create is an optimistic, positive and pleasing story. So, the title seems to be a little out of focus for this work.

There are a few instances of conflict and contradictions in Collins' other novel *The Dead Secret* as well. The central one is in the characterization of Leonard Frankland. As a visually impaired individual, he remains totally submissive, dependent and vulnerable. But, as an aristocrat, he remains proud, stubborn, and rigid. However, he is forced to come out of his aristocratic temperament to survive in the light of his impairment. There are at least two instances where one could clearly discern his false aristocratic pride. The first one is when he decides to conduct his marriage as a clandestine affair, since he does not want himself to be a public spectacle. The second one is when he says that he does not want Rosamend's inheritance, when it is proven that she is not the original daughter of Captain Treverton. However, the same person remains vulnerable to the mercy of others to move in and out of his lodgings. He is also forced to compromise with Rosamend at the end because, without her he has no existence. So, finally he is even ready to receive the money, which Rosamend's father's brother gives back to her. He never trains himself and gets counselled to improve his melancholy and distress. Collins' insight is very weak in caricaturing him in consideration with Lucilla. Though Leonard asks Rosamend to be controlled on multiple occasions, he himself finds it difficult to do so frequently. Though the author through Dr. Chennery says that Leonard had at last become a happy man after his marriage, one does not see him so, except in his solitude and melancholy. It is his wife who remains happy, active and dominant in the novel.

In *The Glory of the Conquered*, the paradox is there in the very title itself. The question arises, as to whose glory the author is referring to. If it is to the love between Ernestine and Karl, after his visual impairment, one can only discern a Platonic kind of love between them. Even that gets shattered once Karl dies. Thus the title seems to be an exaggeration in the light of the tragic halo that the author wants to create. Again, after he loses his sight, Karl tries to become more philosophical, since he cannot pursue his scientific research. However, the same philosophy fails miserably to give him any optimism or confidence in his own life. At one part, he writes books on philosophy; on the other hand, he suffers from terrible anxieties, loneliness and dies a victim to the same. Like Lenard Frankland, he never goes for any counselling or training to survive the tragedy that befell him. He develops Braille and claims to have done something wonderful but fails to notice the visually challenged can walk with a cane or a trained dog easily. Even with tremendous knowledge and skill, he stops his formal lecture in the University. The author does not offer any convincing reason for Karl's decision to stop his lecture. If he had continued his lecturing, he could have avoided much of the alienation and disappointment that encircles his life. Again, even after being the most loving and lovable partner, Ernestine fails to tell him that he could have continued with lecturing than remaining himself as a dead entity in his house.

In Linda Gillard's *Star Gazing* also certain aspects of contradiction exists, especially in Marianne's character. She is also like Lucilla and Leonard torn

between the alternative images, the competent and the tragic. Though she mourns about her impairment frequently, sometimes, she shows better courage and claims confidence. Sometimes she is scared of blindness and tries to conceal it as far as possible. In her true self, she is desirous, sexually and in terms of her longing for a child. But she shows greater indifference when she gets opportunities for the same. There are conflicting impressions in the novel about her abilities of visual perception as well. The greatest contradiction is that a person with total absence of sight is made to see stars and quaint natural scenery. It is possible for her to enjoy sounds, climate, and other features. But, one cannot think that any of this can give her any visual impressions. She says that she has her own way of doing things and she can get accustomed to new situations quite easily. However, the reality is that as long as she is in the Island of Skie, one sees her a totally dependent person and it is Keir who does everything for her. Even her own confidence in identifying directions deceives her finally falling down in the tree house. Thus the element of conflict may vary in the selected works, but it is sure that either overt or covert, some instances of conflict and contradictions always exist in the representation of the visually impaired in all these novels.

One can also discern certain patterns by which visual impairment gets represented in the literary works. Kenneth Jernigan in his 1974 *Banquet Speech* identifies nine types of such images. They are;- blindness as compensatory or miraculous power; blindness as total tragedy; blindness as foolishness and

helplessness; blindness as unrelieved wickedness and evil; blindness as perfect virtue; blindness as punishment for sin; blindness as abnormality or dehumanization; blindness as purification; and blindness as symbol or parable. (Jernigan 356)

If a close reading of the selected works is attempted, one can identify many of such patterns in them. There is a dominant mood in all these works, however, in certain passages, knowingly or unknowingly, authors deviate slightly in giving different colours to their characters. Though Jernigan speaks only of nine types, there could be other farfetched ones as well. But, most of them converge into one of the above mentioned kinds in temperament and spirit.

The dominant strategy of Collins's *Poor Miss Finch* as explained earlier is to conceive blindness as utter tragedy and helplessness. The title itself suggests this idea. On account of her sympathetic and helpless condition, people usually referred to Lucilla as 'Poor Miss Finch'. The following passage from the novel is the best example to show what a misfortune visual impairment seems to the author. Lucilla says, "Oh, my blindness! My blindness! Oh, God, of all your creatures, the most helpless, the most miserable, is the creature who can't see!" (Chapter 23). The idea that visual impairment is the worst kind of disability as expressed by Lucilla here is an age old one. It controls the perception of many of the public figures even in the contemporary society. One frequently listens to people speaking in public meetings of or for the visually impaired that visual impairment is the most horrible experience in the world and the visually

impaired are the most unlucky by the nature of their fate. Even some of the visually impaired hold this view in their discussions. However, Mr. K. Satyasheelan has a very different opinion about this attitude of the general public. On being asked about this tendency, in the interview that the researcher conducted, he observes that,

I'm of the view that each disability has its own difficulties. I consider visual impairment as a lesser difficulty in comparison with muscular dystrophia or any such problem where the mobility of a candidate is totally lost. Even for hearing impairment, there is the loss of language to a great extent. However, it is very difficult to convince the general public about this issue. I have read in an article that when a survey was conducted among a selected group of women on, given a chance, whether they preferred to marry a visually impaired person or a paralyzed person. It is said that more than eighty percent vouched for the paralyzed and only less than 10 percent stood for the visually impaired. This example tells much on the prejudices that are operational in our society about the world of the visually impaired.

Thus there is no wonder in Lucilla making such a highly eccentric and farfetched view that and it clearly reflects the author's point of view.

At the very beginning itself, Madame Pratolungo describes her ward as a poor fellow living in the dark world. Throughout the novel Lucilla is constantly deceived by different characters and all these aggravate the tragic mood of the

novel. Though the dominant mood of the novel is tragic, there are other facets of visual impairment as suggested by Jernigan also in the novel. For instance, Lucilla's irrational fear of darkness and her lack of modesty in behaviour make her visual impairment almost an abnormal affair. Her way of feeling others and her identification of colours adds an element of foolery in it. Madame Pratolungo also describes her as the purest creature on the earth and this reminds us of Jernigan's idea of 'blindness as virtue and purity'. On another occasion, she describes Lucilla, "I believed her to be then, what I knew her to be afterwards, as pure a creature as ever walked the earth" (Chapter 11). In the next instance, she describes her as an unusually sensitive and impetuous person. Madame Pratolungo's comparison of Lucilla to "The Madonna di San Sisto" also has to be viewed as an instance of glorification and purification. Even in Collins's description of Lucilla's devotion to nurse her injured lover, there is an element of glorification.

In the novel *The Dead Secret also*, visual impairment as tragedy and helplessness attains significance. The following passage is illustrative of this.

Hearing no answer, he rose surprised and uneasy. Moving his poor, helpless, wandering hands to and fro before him in the air, he walked forward a few paces, straight out from the wall against which he had been sitting. A chair, which his hands were not held low enough to touch, stood in his way; and, as he still advanced, he struck his knee sharply against it. A cry burst from Rosamond's lips, as if the pain of

the blow had passed, at the instant of its infliction, from her husband to herself. She was by his side in a moment. "You are not hurt, Lenny," she said, faintly. "No, no." He tried to press his hand on the place where he had struck himself, but she knelt down quickly, and put her own hand there instead, nestling her head against him, while she was on her knees, in a strangely hesitating timid way. He lightly laid the hand which she had intercepted on her shoulder. The moment it touched her, her eyes began to soften; the tears rose in them, and fell slowly one by one down her cheeks. (Book 5 Chapter 5)

This passage is ample enough to understand what a tragic halo and helplessness Collins associates with visual impairment. Since he has not yet developed techniques to survive this void, this kind of emptiness may haunt Lenard throughout his life. The fact that Lenard has a very limited role in the novel does not provide the author with adequate opportunities to make the situation complicated by introducing other dimensions of visual impairment.

It is in Glaspell's novel that the sentimentalisation of visual impairment reaches at its zenith. One can see this death-in-life stereotype associated with visual impairment at its extreme in the Oedipal Trilogy of Sophocles also. The Chorus says in *Oedipus Rex* the following words. "I cannot say that thou hast counselled well, for thou wert better dead than living blind". Glaspell's approach to blindness agrees almost with this view proposed by the Chorus in *Oedipus Rex*. Earnestine does her level best to bring Karl back to his profession.

However, she is asked to go for a rest, before she confides her secret in Karl. All on a sudden, almost as a well executed plan of the author, Karl falls ill and dies. One doubts, if the author's intention was to exterminate Karl the way he did, what could have been the need of all the trials and tribulations that Ernestine went through. Kenneth Jernigan makes the following observation about this end.

For writers such as these, the supposed tragedy of blindness is so unbearable that only two solutions can be imagined: either the victim must be cured or he must be killed. A typical illustration is Susan Glaspell's *The Glory of the Conquered*, of which an unkind critic has written: "It is a rather easy solution of the problem to make her hero die at the end of the book, but probably the author did not know what else to do with him." (360-361)

Even before his death, since he lost his sight, Karl was living almost as dead. So, the author might have felt that it does not matter if he dies. The saddest thing of all this is that she has entitled the novel *Glory of the Conquered*. One fails to understand whose glory she is referring to. The novel does not offer any other aspects of the life of the visually impaired than this groping for direction and total wilderness that encircle Karl's life.

There are sufficient number of passages in the novel to assess how Glaspell looks at visual impairment as a doom and destruction. For example, one comes across the following passage, where Karl ruminates over the impairment that conquered him all on a sudden.

The thing which brought him from under the blow at last was a blinding rage. He wanted to take a revolver and blow his brains out, then and there. He--a man supposed to have a mind! He--counted a master of those very things! And now, what? Manhood, power, himself gone. Stumbling through his days! Useless!--a curse to himself and everyone else. Groping about in the dark--a thing to be pitied and treated well for pity's sake! Cared for--looked after--helped! That beat down the bounds of control. (Chapter 16)

Even “Death like stereotype” as an expression may fail to contain the frustration and tragic agony that lies in these words. Karl’s desire to kill himself may be a daunting consequence of his realization about the loss of his sight. But, to say that his manhood itself is gone on losing his sight is a highly farfetched impression. The basic premise that the author keeps in mind is that the visually impaired are useless from a social point of view and they can only remain as a curse to others. The groping dark figure is a universal stereotype found in popular literary works. David Bolt discusses this in his book, *The Metanarrative About Blindness: A Re-reading of Twentieth Century Anglophone Writing*. As discussed by him, the groping figure does not refer to synaesthesia and lecherousness alone but also to the gait and disempowerment of the visually impaired. Other than the degree of dependency, the agony of impending impairment is glorified here beyond any degree. The strange thing is that Karl

Hubers makes this very agonizing statement long after he is hit with visual impairment. He seems to be not adjusting with his situation at all.

The passage quoted above reminds one of a similar and more disturbing passage in *Samson Agonistes*. In fact this passage conceives visual impairment as an experience worse than death in all respects.

Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
 Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!...
 Inferior to the vilest now become
 Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,
 They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, exposed
 To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
 Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
 In power of others, never in my own;
 Scarce half I seem to live,
 Dead more than half....a moving grave. (*The Portable Milton* 615-
 616)

The description here is almost similar to how Glaspell does with Karl's sentiments. One doubts which of them could be more successful in making visual impairment the most horrible and unbearable experience. While Milton's agonizing unleash is a direct consequence of his own shock and bewilderment that his unexpected impairment might have produced in him, Glaspell's description is more an exaggerated thinking which she might have produced

from her imagination. The imagery is, however, almost similar in both, though Milton's excellence as a poet puts him a little over Glaspell. The basic temperament is anyhow the same. As Kenneth Gernigan observes in his speech, "Is Literature against us", the most striking aspect of this Miltonic quotation is that Milton made such an utter disappointing and frustrating unleash, after he completed his major Epics like *Paradise lost*, *Paradise Regained* and even *Samson Agonistes* in his post impairment days. Naturally one asks the question, what made him do this? It is not simply the disappointment and tragic agony that sightlessness might have imposed on him. But, it is also his involuntary temptation to form his own image in accordance with the general perception about the impaired which makes him create such a death knell on visual impairment. The visually challenged usually try to see themselves as how those around them view them. (Jernigan 359-360)

In Linda Gillard's *Star Gazing*, though the dominant mood is tragic, she seems to be holding an optimistic view as well that the visually challenged can survive effectively and live confidently as the non challenged people. She tries to express the various figures that a visually challenged person goes through such as, lack of companionship, loneliness, lack of understanding from the part of society and so on. However, the novel ends in an optimistic mood, where Marianne decides to marry Keir and one foresees a comfortable life ahead for them. When Louisa says that Marianne cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality and she has to be given some reservations for that, Gillard seems to be

highlighting the abnormality associated with visual impairment. On multiple occasions, one comes across situations where the helplessness associated with visual impairment is brought into light. Marianne's search for the lost keys and gloves, her feelings on multiple occasions that she was being watched but she could not identify it, her anxieties on being a mother without visual impairment, all stand as testimonies to the author's tragic perception of visual impairment. Again, the comparison of Marianne to an animal scenting danger is also slightly on the abnormal point of view. Thus Gillard and Collins especially in *Poor Miss Finch*, shows some positive trends in representing visual impairment irrespective of the conditioning that mostly grip them, when they consider visual impairment for fictional requirement.

A logical conclusion that one can reach from this analysis is that, even though there are many shades in representing the visually impaired in literature as pointed out by Jernigan, and as practiced by the selected authors, they mainly belong to two classes, glorification and nullification. Either they are given extraordinary powers or they are stripped of all qualities of an average human being and converted into a nonexistent being. Such figures might evoke fun, sorrow, wonder, hatred and so on, depending upon the situation they emerge from. Again, the basic political idea that emerges from either of these categorizations is that the visually impaired are different. Since the sighted basically believe that eyes are the gateways to knowledge, and eighty percent of man's information is gathered through them, they reach the conclusion that

those who lack visual perception are totally different from them and in an extended sense are not equal to them in all respects. So, the momentary impressions that such authors create in the appreciators are not temporary ones, but, they stay deep in the minds of them. Even after frequent interventions and corrections, the general public is not ready to part with their notions, which they might have got through literary or social conditioning.

As an example, one can take the situation in the famous Malayalam Film, *Vasanthiyum Lakshmiyum Pinne Njanum* directed by Vinayan. In the film, one can see an affair between the visually impaired hero and the hearing impaired heroine. Most of the viewers considered this film as a reality plausible and acknowledged the director and actors for their skills. They could not even think that love takes place only between those who can communicate with each other. The visually impaired hero cannot understand the sign language of the heroine and she cannot reciprocate his speech. Even when a competent authority points to this irregularity, the public is not ready to take it that way. They may finally justify it in such a way that anything is possible in films. So, the unchallengeable premise is that such glorifications and nullifications can influence even the most sensible among our readers and authors.

Again, it is also interesting, in this context, to look at how people in general observe the construction of Dritharashtra of *Mahabharatha*. Though the real intention in creating him is to exemplify the emotional failure of an individual, people always fail to identify the link between his emotional failure

and his visual impairment and take his visual impairment for an absolute reality. For example, Dritharashtra fails to distinguish between Bheema and his statue, as he tries to kill him by embracing him. Most people associate this failure to his visual impairment. But, the actual reason is his frozen state and lack of sense due to his surrender to the extreme level of anger and hatred. Thus the readers always miss the key point in such symbolic representations. It is however, another shocking reality that wherever visual impairment is used symbolically, it is all negative.

Kenneth Jernigan quotes the example of Laura E Richards and her book *Melody* to prove this point. Melody as a visually impaired girl is gifted with extraordinary, unbelievable and magical skills that she remains a baffling mystery. As Jernigan observes, Melody the visually impaired child touches life with her hand and discerns everything by her touch. She has the extraordinary skill of knowing every tree of the forest by its bark and could also understand when the trees got blossomed. Even a dog or cat in the village would leave their master at a call from melody. She is not simply an embodiment of virtue. But, she is also blessed with extraordinary magical powers. She performs the most unbelievable things like rescuing a baby from a burning building and cures the sick by the magical power of her singing. She could even liberate the Alcoholics from the clutches of the drink.

Jernigan writes,

It is passing strange, and what is strangest of all is that this absurd creature is the invention of Laura Richards, the daughter of Samuel Gridley Howe, a pioneer educator of the blind. Like Milton, Mrs. Richards knew better. She was betrayed by the forces of tradition and custom, of folklore and literature. In turn she betrayed herself and the blind, and gave reinforcement to the stereotype. Worst of all, she doubtless never knew what she had done, and thought of herself as a benefactor of the blind and a champion of their cause. (363)

One of the most important factors which makes a significant influence in constructing the strategies of representation is the social ethos of an era. As Jernigan says, the social ethos of an age plays a fundamental role in deciding the pattern of representation the visually impaired receives. The main objective of authors is to satisfy their fictional necessities by creating characters who are potentially capable of doing that. In doing so, they are least bothered about the kind of damage that their representations can put on the community thus glorified or nullified.

This idea can be further realized by looking at two things in the context of the selected works. The first one is to examine how informed are the authors about the social, biological and cultural particulars of the visually impaired and whether their characters are mere illusory ones born out of the figment of their imagination? Along with that, one must also see whether writing about the visually impaired is a purport of the author in the context of the fiction selected.

The second thing is to examine what type of books are the works under consideration and how vital is the role of the visually impaired characters in those books in securing their fictional goals. One can see that these aspects function as complementary links in the selected works.

With reference to Wilkie Collins, one understands that he had the opportunity to read *Diderot's letter* on visual impairment one of the accepted and standard documents of his times. In his note of dedication to Mrs Eliot Francis Dickinson, whom he addresses as Mrs Eliot, Collins makes it clear that representing visual impairment is one of his main goals in *Poor Miss Finch*. He writes,

More than one charming blind girl, in fiction and in the drama, has preceded "Poor Miss Finch." But, so far as I know, blindness in these cases has been always exhibited, more or less exclusively, from the ideal and the sentimental point of view. The attempt here made is to appeal to an interest of another kind, by exhibiting blindness as it really is. I have carefully gathered the information necessary to the execution of this purpose from competent authorities of all sorts.

Whenever "Lucilla" acts or speaks in these pages, with reference to her blindness, she is doing or saying what persons afflicted as she is have done or said before her. (Note of Dedication)

However, Collins is generally known for his adventurous novels and even in this novel he tries to retain the same trend. In order to do that, he includes

many imaginary and fictitious elements in the story to make it more readable and maintain suspense. For example, Oskar's disfigurement after his treatment, Lucilla's initial horror after seeing Oskar, her abnormal fear of darkness and the eccentric character of Jix are all done to attain this purpose. Irrespective of its failures in many levels Jernigan and Jessica L. Langworthy identify *Poor Miss Finch* as a better book in representing the visually impaired. From a close reading, one can understand that, though Collins' ostensible claim in writing the book is to represent the visually impaired, he uses visual impairment more as a fictional device than something he chose out of his social commitment.

In the next novel, *The Dead Secret*, this proposed sympathy of Collins is not seen in creating Lenard Frankland. Mr. Frankland does not show any competence or confidence that Lucilla shows. He simply remains a helpless, tragic and absent figure. He is only created with the purpose of establishing Rosamend as a strong and towering character. Rosamend is the actual protagonist of the story and Lenard remains a figure for Rosamend to establish her full self. Without her, he does not have identity at all., He is forced to submit before her at the end of the novel even his false pride.

Regarding the novel of Susan Glaspell, one is not sure whether she had any relationship with the visually impaired. However, from a quick glance through the works, one can reach the premise that she is not likely to have any relationship. The novel is already noted for certain failures that it suffers in terms of the integrity and logic of the plot. First of all, the author does not give a

full description of Karl's work, its nature is vague. His illness is not properly defined also. Finally, too much banging on emotional distress is unbearable for the reader. The novel is praised as a Romantic thriller and its most important aspect is Ernestine's dedication to Karl. Karl does not play any significant deeds in the novel since he loses his vision. He remains a figure in the dark, groping for direction and support. Whatever he attempts—such as his book, his Braille invention—all fall short of accomplishing the expected result. He occupies only a very small part of the narration and it is Ernestine who occupies and controls the reader's thoughts mostly. From all these, one can understand that Karl's impairment was not at all a significant factor for the author other than that it stood as a ground to justify the Platonic devotion and sacrifice that Ernestine showed for him. Karl was thus only a fictional entity created in order to carve Ernestine, the extraordinary, heroic and ideal.

With Respect to Linda Gillard also, one understands that she had no prior experience of being with the visually impaired. In a facebook review she writes,

I decided I would write about the landscape, but from an unusual point of view, or rather no point of view. I would make my heroine blind - and not just blind, but congenitally blind. She would have no visual frame of reference at all. Could it be done? I didn't know. I wasn't blind or visually impaired and I didn't even know anyone who was, but I thought it might be interesting to write about landscape

from a non-visual angle. It would also develop my writing in a new direction. (Star Gazing, A novel by Linda Gillard)

From this response one can reach the following conclusions. Firstly, according to her, the visually impaired does not have a point of view at all, and a point of view is closely related to physical vision. Secondly, though she had done a little bit of research, she had no estimable contact or ideas about the visually impaired and her book is primarily created out of her imagination. Finally, her intention in writing this novel is to experiment with a new direction of writing. The exaggerations, confusions and conflicts in the novel stand as testimonies to her lack of knowledge about the visually impaired. She says that Marianne does not have any visual frame of reference. But one can see that her visual frame of reference is very confusing. Even the idea of exposing stars to a visually impaired seems to be absurd. So here as well, Marianne the visually impaired, is constructed as an offshoot of her fictional creativity and necessity. However, may be on account of her research, she introduces some very important issues that the visually impaired go through, which most authors fail to notice and she has to be given credits for that. Again, it is striking that she fails to understand what all are the trends that regulate the life of the visually impaired in the age when she wrote the novel. Thus rather than giving a recognition and service to the visually impaired by selecting them for their fictional requirements, these authors are in a sense doing a profound disservice to them by making them what they are not.

From a theoretical point of view, one can argue that the selected authors are holding an ‘ocularcentric’ and ‘ocularnormative’ perspective aiming at the creation of certain shades of metanarratives about visual impairment.

Ocularnormativism and Ocularcentrism are phrases that David Bolt introduces in his book, *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Re-reading of Twentieth-Century Anglophone Writing*. Metanarrative about visual impairment is a concept that he speaks of as a central hypothesis in his book. By Ocularnormativism, Bolt means “the mass or institutionalised endorsement of visual necessity” (5). In other words it “denotes the effect: the perpetuation of the conclusion that the supreme means of perception is necessarily visual” (15). While ocularcentrism “denotes a perspective--and, by extension, a subject position--that is dominated by vision, as is illustrated with reference to language and metaphor” (17). When one reads the selected works, it is possible to come across umpteen examples where visual necessity is stressed and it is concerned as the supreme means of perception. In fact Gillard in her facebook post later published in Website considers the point of view of her novel as no point of view at all, since her protagonist lacks vision. Madame Pratolungo also holds a similar view about Lucilla that her perspective is damaged since she lacks vision. Karl and Lenard are not to be even discussed, for they seem to be dead after the loss of their sight. As in our own common language, the works concerned are also dominated by visual metaphors. Even when Gillard wants her protagonist to be a person of no sight, the metaphors she uses are typically vision oriented.

For example when Marianne says, “I tell sceptics and doubters that I go to the opera because opera pours a vision of a wider world into my ears in a way that no other art form that I can access does” (7). She does not say the experience of a wider world, but still have recourse to the term vision, something strictly ocularcentric in its construction. Similarly when Keir asks Marianne whether she had ever seen any film, she rejects it saying she is visually impaired. Again, the film is not only a visual art, it has to be perceived by auditory clues as well. Even if one uses the term see for that activity, it consists of all the dimensions related to the process of experiencing. When Madame Pratolungo says that Lucilla had one great pleasure to illumine her darkness, that is playing piano. She again imposes a visual metaphor on Lucilla. To such ocularnormative and ocularcentric narrators, absence of light or vision means simply an existence without significance. Whatever a person who lacks vision does is not significant and meaningful and such people in fact have no ways to create meanings in their life. In each of the works under scrutiny, one can come across many such metaphors and fixations.

By the term ‘Metanarrative about blindness’ Bolt refers to how cultural representations define and construct the blind or the visually impaired. In other words, he means “overriding narrative that seems to displace agency” (Bolt 10). As elucidated by Julia Miel Rodas in her book, *On Blindness* 2009, “blindness is always a mediated experience, informed, even defined by language and culture” (129). Thus he tries to establish the logic that visual impairment as it is

encountered today in most spheres is a by-product of the cultural imagination of the society.

When one concludes reading the selected works from a social point of view, he or she gets the idea that as suggested by Bolt, it is the cultural imagination of the author which is pivotal in creating the challenged characters. In order to stretch their canvas, they give emphasis to what they have got through social conditioning and cultural wisdom and very seldom try to verify whether such images or constructs have any resemblance to the original experience of the visually impaired. This cultural imagination is the obvious reason why 'visual impairment is darkness,' remains as an unchallengeable gospel of the mainstream academia even in the present scenario. The solution lies in creating a new literature and research paradigm which ignores and analyses such outmoded images and constructs and suggest alternatives giving accentuation to the original experience and need of the challenged people such as the visually impaired. The researcher's humble attempt here is also towards that direction.

Chapter 3

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT: A MICROCOSMIC POINT OF VIEW

In the last chapter, the main attempt was to analyse strategies of representation of the visually impaired from a social perspective. In this chapter, however, the attempt is to analyse the approach the issue from an individual's point of view, i.e. to look at those aspects of visual impairment and its related issues the authors present in their works from the point of view of an individual who suffers from the impairment. An analysis of this kind is problematic, since one is not sure of what all should be the parameters that are to be incorporated in such a study. However, being a visually impaired person by birth, some of the experiences of the researcher themselves help him in deciding the parameters that are incorporated here.

One of the first points to be examined is what is the nature of the impairment suffered by the visually impaired characters who are represented in the selected works and whether it is congenital or adventitiously created. With reference to the period at which the impairment strikes an individual, visual impairment can be classified as congenital and adventitious. In the selected works, Lucilla and Marianne the two female characters are visually impaired congenitally and Lenard and Karl are visually impaired adventitiously.

While congenital visual impairment refers to the acquisition of visual impairment by birth, the adventitious visually impaired refers to those visually

impaired people who become so in the course of their life, either at an early age or at a later part of their life. If visual impairment conquers a person before he becomes 4 or 5, it could be almost equal to congenital visual impairment. However, becoming a victim of visual impairment after his 10th or 15th year could be very problematic as it needs much fortitude and dedication to survive. An article entitled, “Are you Blind or Blind”, published in the *Caribbean Vision* of June 1987 discusses this issue very convincingly and comprehensively. The article argues that one must make a clear cut difference between the congenitally blind and the adventitiously blind.

For the very simple reason that it makes a world of a difference for a person to have been normally sighted for a long time during his or her life or not! And, then again: if the onset of blindness or visual impairment came at a very early age, or in old age or at middle age the psychological and practical implications will be completely different. (“Are You Blind or Blind”)

In the contemporary world, the number of adventitiously visually impaired is higher than that of the congenitally visually impaired especially among the middle aged and the old. The later the onset of visual impairment, the stronger is the negative attitude in a candidate towards it and as a consequence the more difficult the process of adaptation and acceptance. The perception of the congenitally visually impaired of his environment could be slightly problematic, since he suffers from reduction or limitations in the levels and

ranges of experience. A congenitally visually impaired person if not properly trained can have a withdrawal tendency and a negative temperament to shrink away from the mainstream. However, the congenitally visually impaired show better aspiration and dedication to group together and to fight for their rights and necessities. Most of the NGOs for the visually challenged are run by the congenitally challenged. Above all, if given the same training and attention, the congenitally visually challenged show more confidence and perform better than the adventitiously impaired. (“Are You Blind or Blind”)

Mr. K. Satyasheelan in an interview holds the view that one cannot conclude that either of the categories have got better survival skills than the other. According to him, the most important factor in challenging visual impairment is how one can use his or her residual abilities. So, if a candidate receives right guidance and training, he or she can develop right skills and conquer all hurdles. However, if the initial guidance itself is wrong, people thus guided could be the most unproductive people. It is felt that this point of view of Satyasheelan is very correct and the experience of many people including Mr. Satyasheelan itself acts as testimony to this fact.

In the selected works one can see that Lucilla and Marianne as congenitally visually impaired show better confidence and zest for survival than Karl and Lenard the adventitiously impaired. Both Marianne and Lucilla are confident enough to manage their own affairs and their level of dependency is considerably less. They both have developed skills enough to survive and show

better attitude for challenging the hurdles before them. However, ever since the other are hit by impairment, they both lose their confidence and their existence depends on the charity and generosity of others. Even after being one of the most brilliant Scientists of his time, Karl is not able to proceed with at least his lectures in the University. He seems to be left alone in the darkness and like Lenard he is also constantly hit by a kind of gloom and pessimism. While the perception of Karl and Lenard about their surroundings is better, that of Lucilla and Marianne is slightly reduced, since both of them had lost their vision before they were of an age, where they could take in any parameters related to visual perception. In Lucilla's case, she lost her sight at the age of one and it is almost congenital impairment itself. Both Marianne and Lucilla acknowledge that they lack any impressions about colour, though they have their own strange fantasies and abnormal conceptions about colours.

One of the serious failures that the authors try to associate with the congenitally impaired is that it is difficult for them to distinguish between imagination and reality. In the case of Lucilla and Marianne one can see many strange instances where this issue creates serious challenges. However, this idea seems to be a baseless one. One's imagination is closely related to the reality he or she experiences. For instance, only if one knows certain shades of colour, he or she can make imaginative aspects around the world of colours. Again, if congenitally impaired, one will be least bothered about physical aspects such as colour, appearance, beauty and so on. If conscious, he or she may try to make

oneself perfect with reference to one's appearance, but they never are anxious about how the others look like or what colour the attires of the others are. Hence, Lucilla's way of feeling Madame Pratolungo or Oskar and Marianne's certain behavioural patterns bear no resemblance to reality.

The reason why Karl and Lenard remain dead personalities is that they do not receive any counselling or guidance on how to adjust with their impairment. Certain scholars discuss the different stages of adjustment that an adventitiously impaired person has to go through in order to accept his tragedy and to lead a normal life. Tuttle and Tuttle in their article "Self-esteem and Adjusting With Blindness; The Process of Responding to Life's Demands", 1996 identifies seven phases in an individual's adjustment to visual impairment such as Trauma, Physical or Social, Shock and Denial, Mourning and Withdrawal, Succumbing and Depression, Reassessment and Reaffirmation, Coping and Mobilization, Self-Acceptance and Self-Esteem. Most other experts are of the view that one cannot say how long a client has to be through this process of adjustment. The support offered by the family members and other well-wishers play a pivotal role in this process of transformation. Though most clients consider the onset of visual impairment or a similar tragedy that suddenly befall them as an inescapable doom, the right counselling, the right support and the right training can restore their confidence and make them rehabilitated in an agreeably short time itself. Connecting such clients to those who had similar fate and had

challenged it positively is an effective strategy in this context to boost their morale. (Tuttle and Tuttle)

In the case of Lenard for example, he never accepts his impairment as a reality and he frequently memorises the good old days when he had vision. He is never led into a therapist who could give him right directions and guidance. He never receives training to use a cane or to use Braille. Though Karl uses Braille, he never identifies it as a potential tool for survival and he also cannot walk alone. Both of them are much worried about the impressions that people may make on them when they are seen as visually impaired. Karl's decision to stop lecturing and Lenard's decision to conduct his wedding as a clandestine affair may perhaps be due to this fear of social ignominy. "Ernestine, light's a great thing. Light's the great thing. I never knew that until I went blind. You have to stay a long time in the darkness to know just what it is light means" (Chapter 40). This dialogue of Karl is a testimony to see how depressed he is about the loss of his vision and he never progresses beyond this state. In fact, the author does not think him fit to go beyond this mourning stage. That could be the reason why having no alternatives left she has to kill him in a most mysterious way. The novel was published in 1909 and all the available historical records demonstrate that by that age, there were ample mechanisms and strategies to empower and rehabilitate the adventitiously impaired, but that fact might perhaps have not caught the attention of the author.

Similarly in a conversation with his wife, Lenard Frankland discusses some of his impressions about his wife before he lost his vision.

“Do I remember, Rosamond! My last look at your face has painted your portrait in my memory in colors that can never change. I have many pictures in my mind, but your picture is the clearest and brightest of all.” “And it is the picture of me at my best--painted in my youth, dear, when my face was always confessing how I loved you, though my lips said nothing.” (Book 2 Chapter 3)

It is significant that his wife becomes closer to him and he has to depend on her more after he loses his vision. But, what he keeps alive in his mind is his visual memories. He also always remains in the mourning phase and never reaches the accepting or affirming type.

I was prompted to start collecting new material when I had a dream in which I was falling from a high tower and landing on the shore, crushed between the land and the sea, yet alive. This dream seemed to speak of my position on the frontier between sight and blindness. I was, of course, completely blind and yet I had not been blind from birth. My memories were those of a passage over the frontier. The awareness that I had passed over this frontier seemed to stimulate a more positive experience of blindness, in which I was able to explore in a more creative way the gifts of hearing and touch. I was able to

distinguish more clearly the state of blindness as such and the experience of loss which was associated with leaving sight. (Hull Xi)

The passage quoted from the introduction to the book, *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness*, by John Hull implies clearly that it is possible for an adventitiously impaired to get rehabilitated and empowered. The Positive confidence of which he speaks is something that both Karl and Lenard miss badly. Again in the book, *Coping with Blindness Personal Tales of Blindness Rehabilitation*, Alvin Roberts presents a list of case studies where the candidates who lose their vision at a later part of their life show tremendous degree of survival and positive attitude in their life. In his Preface he says:

After forty years of enabling blind people to cope with the challenges of living in a world of seeing people and striving to remove societal barriers so that the blind could fully participate, I could not write a book that did not convey a social message or intent. My intent (or, at least, my hope) is that through these stories, some of the 1.7 million Americans who are blind or are in the process of losing their vision will be reassured that blindness need not be the end of active life but rather the beginning of a life in which they will depend on their residual senses. I hope that this reassurance will be conveyed by the effectiveness with which the teachers and counsellors portrayed in these narratives assist visually impaired persons to re-enter the mainstream of society. (Preface)

Clearly, the most essential ingredient for an adventitiously impaired candidate to survive as shown above is to have the right kind of guidance and the right kind of counselling. Such a candidate must be told about the importance of accepting his disability and should be made aware of adequate techniques of survival. If possible they must also be connected to people who have had similar experiences. However, giving the wrong kind of guidance and counselling will be the most horrible thing. In our own time one can see a series of Medical professionals whose main preoccupation is to make their fortune by exploiting such adventitiously afflicted people. Such pseudo-physicians always try to play with the hope of such adventitiously afflicted people by giving them wrong and illusive promises that they will be able to restore their vision by continuing their treatment. However, the first thing that a person who shows symptoms of losing his vision has to understand is that, there is every possibility that he may become a totally visually impaired person in a short time.

One author who is successful in presenting a positive view about the post impairment trauma is Rabindranath Tagore. In the story, "Vision", which appears in his collection *Hungry Storm and Other Stories*, he introduces a lady who loses her sight after a post delivery ailment. However, as she loses her sight, she develops a strange sensation that she has got a divine stature and she cannot be happy as a wife. Many people ask her to allow her husband to marry a second time. Initially she seems to agree. But when a distant Aunt of hers brings a girl into her house, she understands the mistake she had committed and the

meaninglessness of her sensation. Irrespective of this strange sensation of her, she suffers no difficulties in managing her household chores and other duties. The new girl, however, soon realizes that this strange fancy of the lady is only a sudden effect of her loss and it can be solved soon.

Though her husband was tempted by the offer of a second marriage, in the face of his wife's resistance he also becomes doubtful. Finally, the girl marries the lady's brother and the visually challenged lady and her husband realize that there is nothing problematic about the wife being blind and they can still lead a happy life. The lady acknowledges that she is not a goddess but only a human being, the wife of her husband. To quote a passage from the story,

“In that moment of self-revelation I knew that I could have no happiness except with you. You are a Goddess.” I laughed and cried at the same time, and said: "No, no, no! I am not going to be a Goddess any longer I am simply your own little wife. I am an ordinary woman." "Dearest," he replied, "I have also something I want to say to you. Never again put me to shame by calling me your God." (The Vision)

It is possible that if someone comes across a gruesome tragedy like visual impairment in a quite unexpected moment of his or her life, it may create in the individual concerned, some strange feelings like being cursed, deified, heightened and so on. But, if they go through the right stage of counselling either

through an external agent, or by self-introspection and self-counselling, the afflicted people can correct such delusions. One wonders, how Tagore might have secured such a deep insight into the working of the mind of an individual who goes through such a terrible fate. His portrayal and representation are true to reality in all respects.

A more pragmatic instance of successfully challenging visual impairment is visible in the case of Georgekutty Karepparampil, one of the pioneers of the visually impaired in Kerala. In an interview with him that the researcher conducted on 12 May 2014 and published in *I vs Eye: An Anthology of the Visually Impaired* he explains clearly what the initial feelings that he went through were on losing his sight and how his family took it. To the researcher's question how he did remember the initial experiences he had, as he lost his vision, Mr. Goergekutty replies,

Even though mine was a case of gradual visual degradation, in the initial stage itself I had to resign my job as the residual vision prevented me from going on as a teacher. Since I lost both my job and my sight at the same time I felt like being in an unknown land. I was not aware of any opportunities for the visually challenged to survive. I was totally frustrated. I was the sole hope of my family. The sudden handicap that enveloped me put them to a deep distress. All this redoubled my agony and sufferings. (214)

One wonders whether it is the same Georgekutty who had considered his visual impairment almost a death knell who could publish the most number of books from among the visually impaired in Kerala. He had the fortune to visit more than five or six foreign countries. He had been the General Secretary of Kerala Federation of the Blind, the largest non-profit charitable organization of, by and for the visually impaired for about 35 years. It is significant that in all those years he was elected unopposed. He reveals his fortune to meet The Pope, Hon. John Paul II, as the best moment of his life in the interview. He was honoured by many national and international agencies including the President of India for his commendable performance in the service sector. Here again, it can be very confidently argued that if given the right training, guidance and confidence, an adventitiously visually impaired can reach up to any level. Some of them can even come above the normally underscored positive confidence of the congenitally challenged. Mr. Georgekutty, through his unique accomplishments and irreplaceable hold in the visually impaired community in India, remains an embodiment of this zest and enthusiasm for survival.

While Glaspell discusses the trauma of an individual on losing his sight, Wilkie Collins represents in *Poor Miss Finch*, the experience of an individual gaining sight. Both accounts seem to be remarkably good, though there are slight degrees of exaggerations in both. In the case of Karl, he was developing a kind of distress ever since he had tension and itching in his eyes. He had almost felt being dead, on the day he confirmed that he was going visually impaired forever.

He could not believe it. His next greatest anxiety was to inform Ernestine about the same. He had to wait long before he did that. Till he died, he was not able to come out of the dejection and distress caused by the loss of his vision. Again, his desire for sight, and his panic about its loss can be well understood from his request to Ernestine to give him her pictures, to have a final glance of it before his sight went for ever. He was not supposed to use his eyes for anything at that juncture, since they were badly injured. He was very much aware of the same. It was his dying thirst to see whatever he could, before his sight went down for ever that compels him to see those pictures so meticulously with so much risk. May be he considered it very important, since they were done by his wife. In all these the agony and torment of a person who loses his vision is remarkably portrayed. But, from the point of view of a visually impaired, it seems that the author is exaggerating the danger of the impending visual impairment as Premlal the famous Malayalam Film director does in his film *Aathmakatha*.

In the film *Attmakatha*, one can see the frustrations and consternations of a father who is visually impaired by birth, when he realises that his only daughter is to lose her sight forever. Even after leading a most challenging life fighting with his disability and the subsequent impoverishment, it is he among all others, who is most panic stricken about this loss. Such an attitude from an experienced person shown in such most extreme level can induce large degree of fear and sometimes aversion towards visual impairment in the spectators.

Many critics have praised Collins for the dexterity and effectiveness with which he manifests Lucilla's feelings, doubts, anxieties, confusions and elations on gaining her sight. In 1963 Richard Langton Gregory, M.A., F.R.M.S. Fellow of Corpus Christie College and Lecturer in Experimental Psychology in the University of Cambridge and Jean G. Wallace, B. Com. Edin. lately Research Assistant, Cambridge Psychological Laboratory had conducted a case study about the History and progress of a man effectively totally visually impaired from birth, who recovers his sight at the age of 52. The slow and laborious process and the emotional frustrations that they identify in such an individual is almost what Lucilla goes through. Collins here shows extraordinary abilities in understanding the problems of such an individual and does the description of this part with a lot of originality. He has the keenness and originality of a modern Medical Professional in establishing that one's physical recovery is closely related to his or her mental health. Lucilla could have avoided the tragedy of losing her sight, if she had someone like Madame, Pratolungo with her during her convalescence. Again, it is striking to note that Collins through Herr Grose suggests a sea side as the best location for her visual recovery. In fact the case of Lucilla's recovery and the creation of Herr Grose made many readers think that Collins had made it out of an original physician. The demand for his whereabouts was of such a high degree that Collins had to clarify in the second edition that Grose and his treatment were only something born out of his imagination.

Another fact worth examining is the nature of the impairment of the characters under study with reference to the visual acuity they enjoy, whether they are partially sighted or those who suffered from the total absence of sight. Both the categories have their own issues and privileges. While the totally visually impaired have no sight left, they soon get accustomed to their reality and face less identity crisis than the partially visually impaired. They express better confidence and show more zest for survival. However, in the case of the partially sighted, it depends on the degree of their residual vision. If someone has a considerably good vision, he or she always takes advantage over the totally challenged and perform well in most respects. For example, a candidate with the ability to read and write or whose residual vision allows him or her to travel alone can outdo the totally challenged in the usual business of life. But if the residual vision is comparatively low, it creates many problems to a candidate. Though such a candidate often tries to identify himself with the partially sighted, in the pragmatic level he is likely to encounter many practical difficulties and this will in turn pose many challenges such as an identity crisis. He will be somewhere between the totally challenged and the partially challenged.

All the characters under scrutiny are totally visually challenged. Though Lucilla and Marianne claim to have some kind of visual perception, either as a possible reality or due to the misconception of the authors, by virtue of their abilities, they also belong to the totally challenged category itself. Even an adventitiously afflicted individual like Karl tries to improve his conditions in

possible ways, though it does not fall on the right track. The only exception to the survival zest of the totally challenged is Lenard Frankland. It could probably be the function he needs to play in the literary environment that makes the author create him in this most sympathetic framework. It seems that fictionally the totally challenged offers better scope and significance than the partially sighted, since the room for imagination and fictionality they provide could be of a more convincing and effective degree. This could be the reason why most of the visually challenged characters in the fictional realm are totally visually challenged.

Visual impairment creates different challenges or losses in an individual. It could be indeed interesting to know, how far the authors under analysis have succeeded in revealing these challenges. Though all of them try to discuss some of the important losses or challenges of visual impairment, either overtly or covertly, it is Linda Gillard who shows a greater ability in understanding the real limitations of visual impairment. Though she acknowledges that she had done very little research in the field and she had no exposure to the world of the visually impaired, she incorporates in her book even some of the very minute and innermost challenges that visual impairment creates in an individual.

Different scholars have looked at the challenges of visual impairment in different ways. One of the earliest authors, who had made scholarly observations about the losses of visual impairment, is Father Thomas Carroll. His book, *Blindness, What It Is, What It Does and How to Live With It* is an oft quoted

book in Scientific studies about visual impairment. The concept of rehabilitation put forward by him is called ‘perceptual rehabilitation’. Robert Amendala in his article “Perceptual Rehabilitation: The Replication of Visual Perception Through Nonocular Sensory Perceptions”, introduces Carroll’s approach to the rehabilitations. He calls it perceptual rehabilitation. He states that

Perceptual rehabilitation is a fundamentally new approach to countering the multiple disabilities generated by blindness. Specifically, it is concerned with replicating to an effective degree, through nonocular means, the capability of discerning those aspects of environment normally perceived through the seven elemental perceptions constituting the sense of sight--the perceptions of light, color, field, depth, imagery, form, and motion. (45-46)

Carroll identifies 20 losses that a visually challenged person suffers from. Brenden Tedric in his article “Adjustment, Losses and Positive Attitude: Dealing With Vision Impairment and Blindness” elucidates these losses and divides them into six major areas such as Basic Losses to Psychological Security, Losses in Basic skills, Losses in Communication, Losses in Appreciation, Losses concerning Occupational and Financial status and Resulting losses to the whole personality. Being a totally visually challenged person by birth, the researcher feels that Carroll’s analysis about the losses of visual impairment is fallacious to a great extent. He tries to expand his ideas into farfetched ranges by subdividing many areas that could be well expressed in a few sentences. For example,

Carroll's category called the losses in appreciation is only an imaginary one. Even without many additions in perception or accommodation, the visually challenged are appreciating the world beautifully in many possible ways. The subdivisions of the losses in appreciation such as loss of physical integrity, loss of the visual perception of the pleasurable, loss of confidence in the remaining senses, loss of the visual perception of the beautiful, loss of reality, contact with environment and loss of visual background are only repetitions of the same idea. In making such a strange classification, he tries to underscore the ocularnormative idea that visual perception is the most authentic perception in the world and in its absence an individual is an insignificant entity. Many scholars and commentators have referred to the lacuna in Carroll's perceptions, since he only inculcates his observations as an outsider and not the feelings of an insider while formulating his theoretical apparatuses. (Brendan Tedric)

Another scholar who shows a better understanding about the losses of visual impairment and who reduces these twenty losses into three main areas is Bertold Lowenfeld. In his article "A Distinction in Terms" he identifies three areas where visual impairment creates challenges in an individual such as "in the range and variety of experiences, in the ability to get about and in the control of the environment and the self in relation to it" (69). This seems to be a more reasonable way of classifying the losses of visual impairment. To whatever farfetched ranges one can extend the losses or challenges of visual impairment, they all fall into these three categories.

At the very beginning of her novel *Star Gazing*, Gillard shows many instances where lack of control over the environment creates serious challenges to the visually impaired. In the very first page of the novel, one can see Marianne speaking to the emptiness, while Keir leaves soon after knocking her down. A similar instance is repeated when they again meet on the occasion of the opera. On both occasions, Marianne failed to notice that Keir had left, while she was going on with her conversation. This is a very common issue that gets repeated, when there is a conversation between a challenged person and a non-challenged. From Irvin Goffman's point of view, this is a situation where the question of stigma is relevant. Not only that the sighted leaves the impaired in the midst of a conversation, but they also fail to inform the challenged candidate that they are leaving. This always puts the visually impaired person in the most shameful and sometimes disappointing circumstances. It is worth noticing that Gillard could identify this as a potential challenge to the visually impaired, though even the trained among the sighted misses this idea and commits the same error frequently.

Marianne's difficulty to locate the fallen key and her gloves which were dangling on her knees is also an instance where Gillard is conscious of the effect of visual impairment. Though she strains her ears to locate the key, she fails. The curses she showers on the person who knocks her down and her own impairment could be a natural response here. Though people usually believe that the visually impaired have an acute sense of hearing, there are situations where this skill fails

them. Since the key has fallen into the basement stair, it is beyond her immediate reach. Here one can identify the difference between the ranges of visual and auditory perceptions. At the same time, if it was something that could make a constant sound, the auditory perception can be of a higher range than the visual perception. For example, though the visually impaired could not hunt in the primitive societies, they could still locate the presence of the wild animals from long distances and communicate it to their friends. The field of hearing is of a very high degree in comparison with the field of vision which could be only of 180 degree to its maximum.

In another part Gillard poses the problem of the visually impaired in recognizing familiar people. Marianne tells Keir, “Well, you might see me, but I definitely won't see you. Goodbye” (6). What she means is that a visually impaired person cannot initiate a conversation with a person or recognize someone, unless and until the individual concerned greets them or gives the feel of the presence of such a person through some sensation, touch, voice, smell or footsteps. Very often, the sighted think that the visually impaired can recognize a familiar person's immediate presence by one of the parameters mentioned above, but even that depends on the closeness that person has got to the challenged candidate. Even greeting someone through a hand shake is a challenge at times for a totally visually challenged candidate. Very often they fail to notice the hand that will be extended towards them. One possible solution to avoid this catastrophe is to extend one's own hand, whenever a visually

impaired person initiates a conversation. The fact that many visually impaired like Marianne look normal to the others makes the case of misunderstanding about the non recognition quite complicated.

On another occasion she says,

I usually take my cane because people leave things on the pavement that I don't expect to be there: rubbish bins, bicycles and the like. But these unexpected obstacles aside, I can walk confidently to the Botanic, enjoying the scents and sounds along my route, anticipating the blissful moment when I can walk through the gates and leave the traffic behind. (18)

Here again, Gillard exposes a difficulty that most visually challenged face if they lack a cane or a navigating tool with them. A visually impaired person can act very effectively or swiftly in a familiar circumstance or situation. However, if someone poses a threat to them by imposing an obstruction or an alteration in the arrangement, it will be problematic to them in accomplishing their mission. For example, even if a visually impaired person is travelling by the most familiar way, without the absence of a navigating tool, a minute stumbling block can make them fall. It is significant that many visually impaired feel shy of using a white cane or a similar device even in the present age, since it acts as a tool in exposing their impairment to the onlooker. Similarly, when an outsider uses a kitchen or a similar place, where a visually impaired person is the

habitual user, it creates many challenges to him or her because the stranger may in most cases change the order of things that the original visually impaired user was used to.

On another occasion Gillard reveals how rain gives Marianne a very different feeling and perception. “Music helps me see. So does rain. Rain helps me see things that my fingers can't encompass, like a tree or a glasshouse. That's where you'll find me when it rains. In the Botanic. In one of the glasshouses, or sheltering under one of my favourite trees” (19). A similar passage is there in the book *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness* by John Hull.

This evening, at about nine o'clock, I was getting ready to leave the house. I opened the front door, and rain was falling. I stood for a few minutes, lost in the beauty of it. Rain has a way of bringing out the contours of everything; it throws a coloured blanket over previously invisible things; instead of an intermittent and thus fragmented world, the steadily falling rain creates continuity of acoustic experience. I hear the rain pattering on the roof above me, dripping down the walls to my left and right, splashing from the drainpipe at ground level on my left, while further over to the left there is a lighter patch as the rain falls almost inaudibly upon a large leafy shrub. On the right, it is drumming, with a deeper, steadier sound upon the lawn. I can even make out the contours of the lawn, which rises to the right in a little hill.

This passage of John Hull like Gillard's description shows, how something like rain can give a very different perception to the visually impaired, how it gives them a three dimensional experience.

Gillard also discusses how colour combinations create problems to the visually impaired, when they have to select their own attires. Perfection in terms of one's appearance is one of the main ingredients of one's confidence about his or her appearance. The failure to accomplish the same puts the visually challenged constantly at risk. Since they fail to decide the matching colours, most of them use some technique to solve this problem. In the novel Marianne says, "I have two wardrobes in my large bedroom. One of them contains black clothes and the other contains cream and ivory. ... Wearing coloured clothes would be too complicated for me. If I wish to look smart for work or for my limited social life, and if I wish to be independent, I have to have clothes that will match or blend" (7-8). Here again, Gillard shows a deeper insight into issues which often fall beyond the notice of common people. A well dressed visually impaired is generally looked askance at by the sighted. However, only because they are visually challenged, they cannot ignore the matter of colour combination. Just like Marianne does, labelling the cloths with identifiable markers could be one of the effective solutions for this problem.

Lack of control over the environment sometimes makes a visually impaired person restless and anxious. For example, when Marianne sits alone in the park, she feels the presence of someone and she understands that she was

being watched. However, she is not able to confirm it. There are situations where a visually impaired person is constantly made aware of the fact that he or she is being observed. This realization causes fear and trepidation. David Bolts's reading of certain authors who try to associate visual impairment with the Foucauldian Concept of Panoptic fear seems to be relevant here. Similar to the experience in a panopticon, the visually challenged person is always worried about the gaze of others around him, while he is unaware of who watches him. This acts as a serious check on his competence, when he involves in elite circles. Though he tries to modify and manoeuvre himself time and again, he never reaches a point of conformation and clearance. Many writers have expanded this idea further and argued that the sightless always suffer from such fears and they are naturally doubtful and uncertain about all such circumstances. Though the association of the visually challenged with the Panoptic fear is a very novel idea, one cannot say that all challenged people suffer from this level of anxiety and restlessness. The degree of anxiety faced by the visually challenged could be closely related to their awareness of the situation and their confidence in themselves. If an individual has better awareness about his limitations related to his lack of control over the environment, he may go through a higher degree of anxiety syndrome and panoptic fear. However, even there, if he has better reliance on his personality and skills, this influence could be very less. Thus, the Panoptic fear could be a more problematic state to an adventitiously visually impaired person, especially in those days, where he tries to adjust himself with

the situation. The more he gets accommodated into the reality, the lesser such fears will be. So, in Marianne's case it does not move to the range of a panoptic fear, but she is still worried about the idea that she is being watched. The confusion, lack of direction and the subsequent Hypothermia that troubles her in Keir's house, when Keir goes out leaving her alone there also is due to her failure to identify the right direction. When she goes to the Gynaech and reveals her plight, she imagines the face of the Doctor, but does not understand it properly. The different unhealthy practices that the sighted make in communicating with the visually impaired, since their eyes remain dead and hollow are also an important issue that Gillard identifies in the novel. There are a few other common challenges that are visible in the work. They do not need a deeper analysis here since they are too common to mention.

If one considers the age she writes in, Gillard is however, not so successful in recognizing adequate solutions to the challenges of the visually impaired she identifies. Marianne uses her cane and she also knows Braille. It is told that she pastes Braille stickers on every valuable CD ROM she has. Even there, a strange thing is that one does not come across any reference to the kind of education Marianne had. Louisa simply says,

At forty-five Marianne is six years younger than me. It seemed a big gap when we were children but I think that was a lot to do with her blindness. I'd already started school when she was born, so Marianne

was always something of a solitary child, isolated by her age and her handicap. (17)

So, one wonders how Marianne might have developed these skills.

Besides, at the time of Gillard's writing of this novel, 2008, the technology had made a revolutionary change in the life of the visually impaired. Screen readers, Optical Character recognizing Software applications and Mobile Screen readers were making miracles in the world of the sightless. It is very strange to note that living in a developed country Gillard fails to recognize these developments. In fact, when Louisa and Garth came to know about Keir's disaster through the Internet, their main anxiety was that Marianne might know that through her Radio, and they were even thinking to damage it somehow. However, Gillard fails to know that in that particular age, the visually impaired across the world would be surfing internet more efficiently than Garth or Louisa. May be Gillard has ignored the technological reality as a convenient excuse to build her fictional realm. Anyhow, it is positive that irrespective of her failure to indicate anything about Marianne's training and education, she makes her as independent and powerful as possible.

Free locomotion and challenges in communication are the two important flaws that Collins highlights in his book *The Dead Secret*. Being an adventitiously challenged these two create serious troubles to Lenard Frankland. Lack of mobility and orientation poses serious challenges to him on multiple occasions. Lack of control over the environment also raises many hurdles in

front of him constantly. Especially, when his wife is tormented by the discovery of the letter and her anxiety over its revelation, he gropes for direction in the interior and gets collided with something and is hurt seriously. However, Collins who gives an Ivory stick to Lucilla fails to give any such device to Lenard to give him at least a limited degree of independence.

Lucilla also goes through some of the worst phases of the trials and tribulations of visual impairment. Her inability to distinguish between Oskar and Nugent seems to be the main challenge she has. One can have serious misgivings about it from the point of view of a born visually challenged. It is possible, however, if the concerned individual's use of the residual senses is not sharp as the situation demands. Her failure to assess certain situations accurately throws Lucilla into wild furies. However, in comparison with many of her companions in the fictional world, Lucilla is a more empowered visually impaired character. She knows how to use a cane and she is also competent to write in her own way. She has also got a few specially designed books as well with her. She was good at playing piano and was also very eloquent and expressive. However, Like Marianne, in Lucilla's case also, one does not come across any details about her education in the novel. Though Zilla the nurse gives us many details about her birth, disability and childhood, she does not mention Lucilla receiving any training or education. Lucilla's optimism, determination and will are highly commendable.

In Glaspell's book, it is almost a replication of Lenard's condition in *The Dead Secret*. Karl also does not use a cane or a trained dog for his mobility, though those two were very common in the early decades of the twentieth century. Karl goes through bitter alienation and loneliness in his life and never gets liberated from them till his death. Karl learns Braille to some extent. But the author does not mention how he had mastered it and it never appears useful for him in his life. One can never see any visually impaired visiting Karl or him doing vice versa. So, it has to be a natural curiosity, how an adventitiously visually impaired can master a very complicated script like Braille by himself. If Karl had learned Braille properly, he could have easily resumed his lecture in the University. Even when he speaks about the inventions he proposes to make on Braille, he never understands the possibility of it remaining as a help to him in the academic scenario. From a quick glance one can understand that Glaspell is least informed about the life, challenges and solutions related to the visually impaired.

One thing where, both Collins and Gillard show some positive insight is in revealing the condition of the visually impaired as children. Lucilla is in fact very lonely and alienated. Even though there are a lot of other children at home, one cannot see any one of them going to her and having any contact with her. Marianne also had a very lonely childhood. The researcher has already quoted the passage where Louisa refers to her sister's lonely and tragic childhood. The attention that an individual receives in childhood is very decisive in the case of a

visually impaired person. In fact, the reduction in the range and variety of experience takes place in a higher degree in the childhood rather than in any other stage. So, they have to be given proper training by developing proper skills and strategies. Besides, owing to the rejective or over protective attitude, the parents or those around them show a tendency to keep them away from the mainstream. From whatever information is available, one can understand that Lucilla's and Marianne's cases were not different from each other and both of them might have suffered a lot in their childhood.

An individual's ability to tackle the consequences of disability is closely related to his or her financial status and social status. The higher one's financial status, the more his or her opportunities to reduce the aftermaths of disability by using the best possible devices and if possible using human assistance itself, whenever it is necessary. The most crucially haunted and the most terribly suffering among any disabled community is the most impoverished among them. As explained by Mr. K. Satyasheelan, the visually impaired in the developed countries always enjoy great advantages over their compatriots in the third world countries. It is thus very interesting to examine how the authors concerned incorporate this correlation between disability and financial status in their works.

In the case of Lucilla, one can understand that she is enormously rich and it is this richness which gives her control over many of her relations on many occasions. But for the fortune that she receives from her maternal family, her father might not have given her any importance in his family affairs. It is the

same authority that gives her freedom to take decision on her marriage. Again, it is the same status that makes her competent enough to leave for her aunt's house with her servant Zillah to comply with the Doctor's direction for her convalescence. But for her financial powers and the subsequent privileges she enjoys, her agonies as a visually impaired could have been four or five times more than how it appears in the novel.

In the novel, *The Dead Secret* also Lenard is able to sustain as the decision maker in the family, only because he is a landlord. He is enormously rich that he never feels like developing himself and he gets plenty of people to help him. He tries to adjust his physical and social failures through his financial powers. In Glaspell's novel, this idea takes a different turn. Karl Hubers, who was very rich on being sighted, becomes almost an impoverished person after his unexpected impairment. One of the main reasons why he proposes to write a book is to earn sufficient money to lead a successful life. One sees him in the most ineffective and sympathetic state not only because of his personal failures but also on account of his financial failures. Though the author does not give any direct clues to this impoverishment and the subsequent challenges, a sensible reader can understand it very easily.

In Gillard's *Star Gazing*, Marianne the protagonist is neither too rich nor too impoverished. It is true that she does not have any job of her own and from that perspective she is miserable. However, since her sister has got adequate financial resources, she is able to get any degree of help from her. She enjoys the

privilege of attending Operas, using a CD player and even travelling to different places according to her wish. At the same time, one can see her anxieties about her financial status, when she imagines the fate of bringing up a posthumous child alone. Even her sister's promises do not console her in the initial days. Thus, it is notable that most of the visually impaired characters in the selected works have got considerably higher financial status and that gives them many advantages to get rid of some of the most challenging consequences of their impairment. Collins' characters enjoy supremacy over their fictional companions in the other selected works in this respect.

Since two of the characters under examination, Lucilla and Marianne are women, it could be very exciting to see how far their creators have succeeded in discussing the specific issues that affect the visually impaired women in general. At a primary glance itself, one can understand that both of them show remarkable depth in perceiving the specific challenges of the visually impaired women and Gillard is in fact a bit more advanced than Collins in that attempt. May be, it is her understanding as a woman that makes her more constructive in such analysis. The theoretical advances and clarity that the modern thinking has produced could also have added into Gillard's understanding about the predicament of the visually impaired women.

Similar to the predicament of the women of any marginalized group, the visually impaired women also suffer from various levels of erasure, nullification and discrimination. The disabled women in general is given a third class

citizenship and the visually impaired woman is the most severely handicapped among them. They suffer alienation in the first place, for they are women. However, they are also doublyhegemonized and discriminated since they are visually challenged. When these double hold of restrictions correlate their fate is sometimes worse than that of the Black women or any such socially discriminated group of women. It is again significant that in an age where we discuss the rights of even the sexual minorities, very little attention is paid to the maternal rights, marital rights or even the sexual rights of the disabled women in general and the visually challenged women in particular.

A visually challenged woman's social mobility is very limited. She often fails to establish relationship with abled males and even sometimes with abled women. Even the proximity with the visually challenged male is very limited at times. A visually impaired woman needs enormous degree of confidence and an extraordinary degree of will to come out of her shackles and to build a social life of her own. Sometimes, even if she is employed, because her family considers her a duck that lays golden eggs, they try to avoid as much chances for her to have a marriage or a family life. Such parents almost follow either over protection or disguised rejection as a viable strategy to tighten their control over such women.

Collins in his *Poor Miss Finch* presents many issues which Lucilla has to face simply because she is a girl. She is almost a nonentity in her house. No one is interested in having a companionship with her except her maid Zillah. Even

her apartment is constructed as a separate one from the main building. The only fact that makes her vulnerable in the family structure is the financial resources she has. Finch was initially against her marriage with Oskar, till he understood that Oskar is also a potential financial resource whom he can exploit well. Again, his reaction to the prospect of Lucilla getting her sight is also worth noticing here. He was totally against it. A father who is interested in the welfare of his daughter might have expressed his consent for such a move without any hesitation, since by trying with that she loses nothing, but if positive, will gain her sight. However, Mr. Finch was worried that if she gets her sight back, he might lose his hold on the duck that lays golden eggs. Mr. Finch is only one of the typical fathers, who does not want to lose his control over the financial resources of his daughter as we have remarked. Even when she leaves without his consent Madame Pratolungo says that the dispute between the father and daughter will be over, when the next instalment for the money comes. Madame Pratolungo for instance says,

The little sense the man possessed at the best of times, was completely upset by the shock which Lucilla's abrupt departure had inflicted on his high opinion of his own importance. That he would end in being reconciled to his daughter--before her next subscription to the household expenses fell due--was a matter of downright certainty. (Chapter 44)

One cannot see any instance of loving relationship between the father and the daughter. He always keeps a formal and clinical attitude for his daughter and never acts as her confidant or as a source of consolation for her in times of trials and tribulations. Being motherless and visually impaired by birth, one naturally expects that there could be such a deep note of understanding between them. In fact as the author suggests, the only medium by which Lucilla was challenging her loneliness was through music.

In the final part of the novel just before Madame Pratolungo reveals the truth of betrayal, Lucilla emerges as a fearful, vulnerable and weak girl. Though she has some sort of suspicion in her mind about the identity of her would be husband and she is badly in need of postponing the marriage, she fails to do all that because she is a woman. One of the reasons why she wanted to get her sight could be that she wants to escape from the double hold of colonization and to assert at least half of her independence. Anyhow, one has to agree with the fact that in comparison with the restricted and rigid structure of the Victorian society, Lucilla exhibits an extraordinary degree of confidence and will power. Irrespective of the factual ambivalence in her decision to accept her impairment as her final destiny, she merits kudos for such a decision. She can be estimated as a very bold woman on account of this decision.

Gillard also presents many complicated aspects about the life of the visually impaired women. At the very beginning itself, one gets a view on the alienation and lack of companionship that Marianne was facing in her life.

Louisa gives the clue that even though Marianne was younger than her, she does not appear so. Louisa attributes this to her visual defect.

I was widowed at twenty-seven and, for a blind woman, I was not unattractive, or so I was told. In my thirties I went through an interesting period of trying to find a life partner in an abortive attempt to escape from the smothering symbiotic relationship I'd developed living with my sister (37).

Here, she very clearly states what predicament had Marianne found herself in, since she lost her husband and she had her miscarriage. It is obvious that she might have encountered no difficulty to manage a relationship, if she was sighted. On multiple occasions, she speaks about the troubles that a lady has to face as a visually impaired mother. Even if she is competent, the society will always underestimate her. That could be the reason why Harvey was not happy with the prospect of them having a child.

In a pretty long passage Marianne expresses the difficulties of the visually impaired women to manage sexual relationships. She says that, "Blind sexual relationships are even more fraught with difficulty than the sighted variety, especially for women. Perhaps I should explain. The sort of men you attract if you're blind fall into one of three categories:" (37). She identifies the Romantics as the first category among them. According to her, they are people who think that there is something 'spiritual', 'beautiful' and 'quintessentially feminine'

about being visually impaired. Visual impairment brings out the Galahad in this type. They claim that they are helpful on a heroic scale. However, the ultimate result for a visually impaired woman in such a relationship is sorrow. She has to be rescued from such a situation by someone.

The second one in this group according to Marianne is the sexually insecure. About them she says that, “men believe that if you're blind (i.e. defective), you'll be grateful for any interest shown in you, even if it comes from a short, fat, malodorous codd, so unappealing, a sighted woman would cross the road to avoid him” (38). She further adds how the visually impaired women were sent to brothels, presumably to service clients so deformed or otherwise loathsome that an average girl may take one look and go on strike. She adds further that the visually impaired might have moved into such a profession for many other reasons as well.

The third category is called perverts. About them she says, “There are, unfortunately, a number of men who are turned on by the idea of a blind woman. Whether it's the Peeping Tom factor or the reputation the blind have for sensory over-compensation, I've never hung around long enough to find out” (38). As a general remark about all of them she says that what is most unbearable about them in common is that they expect a visually impaired woman to be grateful for their attentions. She is of the view that it is this second class citizenship which is created by her impairment and on being a woman, that makes her most restless. If it was the case of the impairment alone, there could have been ample

solutions. But this lack of belongingness and patronizing patriarchal point of view is something with which she could never compromise.

In a society where, sexuality and marriage are still taboos or unapproachable areas to the disabled in general, and the visually impaired in particular, this description of Marianne seems to be a very big eye opener to the mainstream society. Its importance is all the more, when it comes from an author who does not have a strong kinship to the visually impaired community. Even today, this lack of accessibility in marriage and sex remains a vital threat to the survival of the visually impaired women. Right to sexuality and right to maternity have to be recognized as fundamental rights of the challenged women. Though there are many national and international statutory provisions to this effect, the practical affair still remains an untouched zone. In the developed countries, such women may get extra marital social dates. However, even in one of the most advanced states like Kerala in a developing country like India, this still remains a complex and unresolved topic. So, Gillard has to be given full credit for her exposition of this issue.

In a continuing passage, Marianne very categorically establishes that visual impairment becomes a problem only as far as the general people consider it so. For a candidate who suffers from it, there are feasible solutions. She says,

Blindness is just a series of practical problems for which one eventually finds a solution. I don't consider myself handicapped,

except by others' views of me. What constrains me, angers me, demeans me, are other people's expectations, in particular the universal expectation that I should be grateful for their help, for their concessions, for inclusion in their sighted world, to which I don't really belong. (38)

Two things are relevant here. The first one is the general society's expectation or rather insistence that the visually impaired should be always grateful to the society for including them in the mainstream. The society never tolerates or feels comfortable with an articulate and expressive challenged person. The society always wants them to conform to the general public's views and concepts. Besides, whenever they identify the presence of a challenged candidate as a potential threat in a public affair, they may use the dictum of impairment to outcast them or to erase them from the procedure. Visual impairment is thus treated as a sticking point in the progress of this section of society.

The second aspect is the question whether disability is socially constructed or it is a physical defect. In fact, one can see Marianne saying that she never feels handicapped except by others' view of her.

Though the question of sexuality is an untouched area for the visually impaired even in the present age, it is very interesting to examine that it occupies a central position in all the works under consideration. There of course is the

change in the social attitude to the topic of sex in general and that change is shown from an evolutionary point of view in the current novels as well. For example, the question of sexuality is very important in *Poor Miss Finch*. Various critics have acclaimed Collins for highlighting the sexual need and marriage of a visually impaired girl of the Victorian era as a central concern in his novel. Though one cannot see any obvious instances of Lucilla's desire in the novel, there are scenes, where she tries to express her passion by touch and proximity to Oskar. It is probably her suppressed sexual energy that comes out on such moments. From a theoretical point of view, Lucilla is a victim in the hands of the twins Oskar and Nugent with reference to her sexuality. Nugent tries to take better advantage of her, as he is the dominant one in terms of his physical features and social accessibility. Oskar's disfigurement is in a way an added disadvantage to him. Lucilla's own involvement is very much constrained by the patriarchal structure that envelopes her.

At the end of the novel, it is seen that Lucilla lives with Oskar and her children comfortably. If the entire novel is considered as Lucilla's quest for the fulfilment of her sexuality, one can argue that she is a satisfied character at the end. She had, however, to compromise with the prospect of gaining her sight for accomplishing this aim.

In the work *The Dead Secret* also, sexuality comes into play. It occupies the novel as a subordinate theme. Though an adventitiously impaired, Lenard is not castrated as many others like Karl of *The Glory of the Conquered*. Lenard

and Rosamend lead a successful marriage life that they have a child to bring enormous joy into their life. But, a significant aspect that catches one's attention is that, whenever there is a serious affair between them, in terms of sexuality, it is Rosamend who takes the main initiative. Lenard only remains as a passive agent, who complies with the desires of his wife. This is pretty clear from the scene at the Inn, where just before, the girl there was peeping at their secret affair, it was Rosamend who had taken initiative to sit at Lenard's lap and to have an interesting time. The same course of action is repeated on a few other occasions as well in the novel. Thus, the fundamental conclusion one can derive is that, as of all other aspects of his life, sexually also Lenard is considerably passive and it is his wife who takes a positive role in his life. Anyhow, one can argue that at the end of the day, he is also a happy customer like Lucilla.

The question of sexuality takes a different route in Glaspell's *Glory of the Conquered*. There was a big age gap between Karl and Ernestine and ever since they got married, they were in each other's best society. However, as Karl loses his vision, the passion all on a sudden gives its way to a Platonic dimension, as if he is castrated, since he lost his vision. The castration synonymy is something which many other authors have attributed to the visually impaired in the past. David Bolt in his Book *The Metanarrative About Blindness: A Re-reading of Twentieth-Century Anglophone Writing* explains how the visually impaired are equated to asexuality and castration complex, since they lack eyes which are the gateways to sexuality. Many people believe that since the visually challenged are

denied the visual gaze one of the primeval means of sexual communication, their drive is considerably hampered. In fact, there are people who argue that the visually impaired men are not likely to feel sexual attractions to different women they meet in the course of their life, since they lack gaze one of the most powerful motivators of sexual energy. This, however, is a fallacious perception, since sight alone is not the factor that boosts the sexual energy of an individual. For a visually impaired individual, voice can be an equally powerful sexual booster, as sight is for the visually competent.

A new concept that Bolt introduces in association with this castration synonymy is Ophthalmocentrism. It denotes the idea that "eyes and vision are fundamentally sexual and they are necessary for normal sexual enjoyment and productivity" Bolt 13-37-51). In the novel *The Glory of the Conquered* for example, the narrator refers to the circumstances in which Ernestine had to abort their child, when she and Karl were travelling in Europe. To quote the passage,

Europe meant more to her than an Old World civilisation, more than tradition, beauty or art. It even meant more than the place where she had spent those first dear months of her love. It meant to her the place where she had hoped with woman's dearest hope, and where she had given up the child which should have been hers. Her tenderest, deepest thoughts were not of the wonders and beauties she had seen; they were of the dreams within, of the holy happiness of first

knowledge, and then the grief in giving up the much desired, which she had known only in anticipation. (Chapter 5)

Ernestine and Karl might have decided to give up the child then for technical reasons such as continuing with their career, tour and so on. But, after losing Karl's vision, one does not come across any reference where the desire for a child is expressed. Karl frequently demands Ernestine's society to get rid of his ennui and to reduce his disappointment. But that reminds one more of the child like image by which Mr. Chennery was describing Lenard in *The Dead Secret*. Though Karl is always at Ernestine's society, when she was available, that never goes beyond a particular degree. Again the following passage establishes this claim of ours about the castrated state he was reduced into. The narrator says,

Oh but I'm the brute to talk to you like this, after you've been"--again he swept her into his arms--"what you have been to me this summer." She guided him to a chair and knelt beside him. She held his hand for a minute as the mother holds the hand of the child in pain. (Chapter 22)

Only after a long time, one comes across another reference to that child of theirs, when it is told that,

As she lay there resting, away from the current of her life, she thought a great deal about a little grave over in France, such a very, very small grave which represented a life which had really never come into

the world at all. She could fancy her baby here with her now--patting her face, pulling her hair--so warm and dear and sweet. Her arms ached for that little child which had been hers only in anticipation. And what it would have meant to Karl!--the laughter of a very small voice, the cuddling of a very small head. (Chapter 34)

It is worth noting that she has this thought at a time when Karl is virtually out of her life. When she was at rest, Karl was already hospitalized and he would not come back. Having a child could have given a lot of relief to Karl during the days of his impairment. But, the castrated state he is in does not provide the author with the potential of giving him that luck. The same element of castrated identity is shown in Henry Green's *Blindness* and Susan Sontag's *Death Kit*.

In Linda Gillard's *Star Gazing*, sex is one of the fundamental desires of Marianne. She had married once. But she lost her husband in an accident in the Mines. She had attempted to develop a few other Liaisons, but other than being a few casual sexual encounters, they did not offer her anything lasting. So, at the point of meeting Keir, she was leading a dry and barren life. It is striking that if one was Harvey Frazer, The new man is Keir Harvey like Alexey Kirilich Bronsky and Alexey Alexandrovich of *Anna Karenina* of Leo Tolstoy. So, at the beginning itself, the readers develop an anticipation that this might culminate in a productive relationship for her. On expressing her suppressed desire for sex she says,

I hardly ever think about sex. I don't particularly miss it. But I think about men. Men other than Harvey, I mean. (I try very hard not to think about Harvey. His life was so completely subsumed by the manner of his death that thinking about him means -- will always mean -- thinking about how he died). But I think about other men. Sometimes. Men and maleness. I think I miss the difference of men. I can hardly remember what sex feels like and you can't really fantasise about something you've forgotten. Virgins can fantasise about sex because they might be right, it might be like that. But when you've forgotten how it feels to make love and try to remember, you know it wasn't quite like that, it must have been better than that, surely? And you realise the memory has gone. You know the only thing that could remind you what it was like would be making love with a man. But that wasn't going to happen. I was quite clear about that. I was quite clear because there was absolutely no question of my asking Louisa to shop for condoms. Nor was I prepared to stand at the counter in Boots, at the mercy of a gormless shop assistant who might compound my embarrassment by enquiring if I preferred ribbed or flavoured. (47)

The conflict between her desire and her difficulties is very much evident here. Though she has many desires, the practical difficulties made her suppress it for the time being.

One of her motives in developing a relationship with Keir could be the satisfaction of her sexual urge itself. "I'd assumed my sexual organs and appetite had long atrophied through lack of use and was surprised, a little embarrassed, even dismayed to find that this wasn't so, although to say I felt a sexual attraction to Keir would have been overstating the case" (39). Though she is not directly expressive, one can clearly discern how Keir had kindled her suppressed desires.

As they went to the island of Skie, on the first night itself, Marianne became restless on a few occasions due to her longing for Keir. However, she was not ready to express it may be as a result of her constraints. But, the striking thing is that, here again, the sexual encounter happens accidentally, when Keir was comforting her after her Hyperthermia. It is Keir who takes advantage over her in sexual matters. The wild fury with which he uses her makes it clear, how he takes control over her and takes advantage over her suppressed existence. One can even argue that one of the clearer motives for Keir in taking her to the Island of Skie is to develop a casual sexual tie with her. It is not that he does not get other people, but being an eccentric one in many dimensions, he might have felt a particular attraction to her. The fact that he insists on a casual relationship between them, leaving no commitments to each other makes this observation more valid.

Thus in all the sexual relations discussed here, it is the active partner who takes prominent role in managing the sexual ties. The only exemption is Glaspell's novel and there the hero remains sexually castrated. As pointed out

earlier, in terms of discussing sexuality, when one reaches Gillard, from the covert narrations of Collins, it reaches to a direct and plain description and this change has to be analysed with reference to the changes the society in general has developed towards sex and sexuality. Overtly or covertly, all the writers under consideration are aware of the sexual need of the visually impaired people.

The question of marriage is also very important in all the works under scrutiny. Something very common to all the marital patterns in the selected works is that the normal in the alliance is also made abnormal by degrading them either socially or physically. Here one is reminded of Lennard J Davis's concept of Normalcy which he conspicuously expresses in his essay, "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the novel, and the Invention". Davis tries to examine how the concept of 'Normalcy' was constructed in the Romantic and Modern era and How Disability has been theoretically constructed as a by-product of this conceptualization of Normalcy. Davis Holds the view that there is no area of contemporary life, where the concept of norm, mean or average is not operational or applied. According to him, to understand how the disabled body is constructed, one must go back to the construction of the normal body. He makes his position clear by explaining the epistemological similarity between Racial Studies and Disability Studies. While the earlier version of Racial Studies gave more importance to Colour, in recent times they give more focus to Whiteness, elucidating how the concept of Whiteness was created at first to establish the concept of Blackness or Colourness. Likewise, all major studies on disability in

the past were concentrating on the disabled person as the object of study, whereas, Davis is of the view that, while studying the concept of Disability, one must give prominence to the concept of Normalcy, to understand how the concept of Normalcy was constructed similarly to establish the binary, Disability. (Davis 3)

What happens in the selected fiction is somewhat different from how Davis or Thomson visualizes things. For example, in *Poor Miss Finch*, at the beginning, Lucilla is the abnormal and Oskar is the normal having no defects. But, before their marriage, he undergoes a kind of disfigurement owing to his treatment for Epilepsy and he also becomes an abnormal and the fusion finally happens to be that of two abnormals. The author might be probably under the impression that no normal sighted may marry Lucilla with her visual impairment. The prospect of Lucilla getting her sight back is also clear by her decision to remain as a challenged person throughout her life. Thus the author here enforces the abnormal abnormal fusion, by never making one of them normal.

Similarly, in *The Dead Secret*, Lenard the abnormal marries Rosamend the normal at the beginning. Many people in the novel describe Rosamend's decision as a sacrifice. However, by raising questions on her parentage and proving that Rosamend is the daughter of two servants, she is also brought down to the category of the abnormal. In fact, once she is stripped of her aristocratic lineage, she seems to be more vulnerable and weak before her husband and he

enjoys a superior position over her. So, here also the same pattern of an abnormal person marrying another abnormal person gets repeated in the question of marriage.

In Gillard's *Star Gazing* also, though the alliance seems to be between the normal and the abnormal at the beginning, as one knows Keir closely, it is understood that Keir has many eccentricities in his character such as his superstitions, his telepathic beliefs and power and his out of the nature dealings. So, in a very subtle sense, it is also a fusion of the abnormal and another abnormal. The author very clearly argues that an alliance between a visually impaired that is an abnormal and a sighted, normal of the common kind would not be possible. Keir is introduced as a very special being from the beginning itself. The only exemption to this fusion of the abnormal and abnormal is the marriage of Karl and Ernestine and there each of them is eccentric in his or her own way. Besides, the marriage takes place much before Karl loses his vision. It is anyhow significant that like sex, marriage is also a powerful motif in the selected works.

One of the most misinterpreted and misjudged areas, where the visually impaired are seriously underrated is with reference to their psychological specialities. An analysis of this kind will be incomplete, if one does not examine how far the authors try to deal with the psychological tensions that visual impairment creates in an individual. Though not very specific, each of the novels

tries to project some kind of psychological crisis that challenges an impaired individual. There is, however, no unique pattern visible in this representation.

An eminent scholar who has contributed some productive materials with reference to the psychological features of the visually impaired is Berthold Lowenfeld. His article, "The Psychoanalytic Contribution to the Understanding of the Early Development of Blind Children" is an important work among the academic deliberations on the visually impaired and visual impairment. He refers to the scarcity of research materials on the psychoanalytical issues of the visually challenged, though Freud gives much importance to the eyes in the sexual, egoistic and psychological development of an individual. In Freudian Psychoanalysis the eye attains multiple significations such as how it functions symbolically, how it is related to castration anxiety, its role as an erogenous zone, its connection with scopophilia and so on. However, neither Freud nor his successors think or analyse how such moves take place in a person with incapacitated eyes. It is generally concluded that there is no much difference in the developmental process of a sightless child and a seeing child. The former goes through almost every stage that the latter goes through. However, if the impaired child is not properly trained or motivated from the beginning itself, there can be delays in his developmental stages and this creates certain vacuums in his attainment of maturity and adulthood.

Berthold Lowenfeld also tries to distinguish between the two important terms, 'Psychology of the blind' and 'Psychology of blindness', which are

indiscriminately used while discussing the visually impaired. He is of the view that the latter should be used consecutively in all discourses since it accentuates more the effects and problems that the impairment/disability can produce in an individual. Giving currency to the former can create an illusory perception that the visually challenged constitute a homogenous category and there are certain psychological characteristics that are exclusively seen in them only. Researches in this field, however, point to no such particular psychological features that are visible only among the visually challenged. Besides, even the range of psychological crisis that visual impairment creates in individuals varies. Instead of approaching them from a categorical point of view, one must use a case to case strategy, emphasizing more on the individual's need than the effectiveness of the tool. (Lowenfeld 66-67)

Linda Gillard in her *Star Gazing* expresses certain inferiority complexes and inhibitions which are seen in the visually impaired. In the opening Chapter of the novel itself, one can understand that Marianne uses no signs like a Cane or dark Glass to indicate that she is visually impaired. When Keir the Cyclist hits her, he questions her on why she was not using either a cane or a Glass to imply that she is visually impaired. Then she admits that it was her fault that she was not using anything of that sort. But at a later part she adds that,

One of the reasons I don't use my cane as much as I should is because I don't like to advertise to the world that I'm blind. I'm vulnerable enough on the streets as a woman without letting criminals and

perverts of all denominations know that I'm easy prey. I try to look and behave as if I'm sighted. What I actually look, I suspect, is drunk. I trip and stumble, touch railings and walls, as if I'm unsteady on my feet, but it probably draws the attention less than a white stick. But despite my precautions, my attempts at invisibility, my dressing in black, my intention of blending in with the leafless skeletons of trees, someone had noticed me. (20)

It is quite clear from the passage that Marianne has not yet reconciled to her fate fully. Though she gives a kind of paranoid fear as the reason for the delusion she creates about herself by concealing her impairment, an experienced reader can very easily diagnose that she suffers from terrible inferiority complex and her real reason is that she does not want others to know that she is a challenged person.

One of the strong motifs by which the psychological tension of the individual gets manifested in the fiction is through dreams. In one of the later chapters Marianne says, "At the end of a broken night, disturbed by vivid dreams of the Piper Alpha explosion and making love with Keir, I rose early, wrecked but resolved" (228). This dream occurs when Keir's whereabouts are not known and he is supposed to be dead. Marianne's sense of loss, loneliness and desire for her lover get strangely mixed in this dream. As already pointed out there are nominal similarities between both of them. Lenard of *The Dead Secret* indeed says that,

I dream a great deal, but I never dream of myself as a blind man. I often visit in my dreams places that I saw and people whom I knew when I had my sight, and though I feel as much myself, at those visionary times, as I am now when I am wide-awake, I never by any chance feel blind. I wander about all sorts of old walks in my sleep, and never grope my way. I talk to all sorts of old friends in my sleep, and see the expression in their faces which, waking, I shall never see again. (Book 2 Chapter 3)

Here again, the frustrations he goes through as a result of his loss of vision is very much reflected in his dreams and this passage tells much about Lenard's failure to reconcile with his impairment. An interesting reality, of which the researcher is reminded of at this point, is the question that the visually impaired frequently receives from the average sighted, whether they see dreams. The seeing-knowing metaphor that David Bolt expresses in his book about the Metanarrative about visual impairment is elemental to this question. He explains in his book, how people always equate seeing to knowing and conclude that those who cannot see fail considerably in knowing things as well. Though dream is a phenomenon where what is actually experienced in one's life gets replicated in a slightly different way, people always try to reduce it to a visual experience. The final result is that they believe that the visually impaired do not have dreams. Here for example, Lenard's dreams are full of visual imageries, since he had his vision earlier in his life. However, in the case of a congenitally visually

impaired, no visual clues appear in his dreams. So, dreams are in a sense not to be seen but experienced. Again, in a different passage, Lenard speaks to his wife about a dream he had, that of the place where he had first met his lover as a child. It is almost the same psychological frustration that is reflected in this dream as well.

Karl's case in Glaspell's *Glory of the Conquered* is almost a repetition of Lenard's fate or a stronger endorsement of his failure in his dreams. To quote a passage from the novel,

Sleep had come once or twice, but sleep meant only the surrender of his mind to the horrors which preyed upon it. He could, in some measure, exert a mastery when awake, but no man is master of his dreams. His dreams put before him all those things his thoughts fought away. In his dreams, there was a fearful thing pursuing him, reaching out for him, gaining upon him with each step. Or sometimes, it stalked beside him, not retreating, not advancing, but waiting, standing there beside him with grim, inexorable smile. It was after waking from such dreams that he breathed his prayer that this night pass. (Chapter 15).

The frustration and disappointment that visual impairment created in him is very evident in this passage. It is our normal anxieties and frustrations that get

manifested in our dreams. One can escape from this agony only if he is exposed to the right kind of counselling.

In *Poor Miss Finch* also, some aspects of the psychological tension of the visually impaired are discussed. For Example, Lucilla refers to a dream of hers in the novel. She says,

What is there to laugh at?" she asked angrily. "I saw his hideous, discolored face--I am never blind in my dreams! I felt his blue hand put the ring on my finger. Wait! The worst part of it is to come. I married Nugent Dubourg willingly--married him without a thought of my engagement to Oscar. Yes! Yes! I know it's only a dream. I can't bear to think of it, for all that. I don't like to be false to Oscar even in a dream. (Chapter 27)

Here again, the dream is closely related to her visual impairment. It is the suspicion that lurks within the depths of her mind owing to her inability to distinguish the brothers and the doubt that she has taken one for the other that troubles her in her dreams. However, her claim that she has vision in her dreams is faulty at this stage, for, she is totally visually impaired at this stage and she is yet to regain her sight and she cannot have any visual images at this stage in her dreams. But at a later stage after she gets her sight and loses it, she is likely to have visual perception in her dreams in accordance with whatever visual impressions she might have acquired. One of the worst psychological tortures

that happens in Lucilla's case is, when she regains her sight. Her expectation is that she will be able to see everything at the first instance itself. But she fails miserably, since it is not the case with the newly sighted ones. This exposes her into multiple kinds of tensions. She becomes very much frustrated, impetuous and anxious at times. It is also significant that Madame, Pratolungo describes her as an impetuous, emotionally weak and abnormal girl throughout the novel and attributes these to her impairment.

After analyzing the passages quoted above and the different aspects of psychological importance that the authors attribute to the visually impaired in their works, one can only agree with Lowenfeld in understanding that the visually impaired as a homogenous category do not have any specific psychological problems or characteristics. But the psychological problems come in the individuals as a by-product of their impairment. They cease to exist as soon as the candidate concerned receives the right kind of counselling, guidance and consequent confidence. The escapism and fake identity that Marianne tries to create, her anxieties about choosing the right colour combination, Lenard's and Karl's disturbing dreams and Lucilla's confusions, all can be properly eliminated, if they are given individual attention, counselling and if necessary training. Thus the psychological problems have to be dealt with in a case to case manner and not with any fixed or unique standards.

Another area where people keep a lot of misconceptions is about the failure of the visually impaired to understand the feelings of a speaker and to

show the reciprocal responses. Many activists and trainers of the visually impaired argue that, since the visually impaired cannot identify the facial state of a speaker, they are not in a position to identify the speaker's mood and intentions. There are many examples in the selected works where this failure becomes instrumental in aggravating the tension.

Lenard is constantly at a loss to understand the emotional state of his wife and expresses his doubts frequently, even though his wife tries her level best to make her feelings clear. Similarly, one of the reasons for the failure of Lucilla in understanding Madame Pratalungo's intentions and often misunderstanding her from an authorial point of view is this failure of Lucilla. In the other works also, Marianne and Karl go through similar situations.

Berthold Lowenfeld however has a very different perspective about this question of failure. He explains it in his article "A Distinction in Terms". He holds the view that "The blind person's inability to visually observe facial expressions puts him at no particular disadvantage because to him the voice may be just as expressive as facial expressions or bodily gestures are to others" (77). The researcher is of the view that, as long as people are familiar to a visually impaired person and they remain straightforward in their communications, voice is an adequate tool for a visually impaired to discern the emotional aspects and mood of the speaker. If the speaker who converses with a visually impaired is a new acquaintance to him, it may sometimes create problems for him to guess the right mood of the speaker. Again, if the speaker keeps the intention of deceiving

the listener by putting on a masked appearance, only a crude and sensible listener might understand the sardonic or hidden strategies or intentions of the speaker. This failure is there not only in the visually impaired but, also in the sighted world. Without auditory clues, it may not be possible for a visually impaired person to identify the moods and attitudes of an individual whom he or she meets at some point of their life.

Though people usually use the word aesthetics only in terms of visual perceptions and visual arts, the visually challenged have also got their own aesthetics, since art and artistic experiences are more multisensory than visual. Thus, in an age where the visually impaired have begun to speak of their aesthetics, it is interesting to know whether the authors concerned give any attention to this idea in their works. Here again, the distinction between the adventitiously impaired and congenitally impaired is central in our analysis. The adventitiously impaired being exposed to the visual images and perceptions, their language and artistic perceptions and manifestations will be dominated by visual aspects. However, they will be minimal in the case of a congenitally impaired except what he or she acquires through the use of language.

Here one is reminded of the controversy that had emerged around Milton's *Paradise Lost* in the Western academia in the early part of the 20th century. A group of them were critical of Milton and argued that Milton lacked effectiveness in his creation, since he was visually impaired and his imagery was not perfect. However, some of them like TS Eliot changed this point of view

later by saying that the theme Milton was addressing was spiritual and it did not mandate visual perception. The reality however is that Milton as an author never suffers from scarcity of visual imagery in his writings, For, he lost his sight only in an age where he had already bloomed himself into a mature writer. There is a sense of tragedy in his post impairment writings and this tragic sense is created by the sudden loss of his sight. Except for this, he is perfect as a poet of his time. Without the assistance of his vision, he could have never produced that epic simile that makes his *Paradise Lost* an extraordinary creation.

The question of aesthetics thus does matter only in the case of Lucilla and Marianne. In Lucilla's case, the only aesthetic enjoyment or response she is capable of is Music and to a limited level literature. Madame Pratolungo in fact describes Music as the only thing that illumines her dark world. As a corollary to this observation, Madame Pratolungo adds, "Her companion wanted to play from the book, and play worthily, the works of the great masters (whom this young creature adored)--and she, listening, would take her place next at the piano, and reproduce the music morsel by morsel, by ear" (Chapter 1). Here one can note that Lucilla is capable of understanding literature and produce Music suitable to the moods in the books. Besides, Lucilla's own capacity to articulate is visible in her Diary entries which form a small part of the narrative. There one can discern the dexterity and efficiency of a writer in her, though there could be debates on the kind of imagery she employs in it. She writes almost as if she is a fully sighted girl. But, at that time, she was only going through the period of

convalescence and one is not sure whether she ever had her full sight. However, it is striking to note that even the question of expression becomes important in this work.

In Linda Gillard's *Star Gazing*, though Marianne speaks at length about herself and her feelings, her perception is very much prejudiced. In fact, when Keir ask her, whether she had seen a particular film her answer is negative. She attributes it to her lack of sight. The author fails to notice that film is not simply a visual medium, though limited, its auditory frame can also offer great scope for appreciation.

The age old relationship between Music and the visually impaired is visible here also. It is quite clear in the passage how Marianne expresses her favour for Operas.

People often ask me why I go to the opera when I can't see the singers act, I can't see the set or costumes and I can't see any lighting effects. Why don't I just stay home and listen to a CD -- surely it's the same? I ask them if they think it's the same looking at a reproduction of Van Gogh's *Starry Night* as standing in front of the actual painting. (I wouldn't know, of course, but I do know people who have stood before that canvas and wept.) I tell sceptics and doubters that I go to the opera because opera pours a vision of a wider world into my ears in a way that no other art form that I can access does. (7)

From this passage one can conclude that this description of Marianne is only a subjective analysis. It cannot be properly connected to her impairment. There are visually impaired who are least interested in Music. The fact that she knows all the technical aspects of staging such as lighting itself makes it clear that one can enjoy many things through external help. These days descriptive movies are specially designed for the visually impaired, where a voice over gives them the additional information that takes place in the form of dialogue less visuals.

In an adjacent passage, Marianne, however, expresses a very interesting aspect that creates barriers to the visually impaired in appreciating literature. She says,

Sculpture and textiles, on the rare occasion I'm permitted to touch them, excite me. Plays, novels and poems move, entertain and educate me, but they don't rock me to my foundations and make me see. I can read Tolstoy's account of the French retreat from Moscow, either in Braille or as an audio book, but I have never seen a city. Or snow. I've never seen a man, let alone an army. Tolstoy uses a visual language that I can read, haltingly. It's not my mother tongue. (7)

Here Gillard tries to show how our languages are ocular centric or visual oriented. This seems to be a real challenge for the visually impaired when they read literature. Even for expressing things that are not specifically visual, our authors give recourse to visual imagery. The seeing-knowing metaphor that

David Bolt discusses in his book is pertinent here. It is not one's failure to see such things that makes the appreciation of scenes such as the one mentioned of Tolstoy different, but, the complication that is posed by the imagery makes it so. This is indeed one of the challenges that the visually impaired have to cope with, when they design a literature of their own. They have to design a language which can express their sensibilities authentically and effectively. They may have to devise alternatives to substitute visual imageries. It is worth noting that though in a very limited degree, the question of aesthetics gets featured in the above mentioned works. Perhaps, the discussion of aesthetics here lacks a theoretical clarity which the visually impaired can make, when they attempt creative endeavours. However, it is worth appreciating that even a novel like *Star Gazing* written without much research on the visually impaired opens up the possibility for a discussion on such an innermost issue like aesthetics.

In this context, it is germane to make certain observations on the position that the authors offer to the visually impaired, if the narrative strategies employed in the selected works are assessed. At a quick glance, it can be understood that in most cases the challenged are denied the agency of narration and the authors either through third person narrative or through the first person narrative of a few external agents try to create their own versions or images of the visually impaired characters in the works concerned. With reference to *Poor Miss Finch*, except for the diary entries of Lucilla, the narration is done by Madame Pratolungo. She reminds one of Nelley Dean of *Wuthering Heights* in

the context of meticulousness, involvement and flow of narration she employs. Even with regard to the diary entries, Lucilla's perspective is slightly marred, since she is frequently interrupted by Madame Pratolungo's comments and observations. Madame Pratolungo is the mouthpiece of the author and she always narrates the story from her own fixed and slightly prejudiced point of view. The fact that Lucilla does not get an opportunity to articulate her feelings tells much on what status a prototype of her kind was enjoying in the then contemporary society. However, irrespective of the prejudices, fissures, and conflicts that lurk beneath the exterior of the fluent narrative, *Poor Miss Finch* has to be considered a fair narrative on the visually impaired, since one cannot even compare what preceded it in terms of their originality and authenticity.

In *The Dead Secret*, it is mostly a third person narrative except when Dr.Chennery makes a few initial remarks. Here, the narration is very fragile. Even though it is an adventurous story, it lacks the dexterity and suspense that *Poor Miss Finch* offers. The passivity and dead emotional nature of Lenard fails to create any effect in the readers. Even Rosamend fails to move the readers beyond a particular degree, despite her active self. It is Sarah and Uncle Joseph who provide some kind of suspense and entertainment to the readers in the long and dull narrative. The conception of visual impairment is more problematic here in comparison with *Poor Miss Finch*. May be with an intention to fulfil his fictional requirement, Collins fails to give any degree of originality to Lenard Frankland that he very meticulously gives to Lucilla.

In *The Glory of the Conquered*, though it is a third person narrative, the description is of an exciting pitch. It keeps the readers alive and moving till the end of the narration. Even if one disagrees with Glaspell for making the impending impairment a gruesome tragedy, she has to be given commendations for the skilfulness that she employs in the narration. As mentioned earlier, the story suffers from much fallaciousness from a logical point of view. But, Glaspell gains that loss through the fluidity, coarseness and emotionality with which she builds the narrative. She succeeds in retaining the tension, though the entire fabric of the story is very thin and inelastic. With reference to the point of view of the visually impaired, the story does not offer any scope or hope, since the author is basically prejudiced and ignorant about them.

Linda Gillard offers a partial space to Marianne in *Star Gazing*. In fact, this is the only work in this selection where a visually impaired character gets a considerable space to speak. However, many things she says are contradicted or invalidated either by her sister or by her lover. There is an omniscient narrator in the story on a few occasions. But it is mostly done by Marianne and Louisa, her sister. Gillard's inclusion of Marianne in the narrative scale gives her opportunities to discuss many issues that are very closely related to the visually impaired. Though there could be slight misappropriations due to the laggings in the point of view of the author in this narration, the fact that a visually impaired person speaks, makes the story more authentic and sustainable. Besides, Gillard had already mentioned in a Facebook post quoted earlier in this study that she

was so particular of choosing a visually impaired person as her narrator. However, her next argument that such a person has no point of view makes her intention futile. Though not intended or conscious, still Gillard gives a lot of space to Marianne to articulate many innermost things of the visually impaired. Thus the changes in the social attitude towards the visually impaired and the new consciousness from within the visually impaired community can be well understood if one goes through the changes and evolution that the narratives offer in the selected works. If they were fully ignored in the beginning, the authors are forced to accord at least a partial status in narration in recent times. When the literature of the visually impaired becomes a reality, the partial status will give way to a full status.

There are many scenes in the selected works where the interaction primarily takes place between the challenged and the non-challenged. What creates tension in such interactions from a theoretical point of view is the idea of stigma. It is Irvin Goffman who contributed significantly towards the conceptualization of this idea in his work with the same title. The concept of Stigma is closely related to the fact that "all human differences are potentially stigmatizable" and that "stigmas reflect the value judgments of a dominant group" (Coleman 217). Goffman explains the concept of 'Stigma' in his excerpt, "Selections from Stigma", published in *The Disability Studies Reader*. He considers stigma as a deeply discrediting attribute, facilitated by a language of relationships. Something that can be stigmatic to one individual can be usual

or natural to another. So, any stigmatic aspect is not creditable or discreditable in itself and it is the context and the mindset of the individual concerned that makes it so. Goffman's main concern here is what happens when normal and stigmatized people are in one another's company, either in an intimate setting or in a crowded setting. He observes that when an interaction takes place between the stigmatized and the normal, there occurs what is called 'The primeval scenes of Sociology', where the causes and effects of disability is confronted by both sides and it plays a pivotal role in structuring the interaction.

There are several instances in the selected works where the characters concerned exhibit one of the traits of the stigmatized individuals. One of the main strategies of an individual who experiences stigma due to disability is to correct it. Lucilla's desire to get her sight back belongs to this category. Certain people do not wish to confront the stigmatic reactions and so they either conceal their disability or escape from situations where it confronts them. Lenard's decision to conduct his marriage as a secret affair and Marianne's wish to look normal are clearer instances of this tendency.

On some other occasion, the stigmatized individual may try to correct his or her shortcomings through indirectly designed private ways. For that, they need to be very clear about what creates or blocks them from acquiring a normal status in the society. Their methods to challenge or nullify their stigmatic identity will not be apparently visible, but through the acquisition of a skill that general society considers unattainable for them. Lucilla's attempt to nurse her

injured husband, her efforts to excel in playing Piano and Karl's attempt to publish a book all in a sense belong to this category. Even Marianne tries to go through many adventures including her visits to Skie with Keir with the presumption that she may get a different attention from those around her than the usual sympathy she receives. Thus many subtle shades of stigmatic behaviour can be observed in the works. The tension visible in an interaction between the challenged and non-challenged is very fundamental in all the works under consideration. Such interactions always underscore the potential difference between the two categories. The collision between Marianne and Keir on the pavement or the first meeting of Madame Pratolungo with Lucilla are examples where the difference acts as the point of attention than mutual recognition or understanding.

The authors concerned have represented the visually impaired in their works from the point of view of an individual in so far as they are successful in driving home the tensions, frustrations, alienations and some positive experiences that the challenged individuals go through, when they are forced to live in a society which is primarily structured for the able bodied. What can be recognized in these works is an ableist discourse. Semi Linton in her Article, "Reassigning Meaning" examines the implications of the terms 'Ableist' and 'Ableism' in the context of the Disability Studies. She is of the view that the terms ableist and ableism are mainly used to establish the centring and domination of the nondisabled experience and point of view. Thus the term

ableism can be understood as discrimination in favour of the able bodied. Just like racism or sexism, ableism tries to associate the capacities, characteristics and competences of a disabled person to his ability or disability and the ableist scholars or practitioners generally believe that the disabled are inferior to nondisabled people in their skill and temperament. Linton underscores the idea that just like sexist or racist language, one should be mindful of ableist language as well.

While taking these premises into consideration one can see that the authors are ableists in their approach to disability. They always consider the disabled as inferior to the abled in many terms. In fact, the disabled characters themselves speak from these ableist positions. The language used in the works is strictly ableist. Even in the most modern of them, *Star Gazing*, one sees the use of the most obsolete terms such as blind, dark world and so on.

From a close analysis, one can conclude that the authors in the selected works clearly demonstrate a 'Normate' point of view in representing the visually impaired. There are many instances, where the bodily differences and the subsequent power structures are operational in deciding the fate of the challenged people. The advantage that Nugent and Oskar try to take over Lucilla, the erasure and nullification that Karl goes through, the social and psychological domination that Rosamend seems to have over Lenard Frankland and the freedom with which Keir deals with Marianne are a few instances to see how the dominant structures try to subvert the underprivileged using the strategy

of Normate reductionism and exploitation. It is the power and strength that each of them have over the challenged as a result of the bodily difference through the impairment and the subsequent disability and handicap that gives them such an easy access to deal with them in such a fragile and flexible way. Thus, the question of Normate is very much operational in the context of the selected texts. (Tomson 8: Bolt 6: Linton 168)

To conclude this study, one can observe that what emerges as the final output of the author's attempts is the construction of Narrative Prostheses. David Mitchell's and Sharon Snyder's work *Narrative Prosthesis* is an important work in the domain of Disability Studies. As David Bolt observes in his book *The Metanarrative about Blindness: A Re-reading of Twentieth Century Anglophone Writing*, "The consequence of this field-defining work is that disability is now increasingly recognized as the "crutch" on which narratives "lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight" (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 49: David Bolt 14). By Narrative Prosthesis the disability critics mean the different ways by which the authors use disability to create fictional effects.

Though some of the authors make ostensible claims that their objective in writing the book is to give expression to the issues of the disabled ,yet in reality one can easily understand that to them disability is only a fictional tool. They use it indiscriminately to attain their fictional goal. Thus the works under consideration are Narrative Prostheses where disability of the most extreme

kind, either glorified or nullified is used by the authors to develop their fictional world. Mostly such attempts do a lot of harm to the communities concerned, though one cannot neglect a few positive instances of sensitization and education that might emerge from such situations.

CONCLUSION

Visual impairment as any other disability is palpably a recurring theme in literature across the world. The flexibility and fluidity visual impairment offers to the authors in stretching it to farfetched dimensions made it such a perceptible and integral element in the literary works. Since the reaction of the visually impaired with experiential knowledge to the negative representations was at a very minimal pitch owing to sheer lack of mobilisation, theoretical clarity and coordinated response from among them, these stereotyped representation patterns were always taken for granted as reality. However, in recent times as a result of the changing circumstances, the visually impaired began posing questions about the verisimilitude of such representation strategies and suggested alternative models of experiences and perceptions. It is remarkable that the newly emerging model of Cultural Disability Studies has a pivotal role in giving clarity and authenticity to these counter narratives.

One of the most illusory and problematic ideas that govern most of the perceptions about the visually impaired ever since the origin of civilizations has been the misunderstanding that visual impairment is darkness. From the linguistic level to the literary and cultural paradigms, this widely held perception is instrumental in building the existing images and constructs. One can trace the origin of such a belief to the hunting ages, where the active involvement of the visually impaired was very limited due to the absence of vision. However, when sighted people began connecting this illusory association

between darkness and visual impairment to their own experiences in the absence of light, this mythical and illusory association struck such a deep root in society that they were not ready to part with it, even when questions were raised on it by the competent authorities.

It is also interesting to observe that just as in the case of other disabilities, discourses on visual impairment suffer from a terminological abundance, inconsistency and subsequent difficulties in attaining a concrete perspective. Since most of the terminologies were imposed by the traditional society rather than developed by the visually impaired with first hand experience, it remains a challenge even today for the scholars in this area to decide what could be the adequate model to be adopted. While a major fraction with traditional leanings stands for retaining the conventional usages like blindness and the blind, those with a radical and modern inclination call for a drastic shift in the prevalent terminologies. They argue that such obsolete terminologies produce deleterious effect on the image of the community when they get featured in relevant statutory provisions and documents. Such critics suggest alternatives to the stereotyped, imposed and hackneyed terms, which erase the very identity of the challenged community itself.

One of the fundamental trends perceptible in the works where the visually impaired occupy a central position is the apparent contradictions and conflicts in the strategies of representation. As observed by Kenneth Jernigan, this contradiction and chaos are not visible simply among different societies or

different ages, but it is there in the pages of a single book itself. The selected books vindicate this claim. This again leads to many complex dimensions in representing the visually impaired. Interestingly, the authors concerned converge on the points of glorification or nullification. In adopting both, they try to articulate that the visually impaired are significantly different from the sighted whom they consider normal and competent.

In a world where sight is perceived as the primeval means of perception and the language itself is dominated by visual images and metaphors, such 'ocularnormative' and 'ocularcentric' perceptions create no wonders in a sensible individual. However, on reading the selected works, one wonders whether it can lead to such extreme and unbelievable levels of dehumanization and understatements while they build their fictional universes and heroes and heroines.

Defining visual impairment was a real challenge in the past. On most occasions, when the term 'the blind' or a synonym of it appears in a dictionary or a linguistic document, most references connote extra meanings about the perception of the society concerning the visually impaired. In fact, only one or two meanings may signify the actual state of visual impairment. It is therefore perceived that this further demands an alternative and more comprehensive approach from the enlightened in the community when this topic is subjected to study.

Though there have been many attempts to measure and define visual impairment, what has been developed by Herman Snellen: the Snellen Chart has become the ultimate source in measuring visual impairment. The most important aspects in formulating definitions according to Snellen Chart are a candidate's visual acuity and field of vision.

One can see an evolutionary standard in the critical attention that was paid to the representation of the visually impaired in Literature. In the initial phase, the sighted authors like Jessica L. Langworthy, whose basic qualification to be the critics of such literature was mainly their exposure to the visually impaired as trainers, made significant contributions in this realm. Irrespective of their success in facilitating limited attention in the academic circles, such studies lacked authenticity and originality. When the social movements of the visually impaired gained momentum they developed new modes of knowledge acquisition and production, studies like that of Kenneth Jernigan began emerging from different parts of the world. However, they were mostly done on fixed standards and were frequently ignoring the cultural association between disability and its representation and construction.

Interestingly enough, in recent times, owing to the new platforms of accessibility, expression and universalisation of the resources that the technology offered to the visually impaired, they began producing materials with increased theoretical clarity and experience-based pronouncements like that of David Bolt. However, even such studies fail to observe how the mainstream writers delineate

the technical aspects of visual impairment such as its losses, adjustment mechanism and displacements of different kinds that the visually impaired go through. Such studies mainly hinge on a few fixed and rigid theoretical patterns.

Visual impairment is a significant concern in each of the selected works. Wilkie Collins in his *Poor Miss Finch* makes it clear at the very beginning of his text that giving expression to the life of a visually impaired person is his primary motive in writing the book. Though he purports it to be significantly different from the past works carved out in that tradition, he also mostly follows the conventional patterns of representing the visually impaired. His main objective in designing the book is to highlight the tragic fate of the visually impaired. This idea gets reflected in the very title itself. However, contrary to his motive in the title, he seems to be attributing many conflicting and contradictory characteristics to Lucilla. This may be because of a rift between his desire to give originality to his representation and sheer necessity to accomplish the fictional goal of shaping an out of the way adventurous tale.

Being a totally visually challenged girl by birth, Lucilla tries to echo many constraints that restrict the mobility of a visually impaired woman in the patriarchal society. While she is at the summit of optimism on the one hand, she seems to be languishing on the other to come out of the multilayered difficulties that were questioning her very existence. Her decision to abandon a second chance to regain her sight after being through it, though for a very limited period, appears as the most enigmatic part in the novel. It is significant that

Collins considers the sexuality and marriage of a visually impaired girl as potential themes for a Victorian novel, while both the concepts are far away from them even in the contemporary society. Irrespective of his claim that Lucilla is significantly different from her compatriots of literature in the past, what he invests her with is the abnormal, tragic, helpless, foolish and imaginary traits that those preceded Collins were so laboriously imposing on the visually impaired literary beings. Many of the unreal and abnormal dimensions that Collins incorporates in his book such as Lucilla's irrational fear, Oskar's strange disfigurement, Lucilla's complex decision and so on can be partially owing to his effort to retain the adventurous tempo of the novel.

Collins who shows much sympathy and understanding in his 1872 novel *Poor Miss Finch*, however, lacks any vitality, understanding or fictional aura in his 1856 work *The Dead Secret*. One can naturally imagine that his awareness about the visually impaired could be very limited at that time and he might have acquired considerable exposure to the visually impaired before writing the latter novel. While Lucilla is a congenitally visually impaired, Lenard Frankland, the visually impaired hero of *The Dead Secret* is an adventitiously impaired character. This gives Collins enough space to underscore the tragic and death-like state which the authors and the society in general associate with visual impairment. Lennard's role in the novel is only as far as he stands as a presence for Rosamend Treverton, the protagonist to grow and expand into her full self. However, she loses her social advantage that she gets through her hypogamous

marriage, when it is proven that she is not the original daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Treverton and she is born of the union between Sarah the maid and a peasant. Being in an enigmatic state, owing to the confrontation between his aristocratic status and his helplessness necessitated by his sudden impairment, Lenard throughout the text remains as a parasite to his wife. It is she who takes central roles on all the major points in the novel. In fact, the dead and passive presence of Lenard remains as a serious flaw in creating the adventurous tempo of the novel, Collins might have aspired to accomplish while choosing a visually impaired as his hero. However, he succeeds in revealing many conventional attitudes and perceptions which always pose serious threats to the establishment and mobility of the visually impaired even in the contemporary society.

Susan Glaspell's work, *The Glory of the Conquered* epitomizes the long standing association between death and visual impairment which Sophocles very systematically establishes in his *Oedipal Trilogy*. One doubts, whether it is agreeable to create characters with such tragic halo and what virtue it does to the society than making visual impairment one of the most unbearable and brutal experiences. Irrespective of the towering position that Karl Hubers occupies at the beginning of the novel, by virtue of his matchless scientific wisdom, he becomes almost a nonentity when he loses his sight. Obviously, the novel suffers from many technical flaws. The author manages this failure through the flow and tempo of the narrative which she succeeds in retaining till the end, though.

Here again, the title seems to be a totally inappropriate one for the work. If the author's intention is to underscore the love between Karl and Ernestine by referring to *The Glory of the Conquered*, one understands that the glory almost gets faded and moves into a level of Platonic dimension, once Karl loses his vision. The author holds the ocular normative perception that there are only two alternatives left for an individual who loses his vision adventitiously, either to get cured or to die. Karl as Lenard of *The Dead Secret* is mostly a presence constructed for Ernestine to attain a heroic stature. One can never understand the logic that might have tempted Glaspell to kill her hero instead of opening before him at least the laboriously devised plan of Ernestine acting as his companion in his scientific pursuits. The author's conditioning which endorses the most negative attitude to visual impairment does not allow, however, her to do that. Here again, the primary purpose of the author is to create a wonderful romantic story and she never considers giving expression to the challenges of the visually inconvenienced as an objective of her work. Any reader who goes through the work is sure that she had made no acquaintance or contact with the visually impaired before writing her debut work on such a very challenging theme.

Since Linda Gillard's *Star Gazing* was written almost a century after the publication of the other novels, despite her claim that she had not done any significant research into the world of the visually impaired, she succeeds in revealing many relevant, hitherto unexplored and innermost challenges that the visually impaired go through, with her born visually impaired protagonist

Marianne Fraser. In fact, the challenges she reveals such as the difficulties in communication, various challenges due to the lack of control over the environment and the sexual frustrations of the visually impaired very often go beyond the notice of even the trained among the rehabilitation professionals. However, Gillard also falls into the trap of the tradition and conditioning, when she says that her narrative lacks a point of view, since the protagonist is a visually impaired individual. Again, this enforces the ocular normative idea that the visual perception is the dominant one and in its absence the individual's perspective is irrelevant.

Though Gillard instills in Marianne a lot of positive energy and a will to speak out her aspirations and challenges, the representation seems to be very sluggish, when one understands the developments that the visually impaired were going through, when the book was published. Here again, her main intention is to create a matchless romantic tale. However, the very idea crumbles, when one realizes that the idea of 'Star Gazing' which Keir visualizes as his primeval motive in taking Marianne into the island of Skie is only a fictitious one and it is never possible for a born visually impaired suffering from total absence of sight to have any visual experience in her life.

Gillard's narration is also filled with a few instances of conflict and contradictions in the strategy of representation. Her greatest virtue nevertheless is that, she accords an agency of expression to Marianne by making her one of the main narrators. In all the other works mentioned above, they lacked this

status badly and the outside narrators could most often impose anything that they wished on their visually impaired characters. Though some of Marianne's findings could be purely from the author's imaginary point of view, they still attain a higher reliance, once it is spoken by a challenged character. Gillard exhibits considerable insight into the workings of the mind of a visually impaired candidate.

Gillard's discussions on the sexuality and marriage of the visually impaired are also a very rare phenomenon in the fictional realm. However, as the ultimate resource, she also has recourse to the joining of an abnormal with another abnormal as in the other works, by tactically associating with Keir many extraordinary and out of the way behavioural traits. Many of her faults are managed through the fluidity and fecundity with which she constructs her narrative.

One can thus observe an evolutionary standard in the representation strategies of the visually impaired in the selected works. This evolutionary element is visible not only in the thematic level but also in the formal level. By according Marianne with the agency of narration, Gillard comes almost close to the literature of the visually impaired. This clarity is also there in the issues discussed and the position and independence that the visually impaired enjoy in their respective societies. It is anyhow significant that the primary objective of all the writers under examination in using the visually impaired characters is to satisfy their fictional quest. For Collins, it is his zest to retain his adventurous

tempo. For Glaspell and Gillard it is their desire to carve out two distinct and classic Romantic tales. Though they believe that in selecting the visually impaired as their protagonists, they do a great service to the visually impaired, what they actually do is a profound disservice to the community by subjecting them to serious nullification, dehumanization and erasure.

While Collins' and Glaspell's underrating can be sanctioned to a certain extent in comparison with the degree of awareness that was available in their times, one can never justify or legitimize the serious fallacies that Gillard commits in portraying Marianne Frazer. *Poor Miss Finch* and *Star Gazing* stand on a higher stair in giving voice to the visually impaired in comparison with *the Dead Secret* and *The Glory of the Conquered*. The fact that both Lucilla and Marianne are visually impaired women by birth establishes a kindred spirit between them.

From a theoretical point of view, all the authors adopt an ableist standard in their texts. Their main objective is to use ocularnormative and ocularcentric standards and practices to create narrative prostheses, or in a broad level, the metanarratives about visual impairment as David Bolt visualizes. It is worth noting that the development of the Disability Studies is opening up revolutionary perspectives to approach the narratives which depend on disabilities for creating imaginary fictitious tales. However, being too dependent on the other theoretical perspectives of the other marginalized and also as a result of the multifarious nature of the theoretical strategies, Disability Studies is yet to have an efficient

knock on the closed doors of our mainstream academia. Its voice still remains as a few whimperings in the context of the aporia of the modern theories.

The kind of constructs that permeate in our literatures around the visually impaired often crashes a visually impaired reader who is conscious of his or her potential. Just like the other marginalized communities, the visually impaired also have to develop an authentic and autonomous literature of their own. Thus, literature of the visually impaired is the most urgent need of the hour from an inclusive point of view. Such a literature should explore not only the possibilities of expressing the experiences of the visually impaired, but it also should radically redesign the language, images and motifs to carve out a new tradition. At present, one can see even the sexual minorities making their presence in the mainstream discussions. The visually impaired are far behind in this regard, especially when one takes into consideration the social and political advantage that they enjoy in both the developed and the developing countries. However, it gives one immense hope to note that though slowly and steadily such moves are gaining momentum. Now, the writers and directors are at least partially compelled to have an interaction with the visually impaired, before they produce narratives around them. The presence of the visually impaired in the social media can definitely enhance this effort. It can be expected that literature of the visually impaired will also be a genre of considerable academic interest in the near future in our theoretical and literary arena.

APPENDIX I

An Interview with Mr. K. Satyasheelan: by Habeeb C.

Conducted on 2nd July 2017

Mr. K. Satyasheelan is one of the prominent activists among the visually impaired in Kerala. He is presently the Headmaster of Government School for the Blind, Kunnankulam and a recognized professional of The Rehabilitation Council of India. He is an established trainer among the visually impaired in Kerala and has presented papers in various National and International Seminars and Workshops. He had been a Teacher of Diploma in Special Education for some years. He has occupied various offices of Kerala Federation of the Blind, such as its Secretary, Vice President and Executive Member for multiple terms. His performance as the Superintendent of The Vocational Training Centre of Kerala Federation of the Blind at Calicut was also commendable. His dedication to develop various Technological Applications for the visually impaired is matchless. The following is an excerpt from an interview that Mr. Habeeb C. conducted with him on 2 July 2017 as a part of his research.

Habeeb: Were you visually impaired by birth?

Satyan: No. I was sighted by birth as far as my parents knew then. However, even before I joined the School, my left eye became weak due to Myopia. It was when I was about ten that I started losing my second eye as well due to retinal detachment. I can imagine that by birth itself, my vision could have been somewhat limited. But, it was only after I began facing the actual crisis that this deficit might have created problems for me. Unless and until there is a clearly recognizable symptom, it is very difficult for you to conclude, whether a child has a visual problem.

Habeeb: Usually, those who lose their vision adventitiously become very frustrated and tensed and some of them even go totally melancholic. What was your condition?

Satyan: In my case, I was not properly aware of what was happening to me, when I was losing my vision. It was at a time, when my ego was not properly formed. So, the change did not strike me as a tragedy or as a serious issue. In the case of many others like Georgekutty Sir, the vision loss affected them long after their ego was set and so that the effect of tragedy was more serious and aggravative for them. However, I knew that something was happening to me and my initial tension was about my failure to read the Blackboard and my books. I still remember, as a matter of curiosity, how I was trying to see the picture of a feather in my textbook strenuously even when I had only a bare minimum sight left. It was not out of my desire to see what is lastly possible, but as a matter of my curiosity to know, how I would be able to see in that state, that I had attempted such a strange thing.

Habeeb: Do you remember any vivid images or memories that are associated with your losing of the sight?

Satyan: One of the images that was tormenting me in those days was that of a beggar. I don't know what might have made me think about the image of a beggar so constantly in those days. May be, it is the reference of my relatives to the beggarly state in which the visually impaired were mostly in those days, that had made me develop an association with this strange image. I still remember, how I was thinking about this image more forcefully, as I saw many of the beggars in the Railway stations, when I was going to Madhurai Aravind Hospital. Besides, when I was admitted in the Hospital after the surgery for six months, there used to have a beggar beating a drum just outside my Hospital room. Since my

eyes were bandaged, I frequently asked my mother what that sound was and the answer, it was a beggar drumming always made me anxious. Of course, this fear is something beyond logic. But, the visually impaired always try to see them as how the society sees them. Thus, it could be the temperament that I might have acquired through my background and conditioning that had made me so panic stricken. Again, when I went to Tamilnadu, due to my defective vision, I was seeing everything in a slanted level. For long time, I was under the impression that all the Tamilians have their faces slanted to left. These are some of my live memories that I still keep in my mind.

Habeeb: It is told that the right attitude of the parents and the trainers is very crucial in the upbringing of a visually impaired child. How far do you agree with this statement?

Satyan: Childhood is the time when the challenges of visual impairment such as reduction in the range and variety of experience, lack of control over the environment and lack of ability to move around are highly problematic for a visually impaired person. An impaired child's experiences are very limited. Either as a result of over protection or due to disguised rejection, the parents are likely to keep the child away from the mainstream. This can have serious consequences in the growth of the child. In my own School, I have quite recently come across a case, where over protection has made a child almost a paralyzed entity. Due to over protection, a ten year child is not able to wash even his hands. Giving proper training and awareness to parents is very important. The right training given by the teachers and trainers is also essential for an impaired child. In the past, the special Schools were doing this duty comfortably. However, in recent times, since many children are sent to inclusive set up, there, they fail to get this training and attention. If the child is not kept properly engaged, mentally comfortable, and physically

strong, his future will provide him with many handicaps. Here many of the trainers are under trained, and they lack proper skills and techniques to accomplish their mission successfully. The Government should make it clear that all the trainers in this area fulfil the conditions prescribed by The Rehabilitation Counsel of India.

Habeeb: Do you feel that financial status of a candidate plays any role in tackling disability?

Satyan: Obviously, it is true. If you have better financial status, you can use the best facilities to tackle the question of disability. Very often we see better conditions in the rich and advanced countries for the visually impaired and the other differently abled than the developing countries. However, one of the negative attitudes that the rich show towards disability is that they seldom admit the fact that they are disabled. In case of a disability, they try their level best to conceal it. They take disability as a matter of an ignominy. If they come out of this negative temperament, the rich can always take advantage in tackling the issue of disability.

Habeeb: You could have built an amazing career of yours outside the challenged community, then why did you choose the special field as your active area?

Satyan: Before joining the educational zone professionally, I had a chance to be the superintendent of an institution where the grownup visually impaired who had no prospects to receive education due to many socio-political reasons and the adventitiously visually impaired youth were trained and rehabilitated. This life taught me, certain burning realities about the visually impaired in general. Since my family was comparatively on the elite side, I had limited opportunities to confront the worst social effects of the impairment. However, there in the Centre, I could really

understand what pathetic situations visual impairment and impoverishment together can create to a candidate. I could also understand to what level of distress and tragedy wrong intervention and wrong parental attitude can lead a challenged candidate. I understood that there is a big research gap in this field and it has motivated me to continue further with my studies in this area. That was why I did my Diploma in special education from Calcutta. I also regard my autonomy in my professional zone as one of the most coveted virtues and I'm sure that the special field can offer it to you in a higher degree than the general employment sector. It was the same thing that had made me a strong worker and on most occasions an Office bearer of Kerala Federation of the Blind. Positive attitude and right guidance are the essential ingredients that the visually impaired frequently lack from the mainstream society. The society often treats a visually impaired as a burden. This has to be considerably changed. It is a consolation that the recent events offer many hopeful developments in this area.

Habeeb: Even though you said that you had felt a research vacuum in the field of the visually impaired, you have not yet materialized it into a thesis or a book. Why it is so?

Satyan: I wish to make a distinction between life like research and pure academic research. I had a passion for knowledge from my very childhood itself. So, ever since I lost my sight, one of my preoccupations was to create an adequate platform to solve my difficulty to read and write. I still remember, how I was terribly disappointed to open the gift that I had received from the Doctor of Aravind Hospital, once it was confirmed that I would not get my sight back. I thought, it could be something like Braille, an educational apparatus. However, it was a Biscuit packet. So, I went on with my inquiries towards that direction. After learning Braille, one of my greatest ambitions was to

play Chess. Finally, I myself had to design a board to use the coins that I had received from abroad. After the development of the Screen readers, I understood that most of them are proprietary applications and they are beyond the reach of most of the impoverished users of my community. I could never agree to the prospect of using pirated copies as well. It was at this crucial juncture that I began my researches and findings in the open source sector for the visually impaired. At the moment, Linux even offers to you a state of the art OCR for reading Malayalam. Research for the sake of it is never my cup of wine, so all my researches are pragmatically useful for the challenged and I never believe in making big proclamations and findings to be discussed in academic circles.

Habeeb: What, according to you, are the serious issues in the social attitude towards the visually impaired?

Satyan: It is significant that over the times, there are many positive trends in the social attitude towards the physically challenged. An academic discipline like Disability Studies itself is a major achievement. However, whether this change has struck a chord in the general society and among the common people is a perplexing question. The society is not yet ready to part with the beliefs like visual impairment is darkness. They still hold their ocularnormative attitude conceiving vision as the ultimate and dominant way of perception in all major readings. The hasty generalizations which emerge mostly as a result of their confrontation with the most negative impact of the impairment still continue. The society always views the visually impaired and the other challenged as a receiving group. They are yet to gain proper representation in Political and statutory bodies. All these are major hurdles to the building up of a positive and healthy social attitude towards the visually impaired. What the visually impaired or the other physically challenged badly need is a barrier free environment.

Habeeb: The recent critics of Disability Studies are of the view that disability is more social than physical. How do you look at it?

Satyan: In its definition of Disability, Impairment and Handicap, The World Health Organisation has made it very clear that all these concepts are reversible or alterable in accordance with the circumstances. They are only arbitrary situations created by the unhealthy attitude and platform. If a candidate is trained well and given all the necessary prerequisites to conduct his operation, he is very comfortable. For example, the difficulties of a visually impaired candidate in mobility is solved to a great extent, if he or she is comfortable to use any of the techniques such as a Cane, a guided dog, an electronically structured device or similar assistance. However, if you change the platform he operates consecutively, his handicaps will also take shape in new ways. Thus, having the reasonable accommodation and a properly structured environment are the two mandatory things that the challenged people deserve. It is interesting to note that the newly issued RPWD act in India recognizes these facts as its fundamental principles.

Habeeb: Can we say that the problem of the visually impaired is basically the problem of a minority?

Satyan: What you have said is fully correct. If all the people in a society are short in height, imagine, you with your average height go to that society, it will be very difficult for you to pass the stairs and doorways, since they are very short and you may have to bend low frequently and you may even get collided and wounded due to your carelessness. The visually impaired have almost a similar situation here. This world is basically designed for the sighted and here the visually impaired being a minority has to confront umpteen challenges. However, the mainstream often fails to realize the fact that at any moment, a non-challenged can

come across a challenge like visual impairment and such people should not be put into an asylum as Saramago shows in his Novel *Blindness*. We must give them proper accessibility and confidence. So, any development measure that is done for a challenged community should be considered as a preparatory move to accommodate such adventitiously challenged people. Instead of treating the problems of the physically challenged as that of a separate group who need greater charity from the administration, the mainstream should consider them as the problems of the society in general. Similarly, instead of limiting the visually impaired into a group who constantly demands and receives charity, the society should realize that they can also contribute in their own way and their lack of contribution can create leakage in the total human resource potential of the country.

Habeeb: Who among the visually impaired can have better survival zest, the congenitally challenged or the adventitiously challenged?

Satyan: It is erroneous on our part to argue that either of this group has domination over the other. The most important factor in challenging visual impairment is your efficiency to use the residual abilities. It could be possible, only if you get the right training and you are given the most advanced facilities. If the initial guidance itself is wrong, the entire rehabilitation intervention will fail in accomplishing the expected result. The adventitiously afflicted must go through the process of adjustment and reach the stage of acceptance on the right track, otherwise, they can be the most unproductive people in the world. In the case of the congenitally challenged, the right early intervention and training strategies are what inculcates in them this positive attitude. However, if your impairment is slightly low and you have better vision or other sensory ability, where the impairment occurs, your challenges could be minimal and you can take many advantages over the totally challenged

candidates. All this should be decided with reference to the merit of the case under consideration and no common criteria can be imposed here.

Habeeb: Do you feel that marriage and sexuality are difficult tracks for the visually impaired to pass through?

Satyan: The reality here is very sordid and solid in this respect. Marriage for the visually impaired men is more or less manageable in the present circumstances. However, with reference to the visually impaired women, they are yet like taboos where even the impaired women are frustrated to go or rather they consider it a prevented zone. Most of the visually impaired men get hypergamous marriages. However, the visually impaired women get mostly alliances only from among the community and even some of them do not last long. Irrespective of much advancement, the visually impaired women themselves are going through a kind of emotional and social frigidity in this respect. I'm reminded of an experience of mine in this regard. Once, when an important dignitary attended a Seminar of our Federation, I posed a question that since right to marriage, sexuality and motherhood, a few basic rights of humanity, are fully denied to the visually impaired women, what was his opinion about the prospect of using artificial insemination as a probable means to give them all a child. The dignitary simply escaped from my question by referring to population explosion and social consequences. It being an expected answer, there was nothing unusual about it. But, soon after the programme, most of the visually impaired women there began attacking me saying that since they didn't have such a problem and they did not agree with such a prospect, on what grounds I had posed such a question. They said that they would remain unmarried than being through such obscene remarks. Here, even discussion about such a thing makes them uncomfortable. It is sure that there is no biological challenge with respect to sexuality as

misunderstood by many of us. So, it could be the wrongly injected attitude to such issues which the visually impaired women frequently use as a means of protection that makes them so resistive about such issues. Here again, in recent times there is a positive change.

Habeeb: Can you notice any visible change in the West in this regard.

Satyan: Since the Western societies promote living together and dating, in such societies the visually impaired women get a few alliances outside the marital bond as the general people get. However, in a society like ours, where sexuality is a by-product of marriage, this possibility is yet to have its impact. Since, the society in general considers the visually impaired women incompetent to meet with the expected duties of a wife they do not consider them as potential spouses.

Habeeb: I have come across certain instances where the parents themselves block the visually impaired women from getting married. What could be the reason for this attitude?

Satyan: In recent times, many visually impaired women are getting employed and their parents consider them as inexhaustible sources of income. If they remain unmarried, the income received will always be a positive strength for them. The fear of being cheated could also be there in a few cases. Since, many of our families have got better social status, they do not want their girls to be married below them, even if it is a visually impaired girl. So, they discourage such prospects of marriage. I have recently met a visually impaired girl from an elite family in Kerala. From her initial remarks itself, I could understand that she has a strong desire to get married. But, her parents are not ready to marry her to someone who is impaired or having a low social status. They don't mind if she marries a person with a wife and children preferably from a higher social circle. The girl however, prefers to marry a visually impaired

person of her taste than being the second spouse of a sighted gentleman. So, being unable to break the shackles of her family control, she remains unmarried still. Some of the visually impaired women come out of the shackles of such parental controls in actualizing their marital dreams. This problem again is more visible in the traditionally structured societies like ours.

Habeeb: One of the realities that confront a researcher about the visually impaired is that the experience of the visually impaired had seldom been a key factor in constructing knowledge around them. How do you look at it?

Satyan: Since the visually impaired had no access to produce their own knowledge and literature, the absence of experience oriented literature was a reality in the past. Again, since the visually impaired were not organized enough to challenge such images, they ruled our perceptions. However, the Disability Studies and the new literature of the visually impaired are making differences here and now the literature of the visually impaired is almost a reality.

Habeeb: The last three decades could make highly significant improvements for the challenged people through different Technological manifestations. I have often felt that this development is two times or three times higher than what was possible in the last few centuries. Do you agree?

Satyan: This degree of change is not simply limited into the life of the visually impaired alone. It is there in our general society as well. The change in our sector is only a reflection of the change, accessibility, production, construction, distribution of knowledge and expression that is facilitated by the technology in general. However, the difference is that, when the technological innovations could offer quicker and smarter possibilities to the general people, to us the visually impaired it has opened many

hitherto unimaginable prospects to solve many of our challenges. Yet I believe that the contribution of many of our pioneers like Louise Braille and Richard Huver are matchless in comparison with the mushrooming possibilities of technology today.

Habeeb: People usually say that the visually impaired have many special psychological characteristics and they are emotionally very fragile. What is your experience?

Satyan: As suggested by Lowenfeld, there is a scarcity in the research materials about the psychological aspects of the visually impaired. Since, many of the researches are unscientifically done and there are no counter knowledge to challenge them, what such studies propose are often established and sometimes get implemented. I had an experience of this kind. When a researcher told me about the mythical idea of anger and impatience which the society often associate to the visually impaired, I asked him back, if he lost his sight at that instance, whether he would develop some such special anger. He had no answer and his loud tone and chiding could only imply his tension and frustration in receiving such a rupture from an originally experienced. There could be a few immediate frustrations that impairment could create in an individual, but they are over, the minute you accept your reality and develop adequate strategies. Here again, Kenneth Jernigan's observation that the visually impaired always tend to see them as how the others view them, deserves special significance.

Habeeb: I have heard many people speaking about visual impairment as the most difficult form of disability. Can we say that it is more challenging than the other forms of impairments and disabilities?

Satyan: I also have heard such comparisons and exaggerations frequently from the general public. Such speakers are probably speaking from an

ocularnormative perspective, where they consider visual perception as the dominant one and in its absence people are considered incompetent to be given full human status. I'm of the view that each disability has its own difficulties. I consider visual impairment as a lesser difficulty in comparison with muscular dystrophy or any such problem where the mobility of a candidate is totally lost. Even for hearing impairment, there is the loss of language to a great extent. However, it is very difficult to convince the general public about this issue. I have read in an article that when a survey was conducted among a selected group of women on, given a chance, whether they prefer to marry a visually impaired person or a paralyzed person. It is said that more than eighty percent vouched for the paralyzed and only less than 10 percent stood for the visually impaired. This example tells much on the prejudices that are operational in our society about the world of the visually impaired. Similarly, once when I went for a collectivity of the wheel chair users, I heard a public speaker consoling them that they should not be worried over their fate, for, that person had seen umpteen eyeless people selling lottery and leading their life successfully. He stressed that the predicament of those wheel chair users was better than that of the visually impaired to whom he was referring by the term eyeless.

Habeeb: I have also heard you mentioning once about the experience of an individual who had opined that sight is only a luxury.

Satyan: The ocularnormative perspective claims that eighty percent of man's knowledge gathering is through his eyes and eyes are the gate ways to knowledge. Thus, you and I from that point of view can have only around 20 percent knowledge to survive. I feel that it is high time that we parted with such baseless statements and notions. The autonomy of the challenged candidates should be respected and each disability should be treated as instances of human diversity as the United Nation's

convention clearly states. As mentioned by you, I happened to have listened to a narrative where, having spent two weeks with a group of totally visually impaired persons, a researcher could conclude that sight is only a luxury and man can live very comfortably and peacefully without sight. All such realizations depend on the individual's attitude and perspective.

Habeeb: These days, we come across many researches by the mainstream students about the visually impaired, I feel that most of these studies are done unscientifically and their results are very often consequential to the community. What is your experience?

Satyan: After the semesterisation and implementation of the project as a compulsory requirement for the award of degree, many people are doing projects on the question of disability as well. Since, most other topics are already exhausted they get carried away by the disability field as a potentially viable option to be researched. However, most of such studies lack proper guidance and directions. The guides are often under qualified to give the scholar proper directions. Many such students visit my School every month and it is strange to say that even their questionnaires seem to be fully faulty and erroneous. They select their topic mostly out of their aim to complete the course and not out of their commitment to the community. Sometimes, such studies can create many problems to the researched community, if they are not properly done. For example, in the early 21st century, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences had conducted a study on the efficiency of the rehabilitation centres of the disabled funded by the Government of India. One of the main contributions of such centres was the rehabilitation of the adventitiously impaired and they simply underrated this idea while submitting their recommendations. So, the suggestions submitted by them made the Government prescribe many stringent notions for the

successful function of such centres. The final outcome was that most of such centres were forced to be closed. So, I'm of the view that the Government should prescribe some notions or protocols regarding researches on the impaired and there shall be a certification by a qualified professional in all such projects or researches.

Habeeb: In one of the texts I'm analyzing, a totally visually impaired person who was in that condition by birth is told to have a strange and irrational fear to darkness and dark colours. Do you feel that such fears are possible?

Satyan: If a candidate is visually impaired by birth, it is not possible for him or her to have any visual clues or ideas. However, it finally depends on what visual acuity that particular person has got. No such fears or inhibitions are created in a challenged individual as an objective effect of impairment. However, it is likely that conditioning can create such fears in certain individuals. They are created more out of the description of the others than any perceptions he or she makes. For example, I had a student who had his worst fears to the Lizard. His fear was so worst that I could not clear it by showing him a model of the same or making him touch a real lizard. A reference to Lizard itself will make him most restless. Thus, I feel that the fear that you have referred to could be created mostly out of the author's imagination than any real experience.

Habeeb: Do you feel that there are any more areas where research can produce constructive results for the visually impaired?

Satyan: There are many areas where proper research can produce wonderful results for the visually impaired and the society in general. One of the major areas of research that we have ignored so far is the advantage an individual enjoys in the absence of brain related images, especially visual images. Actually for a visually impaired person, his Psycho-visual centre is free and has no work to do. My greatest curiosity is to

know whether brain does use this unused space for any other purpose. At the same time, the brainal energy of a visually impaired person can be of a much higher level, since he is free of visual images. The visual images are more space consuming, as they are sharp and direct than auditory, olfactory or kinaesthetic images.

Habeeb: Who all were the most important influences in your life?

Satyan: My mother was my most important influence in my early life, especially in those days when I had lost my sight. I still remember the patience and strains that she had been through in assisting me in those long periods when I was admitted in hospitals with bandaged eyes. She always had a positive attitude towards everything. My brother Nalinakshan was also a favourite of mine in those early days. Later when I grew up my brother Vinod became my greatest influence and companion in my life. Those two brothers furnished for me a fully flowered late childhood and adolescent life which I might have otherwise lost due to my sudden impairment and its related consequences. Vinu was my eyes and we went to swimming pools and rivers to swim and to the sea to gather oysters and pearls. When we went to collect Nharakkai, a violet coloured fruit, I was deputed to climb the tree, since I could not collect the fallen fruit. When we played Football, the ball was covered with a plastic sheet, so that it will make sound when it moved. I had all the opportunities to enjoy various kinds of childhood plays and I had a very memorable and delicious childhood despite my impairment. Me and Vinu used to collect Cow dung from nearby fields and I still remember one day, how we were chased by a street Dog when we reached a desolate field on the sea-side. Finally we ran to the sea to escape. All those days were amazingly beautiful. Bible and the scriptures had motivated me for some time. Later, Jiddu and Osho caught my attention and I could read a lot of their writings. I'm also struck by many

Psychological books like that of Erich Fromm and Freud. The most recent of my influences is Richard Stalman and the free Software community.

Habeeb: How do you comment on the change that modernity has inculcated into the visually impaired community?

Satyan: I'm sure that there have been a lot of changes in the visually impaired community over the times. The technology offers us ample instances to reduce our dependency and to increase our ranges of experience. The social mobility of the community is also increased to a great extent. It is to that dimension of change that I connect a research like yours. In the absence of the present technological ambience, your difficulties in completing this research could be double or more. Here, your autonomy and skill are equally boosted by the technology and the new information revolution. However, I'm doubtful about the effect of this change in our social attitude. Though the challenged people are assured many things by statutory provisions, pragmatically, most such proclamations do not come beyond the papers. The ignorance of the authorities is a vital flaw of our times in implementing such provisions. The visually impaired community is yet to make a big fight to clear out the road they travel.

Habeeb: Can we say that the society is most often ignorant and unaware about the potential of the visually impaired to contribute towards its welfare in diverse ways.

Satyan: In my view, it is high time that the contributions from the world of the visually impaired flowed to the visual world. Sharada Braille writer, an application that I had developed along with my son Nalin, is such an application. This Software can produce text in any language using only six keys following the Perkins Braille mode using Louise Braille's six key mapping. So, the whole world can use a small six key structured

keyboard and the same combinations of keys to produce any text. The Braille system handles all languages with the same script. It is said that the only thing that the eye cannot see is the eye itself. Since it is open to the outer world, it blocks people very often from developing an introspective glance and inner world. I often wonder why people go to temples and idols of long distance, since most of them close their eyes instead of looking at it on doing their prayer. It is again interesting to see that people forget the very fact that the Train and Railway system functions more on the tactile mode than the visual mode. Similarly typing, one of the most conspicuous activities of our times is also done in an eyes-free mode. Thus, one can say that though overtly or covertly, the visual world is already using umpteen possibilities of the eyes-free world this range can be further increased by developing a more inclusive interaction between the visually impaired and the visually competent in all possible circumstances.

Habeeb: I thank you so much for the valuable time you have given me. I'm sure that your observations will give me a lot of clarity regarding my study.

Satyan: I'm happy that you have selected a topic related to our community as your field of study. I believe that this will open up many future instances for researches in this field. I'm again grateful to you for giving me an opportunity to contribute though in a limited degree in your study. I wish you all the best for your study. Thank you.

Habeeb: Thank you.

Kunnamkulam. 2nd July 2017.

Appendix II

An Interview with Mr. Georgekutty Karepparampil

By Habeeb C.

Mr. Georgekutty Karepparampil is one of the pioneers in the establishment of the social movement for the visually challenged in Kerala. He has played a very significant role in creating an identity for the visually impaired in Kerala. As one of the stalwarts among the visually challenged in Kerala, he had been the General Secretary of Kerala Federation of the Blind for about 34 years, from 1970 to 2004. It was he who created both the organisational foundation and stability to Kerala Federation of the Blind. He has been honoured for his accomplishments by different national and international agencies including the Government of India for the best social worker in India. At present, he acts as an advisor to Kerala Federation of the Blind. The following is an excerpt from an interview with him by Mr. Habeeb C. on 14 May 2012.

Habeeb. Can you tell me in brief the circumstances in which you lost your vision?

Georgekutty. It was in 1965 when I was working as a High School teacher that I recognized the gradual deterioration of my sight. At first I couldn't understand the gravity of it. Only after some days I realized that I was losing my sight. It was a case of Retinitis Pigmentosa.

Habeeb. Have you had any contact or awareness about the visually impaired before you became sightless?

Georgekutty. No, I didn't have any idea or relation with the visually challenged community.

Habeeb. How do you remember the initial experience of yours as you lost your sight?

Georgekutty. Even though mine was a case of gradual visual degradation, in the initial stage itself I had to resign my job, as the residual vision prevented me from going on as a teacher. Since I lost both my job and my sight at the same time, I felt like being in an unknown land. I was not aware of any opportunities for the visually challenged to survive. I was totally frustrated. I was the sole hope of my family. The sudden handicap that enveloped me put them to a deep distress. All this redoubled my agony and sufferings.

Habeeb. How did you happen to contact KFB?

Georgekutty. I happened to read in a newspaper that the first state conference and the foundation meeting of the KFB was to be organized at VDD School Kunnankulam, Trichur, on 10th and 11th of September 1967. Since I was on the lookout for any avenue of possibility for the visually challenged to survive, this news gave me a lot of hope, and my sister wrote a letter to Mr. P.O Varghese, the chairman of the adhoc committee for organising the convention. He invited me to the programme and I could attend the first state meeting of the organization itself. It was the first meeting of its kind organized in Kerala for the visually challenged.

Habeeb. Have you had any expectations on that visit that you would be coming to this field?

Georgekutty. My primary intention in attending that meeting was to know what were the main issues discussed by the conference of the visually impaired. I had already known that it was chiefly with a view to forming an organization. When I was a sighted person, I had plenty of opportunities to take part in different organizational activities, Balajanasakyam, Church related organizations, Clubs and organization

in school and colleges. So I expected that an organization for the visually challenged might open up a new world for people like me.

Habeeb. Then how did you step in to the leadership of the organization?

Georgekutty. In 1967 I was the Joint Secretary of the organization. For one year 1969-70, I acted as the Treasurer and it was on December 12 1970 that I became the organization's general secretary. Mr. P.O Varghese was the first General Secretary.

Habeeb. How do you review the socio-economic conditions of the visually challenged in Kerala, as you began steering the wheel of the organization?

Georgekutty. First of all the society didn't have a clear cut idea about the visually challenged and their potentials or skills. Neither the general society nor the leaders in administration could identify the presence of such a group in the society. The limited mainstream knowledge about the visually impaired was generated through the five blind schools working in different parts of Kerala. I conducted a survey in 1969 about the status of the visually impaired in Kerala as a part of my M.A. dissertation. Only 13 visually impaired were employed in Kerala at that time. It was mainly in Blind schools and in some companies.

Habeeb. What about the social institutions like marriage?

Georgekutty. Some of them got married, especially those who were employed, even some who were at home. But they were very few in number.

Habeeb. What were the main factors which enabled you to give an organizational foundation to KFB and to the visually challenged in Kerala?

Georgekutty. As I told you earlier I already had a great deal of experience in general organizational activities. Once I completed my M.A Sociology from Loyola College Thiruvananthapuram, I got a better awareness about the social work and social mobility. Once I came to this field, there were many social, cultural and political figures to encourage me and to guide me like the Arch Bishop of Thiruvananthapuram, Bennet Mar Gregarious, the former Accountant General T.N. Kuriyakkos, N.V. Krishnavaryar, and many such dignitaries. I got many valuable suggestions and directions from them, and that gave me a lot of confidence and strength.

Habeb. How about the support from among the visually challenged?

Georgekutty. They also gave me a very strong support and strength. All those who were on the leadership before me had already withdrawn from the mainstream activities due to some circumstantial compulsions. The first president E.V Joseph left for America. The first General Secretary and the second President P.O. Varghese also left the field in 1971 as he got employed in the government sector. The first Treasurer and the second General Secretary Abdul Salam went to Pune for his educational and career pursuit. Since all those pioneers left the field, there was a big vacuum to be filled in. It was at that time that two of my close associates Mr. C. Balakrishnan Nair, and T.P. Yeshudasan master, the then teacher of the government blind school Thiruvananthapuram began compelling me to take the leadership of the organization. They told me that since all the experienced hands had already backed out from the scenario, I should come forward to give a direction to the visually challenged in Kerala. They had their own personal problems also at that time. They wanted me to assist them in solving such problems by making negotiations with the authorities concerned. It was mainly due

to their inspiration and compulsion that I accepted the challenge of being the General Secretary.

Habeeb. You had a clear-cut vision and foundation at the beginning. But was it so easier to go ahead in the initial days?

Georgekutty. Never. It was an uphill task for me in the initial days to be got introduced and to do the organizational business. Especially there was a complete disregard from the part of the government authorities. Many of them were neither willing to see us nor ready to promote. We had to strive a lot to get access to and to be properly received and heard. Those who advised the government then with regard to the visually challenged, especially those who were related to the blind schools were of the view that the blind community could only be the recipients of the charitable generousities of the mainstream society. They didn't consider blind fit for social organization and collective bargaining. It was a really different experience for the authorities when we started visiting them for satisfying our rights. Initially they were ignoring us fully, and it was after much devoted work that we could bring about a visible change in their attitude. Even when we approached the government departments along with the social organizations like Lion's Club, they were very often disregarding our very presence itself and didn't give much room to our requests.

Habeeb. What were the circumstances in which KFB decided to strike against the government?

Georgekutty. The first strike was organized in 1969, and in the coming years we had to go through very many strikes to get us recognized by the authorities and to develop an agreeably competent situation to survive.

Habeeb. How did the visually challenged community gain access to the general educational scenario?

Georgekutty. It was only on account of the initiative of KFB that the visually challenged were given access to high school education. In the initial days their education was simply limited to the special education in the schools for the blind. After some years the students who completed their primary education from the blind schools of Kunnankulam and Thiruvananthapuram were allowed to have high school education in the nearby schools. However this facility was available for boys only. So, one of the first things that I managed to do after taking charge as the General Secretary was to arrange such a facility for girls in the blind school at Kottayam. The then Headmistress of the school, I don't remember her name exactly now, was a very committed lady, and she gave me all possible assistance for implementing this. Thus five girls were given admission to high schools through this scheme. Later this got extended to other schools like Kasargod. In the due course all schools were ready to give admission to girls and boys alike as a result of the interventions of KFB.

Habeeb. You could have built an amazing career in your life. Instead of attempting for such a thing, especially since you had registered for PHD, you concentrated your entire time for the well being of KFB, and in a sense sacked your life for the visually challenged community. What were the forces that made you remain so dedicated in this field?

Georgekutty. I was a sighted person at the beginning of my life, and I had already proven my skills both in my educational career and in the general organizational sphere. I was very ambitious about a glorious future in my youth. All on a sudden when I lost my sight, I felt that it was a plan of god with missions that I would not be able to understand

at that instance. Other than the particular vacuum created by the sudden withdrawal of the earlier organizers and the compulsions on me by my close friends, I had a special reason to believe so. After my SSLC my first intention was to become a priest in the Catholic Church. But I couldn't succeed in that mission on account of my night blindness. As I was tearfully leaving the Seminary, the then Archbishop of Changanacherry, His Grace Mar Mathew Kavukatt told me that probably God would have planned a more serious mission with my life. It was only after many years that I became visually challenged. Still at the advent of taking charge as the G.S., I thought that this could be that mission. Again the love and affection the blind friends extended towards me in the initial days of my involvement in KFB also made me remain in the association. Especially the first few people I met like Chettur Unnikrishnan, P.A. Jose and P.O Varghese could influence me a lot and they also played a great role in keeping me tied to the organization.

Habeeb. You have written many important books about the visually challenged both in English and in Malayalam. How do you share those experiences?

Georgekutty. I had interest in literature from my childhood onwards.

Between 1965-69 the period just after I lost my sight, I had written many articles and short stories and many of them were published in renowned magazines and newspapers. After completing my M.A. in 1969 from the University of Kerala, it was NV Krishnavarier Sir, the then Director of Bhasha Institute who inspired me to write my first book. Thus I completed my first book 'Vikalangar' The Disabled in 1973 for Bhasha institute. But it was published only in the year 1981 and I made necessary changes at the time of its publication. After that I

published my book “The Biography of Louise Braille”. Meanwhile I had a chance to visit Russia in 1974. After coming back, I wrote a book with the title “The Blind and Deaf in Soviet Union”. It was published with a Preface by C. Achutha Menon, the then Chief Minister of Kerala. These were the earliest literature about the blind in Kerala. We had no books before that. In 1983 I published a handbook on the assistance given to the disabled. I then published a small book with the title “The Blind Children”. The book “Persons with Disabilities in Society” was written through a UGC scheme. Fr. Jose Murickan, my Vice Principal at Loyola College, was my supervisor for drafting this book. My friends and relatives helped me to read out the material and to prepare the book. I had a provision to appoint a personal staff, and Mr. C.C. Mathew the later Office Superintendent of KFB Head Office was thus appointed. My sister Marykutty and wife Mariamma also helped me a lot in this herculean task. It was published in 1995 with an Introduction by Sri.Sitharam Kesari, the then Honourable Union Minister for Social Welfare, and released by Sri.A.K.Antony, the then Chief Minister of Kerala. In 2011, I prepared a book on “Rights and Concessions to Persons with Physical and Mental Disabilities. Sri.V.S Achudanandan the then Chief Minister wrote its Foreword. It is published and is being sold. 8888

Habeeb. How do you assess the current status of the visually challenged in Kerala?

Georgekutty. The visually impaired in Kerala have come up a lot from the past darkrooms they were tied to. In fact we have been able to achieve most of our goals and objectives in the pursuit of the last five decades. Today we have an agreeable social status and acceptance and we see the presence of the blind in almost all walks of the contemporary life. The society is not only ready to recognize us, but it is also ready to promote

us and to sanction our self autonomy. These were things that we could never have even dreamed of in our times. That doesn't mean that all is right, still the stigma towards the visually challenged as people with some big defect continues. Still the society is not ready to consider the blind outside the cocoon of blindness.

Habeeb. What according to you is the future of NGOs like KFB in Kerala?

Georgekutty. I don't have a considerable anxiety over the future of KFB, because it has got such a strong foundation. Democracy may undergo changes in accordance with the changing attitudes of the people, thus KFB also may change as future generation desires. However the platform will be there, as long as the needs of the visually challenged in Kerala remain.

Habeeb. Something about your family life.

Georgekutty. I got married in 1978. With the blessings of God, I got a very good partner Mariamma, well educated and suitable to my temperament. After our marriage she worked as a teacher in a high school. Now she is also retired. I have two children, a son and a daughter. My son Aji is a senior software engineer and my daughter Gigi is presently working as a teacher in an unaided school at Kottayam where she is married to, after completing her MSC B.Ed.

Habeeb. I have heard that you had visited many foreign countries. How do you relate those experiences?

Georgekutty. I travelled outside the country 10 times and visited 16 countries in the world, Soviet Union twice, U.K twice, Saudi Arabia twice Netherlands twice and many other countries. In all these countries I came across many folds of development for the visually challenged that we are yet to achieve here. They all gave me new strength and vigour to

lead the organization through its trials and tribulations and to create new phases of activism. I got in touch with many organizations, funding agencies and committed individuals in these visits.

Habeeb. Which was the most joyous moment of your life?

Georgekutty. There are many such moment in my life. However the most important and happiest occasion of my life was the day I met His Holiness Pope John Paul II representing KFB. It was a very rarely possible thing for a common man. But even after all my struggles, I was blessed to have that fortune. It was on 18th July 1979 that I met him at his residence at Vatican City. The four occasions when I received awards from the Indian presidents twice for the Organisation and twice as of my own were equally joyous for me. In terms of my activities of KFB, the day when the Indian president inaugurated the Head office of KFB was an equally memorable joyous day in my life.

Habeeb. What is your message to the next generation?

Georgekutty. My first advice to the coming generation is that we should progress individually, We should have a clearcut ambition and awareness from our childhood itself. Instead of shedding tears on what is lost, we should enrich ourselves with adequate skills and should be courageous enough to fight with any situation. We should always work hard and should try to be a part of the main society in all possible avenues. Above all this, all the visually challenged in Kerala must love and encourage KFB.

Habeeb. How do you assess the role of literature in changing the stereotyped existence and representation of the visually challenged? This was something I forgot to ask before.

Georgekutty. I believe that literature can play a very significant role in creating a real identity for the visually challenged. At present we have both scarcity of writers and even for those who are interested, there are lack of avenues. I hope that the missions like yours will begin a new era of hope in this field.

Habeeb. Thank you so much.

Georgekutty. Thank you.

WORKS CITED

- Amendola, Robert. "Perceptual Rehabilitation: The Replication of Visual Perception Through Nonocular Sensory Perceptions." *Essays on Blindness Rehabilitation in Honor of Thomas J. Carroll*. Ed. John F. Muldoon. American Foundation for the Blind, 1990.
- "Are you Blind or Blind?" *Caribbean Vision*. June 1987. www.de-beijer.aw/eng/blind.html. Accessed 1 July 2017.
- Barclay, Florence L. *The Rosary*. G. P. Putnam Sons, 1910.
- Barreyre, Gene. *The Blind Ship*. Dial, 1926.
- Benediall, B. Y. *Blind Sight*. Dodd Mead and Company, 1916.
- Bolt, David. *The Metanarrative of Blindness A Re-reading of Twentieth-Century Anglophone Writing*. The University of Michigan Press, 2017.
- Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. UBS Publisher's Distributors Pvt. Ltd., 2014.
- C, Akbar. "Othering' as a Form of Social Behaviour and its Impact on the Existence of the Visually Challenged." *I vs Eye: An Anthology of the Visually Impaired*. Ed. Mufeeda T. Centre for Advanced Studies and Research in English Language and Literature Farook College, 2014.
- C, Habeeb. "The Blind as the Other! The Dominant Discourse of the Sighted-Representation of the Visually Challenged in Select Malayalam Films."

The Politics of Representation 'of the Self' and 'the Other' in Literature and Film-pedagogy Beyond the Text. Ed. K. Rizwana Sultana. Centre for Advanced Studies and Research in English Language and Literature, Farook College, 2011.

- - -. "The New Technology as a New Platform for Expression, Accessibility and Equality: A Study on the Emerging Prospects of Technology for the Visually Challenged and the Other Marginalized." *Vimala International Research Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol.1 Issue 2, PG Department of English and Research Centre Vimala College, 9 June 2014.

- - -. "Typecasting and Societal Perception, Representation and Attitude Formation towards the Visually Challenged." *I vs Eye: An Anthology of the Visually Impaired*. Ed. Mufeeda T. Centre for Advanced Studies and Research in English Language and Literature Farook College, 2014.

- - -. "Western Literature and the Visually Challenged: Constructs and Resistance." *Assonance. A Journal of Russian and Comparative Literature*. No. 16. Department of Russian and Comparative Literature, University of Calicut, January 2016.

- - -. Preface. *I vs Eye: An Anthology of the Visually Impaired*. Ed. Mufeeda T. Centre for Advanced Studies and Research in English Language and Literature Farook College, 2014, pp. 7-11.

Caine, Hall. *The Scapegoat*. D. Appleton and Company, 1879.

Carroll, Reverend Thomas J. *Blindness: What It Is, What It Does, and How to Live With It*. Little, Brown and Company, 1961.

Cheyne, Ria. "Theorising Culture and Disability: Interdisciplinary Dialogues." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*. 3.1 2009.

Cholden, S. Louis. *A Psychiatrist Works with Blindness*. American Foundation for the Blind, 1958.

Coleman, M Lerita. "Stigma: An Enigma Demystified." *The Disability Studies Reader* Second Edition. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

Collins, Wilkie. *Poor Miss Finch*. Harper and Brothers, 1902.

---. *The Dead Secret*. Harper and Bros, 1873.

Conrad, Joseph. *The End of the Tether*. Doubleday, 1951.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.

United Nations. <https://www.un.org/.../disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities>. Accessed 30 June 2017.

Corey, Paul. *The Planet of the Blind*. Paperback Library, 1969.

Davis, Lennard J. "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention." *The Disability Studies Reader* Second Edition. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

---. "Introduction". *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*. Routledge, 2006.

---. *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. Verso, 1995.

Davis, William Sterns. *Falaise of the Blessed Voice*. The Macmillan Company, 1904.

Dickens, Charles. *Cricket on the Hearth*. Oxford University Press, 1956.

Diderot, Denis. *Lettre sur les Aveugles*. E. Droz, 1951.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *Sir Nigel*. McClure, Philips and Company, 1906.

Encarta World English Dictionary. Microsoft Corporation. Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999.

Farrell, Gabriel. *The Story of Blindness*. Harvard University Press Cambridge, 1956.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 1975. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Penguin, 1977.

---. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1: An Introduction. Trans. Robert Hurley. Vintage, 1980.

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory." *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

- - -. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. Columbia UP, 1997.

Gillard, Linda. *Star Gazing*. Piatkus, 2008.

Glasgow, Ellen. *The Deliverance*. Doubleday Page and Company, 1904.

Glaspell, Susan. *The Glory of the Conquered*. Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1909.

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Penguin, 1968.

- - -. "Selections from Stigma." *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

Grassman, Faltz. Christine. *The Sight Sickness*. Universe Books Inc, 2009.

Green, Henry. *Blindness*. Harvill P, 1996.

Gregory, Langton Richard. Jean G. Wallace. *Recovery from Early Blindness: A Case Study*. www.richardgregory.org/papers/recovery_blind/recovery-from-early-blindness.pdf. Accessed 1 July 2017.

Hersh, A. Marion and Michael A. Jonson. Eds. *Assistive Technology for Visually Impaired and Blind People*. Braille Lite, 2008.

Hugo, Victor. *The Man Who Laughs*. Grosset and Dunlap, nd.

Hull, John M. *Touching the Rock: An Experience of Blindness*. SPCK, 1990.

---. *On sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness*. One World Publications, 1997.

Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. University of California Press, 1994.

Jernigan, Kenneth. "Blindness: The Circle of Sophistry." *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. Floyd Mattson. National Federation of the Blind America. 1990.

---. "Blindness: New Insights on Old Outlooks." *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. Floyd Mattson. National Federation of the Blind America. 1990.

---. "Blindness: The Lessons of History." *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. Floyd Mattson. National Federation of the Blind America. 1990.

---. "Blindness, is literature against us?" *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. Floyd Mattson. National Federation of the Blind America. 1990.

Kareparampil, Georgekutty, Dr. Murican, Jose. S.J. *Persons with Disabilities in Society*. Kerala Federation of the Blind. 1995.

- - -. "An Interview with Mr. Georgekutty Karepparampil by Habeeb C." *I vs Eye: An Anthology of the Visually Impaired*. Ed. Mufeeda T. Centre for Advanced Studies and Research in English Language and Literature Farook College, Kozhikode, 14.5, 2012.

Keller, Helen. Anne Sullivan. John A. Macy. *The Story of My Life*. Doubleday, Page & Company, 1903.

Keller, Helen. *Light in My Darkness*. Ed. Ray. Silverman. Doubleday, Page and Company, 1994.

- - -. *My Religion*. Doubleday, Page and Company, 1927.

- - -. *Out of the Dark: Essays, Lectures, and Addresses on Physical and Social Vision*. Doubleday, Page and Company, 1913.

- - -. *The World I Live in*. The Century Company, 1910.

Lal, Prem. *Atma Kadha*. Pavitram creations, 2010.

Langworthy, Jessica L." Blindness in Fiction: A Study of the Attitude of Authors Toward their Blind Characters." *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Vol. 14.282 1930.

- Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (2009). "Social construction of reality". S.Littlejohn, & K.Foss (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of communication theory*. (pp. 892-895). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412959384.n344. Accessed 7 July 2017.
- Linton, Semi. "Reassigning Meaning." *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.
- Lowenfeld, Berthold. *The Changing Status of the Blind: From separation to integration*. Charles C Thomas, 1975.
- . "A Psychological Approach to Blindness." 1949. *Berthold Lowenfeld on Blindness and Blind People: Selected Papers by Berthold Lowenfeld*. American Foundation for the Blind, 1981.
- . "A Distinction in Terms." 1940. *Berthold Lowenfeld on Blindness and Blind People: Selected Papers by Berthold Lowenfeld*. American Foundation for the Blind, 1981.
- . "Effects of Blindness on the Cognitive Functions of Children." 1948. *Berthold Lowenfeld on Blindness and Blind People: Selected Papers by Berthold Lowenfeld*. American Foundation for the Blind, 1981.
- . "The Case for the Exceptional." 1946. *Berthold Lowenfeld on Blindness and Blind People: Selected Papers by Berthold Lowenfeld*. American Foundation for the Blind, 1981.

- - -. "What Is Blindness?" 1974. *Berthold Lowenfeld on Blindness and Blind People: Selected Papers by Berthold Lowenfeld*. American Foundation for the Blind, 1981.
- - -. "Integration-the Challenge of Our Times." 1967. *Berthold Lowenfeld on Blindness and Blind People: Selected Papers by Berthold Lowenfeld*. American Foundation for the Blind, 1981.
- - -. "The Psychoanalytic Contribution to the Understanding of the Early Development of Blind Children." 1979. *Berthold Lowenfeld on Blindness and Blind People: Selected Papers by Berthold Lowenfeld*. American Foundation for the Blind, 1981.
- - -. *Our Blind Children Growing and Learning with Them*. 2nd ed. C. C Thomas, 1964.
- Mackay, Isabel. Ecclestone. *The House of Windows*. Cassell and Company Limited, 1912.
- Mani, Mng. *See With the Blind*. Christoffel- Blindenmission. 1999.
- Mehta, Ved. *A Family Affair: India under Three Prime Ministers*. Oxford University Press, 1982.
- - -. *All for Love*. Nation Books, 2002.
- - -. *Fly and the Fly-bottle: Encounters with British Intellectuals*. Penguin, 1965.

---. *John is Easy to Please: Encounters with the Written and the Spoken Word.*

Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd, 1971.

---. *The Ledge Between the Streams.* Norton and Company. 1982.

Milton, John. *The Portable Milton.* Viking Press, 1949.

Mitchell, David T., and Sharon L. Snyder. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse.* University of Michigan Press, 2000.

Morris, John G. *The Blind Girl of Wittenberg.* (Karl August Wildenhahn)

Lutheran Publication Society, 1887.

Oliver, Mike. "Defining Impairment and Disability: Issues at Stake." *Exploring the Divide.* Ed. Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer. Disability Press, 1996.

Rai, N. K. Dr. *Visual Handicaps and Personality Dynamics.* Academic

Excellence, 2004.”

Richards, Laura E. *Melody.* Estes and Lauriat, 1897.

“Representation.” (1995). *Critical Terms for Literary Study.* Retrieved from

<http://www.credoreference.com/entry/uchicagols/representation>.

Accessed 1 April 2017.

Roberts, Alvin. *Coping with Blindness: Personal Tales of Blindness*

Rehabilitation. Southern Illinois University Press, 1998.

Rose, Lynn. "Deaf and Dumb in Ancient Greece". *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

Rodas, Julia Miele. "On Blindness." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 3.2 2009.

Roy, Arundhati. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Penguin, 2017.

Saramago, José. *Blindness*. Harvill Press, 1995.

Satchidanandan, K. Introduction. *I vs Eye: An Anthology of the Visually Impaired*. Ed. Mufeeda T. Centre for Advanced Studies and Research in English Language and Literature Farook College, Kozhikode, 2014. 1-7.

Satyasheelan, K. Personal Interview. 2 July 2017.

Shakespeare, Tom. "The Social Model of Disability." *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

Siebers, Tobin. "Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body." *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

- - -. "On the Government of Disability: Foucault, Power, and the Subject of Impairment." *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

Snyder, Sharon. L. and David T. Mitchell. "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor." *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*.

Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

- - -. *Cultural Locations of Disability*. University of Chicago Press, 2006.

"Social Constructionism Facts, Information, Pictures. Encyclopedia.com

Articles about Social constructionism". www.encyclopedia.com.

Accessed 7 July 2017.

Sontag, Susan. *Death Kit*. Vintage, 1967.

Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonnus*. Trans. Charles R. Walker, Anchor Books, 1966.

- - -. *Oedipus Rex*. Translated by Robert Fitzgerald and Dudley Fitts, Harcourt Brace, 1949.

"Star Gazing - A Novel by Linda Gillard." www.lindagillard.co.uk/star-gazing.php. Accessed 1 July 2017.

Tagore, Rabindranath. "Vision." *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories*. The Macmillan Company, 1916.

Tedric, Brendan. "Adjustment, Losses and Positive Attitude: Dealing With Vision Impairment and Blindness." *Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians*. www.blindcanadians.ca › ... › CBM v. 25 - Psychology of Blindness. Accessed 30 June 2017.

TenBroek, Jacobus. "The Cross of Blindness." *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. Floyd Mattson. National Federation of the Blind America. 1990.

- - -. "Within the Grace of God." *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. Floyd Mattson. National Federation of the Blind America. 1990.

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. Part II, Section 1. The Extraordinary Gazette of India. Ministry of Law and Justice, (Legislative Department), 1996.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Part II, Section 1. The Extraordinary Gazette of India. Ministry of Law and Justice, (Legislative Department), 2016.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina*. Trans. Constance Garnett. The Russian Messenger, 1877.

Tremain, Shelley. *On the Subject of Impairment." Disability/Postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory*. Ed. Mairian Corker and Tom Shakespeare. Continuum, 2002.

Tuttle, D and N.Tuttle. *Self-Esteem and Adjusting with Blindness: The Process of Responding to Life's Demands*. Springfield, 1996.

Twersky, Jacob. *Blindness in Literature*. American Foundation for the Blind, 1955.

Vinayan, *Vasanthiyum Lakshmiyum Pinne Njaanum*. Thriveni productions, 1999.

Wendell, Susan. "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability." *The Disability Studies Reader Second Edition*. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2006.

World Health Organisation. "International Classification of Functioning and Disability. ICIDH-2." World Health Organisation. 2001. Accessed 3 Dec. 2004.

Wyndam, John. *The Day of the Triffids*. Book Club Associates, 1981.