EMANCIPATION FROM THE ABLEIST SOCIAL ORDER: AN INTERSECTIONAL READING OF CONTEMPORARY DISABIITY NEPALI LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of

Tribhuvan University in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

ENGLISH

By

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June2026

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "Emancipation from the Ableist Social Order: An Intersectional Reading of Contemporary Nepali Disability Literature" is my own work and it contains no materials previously published. I have not used its materials for the award of any kind and any other degree. Where other authors' sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Pratima Gurung

June2026

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We certify that this dissertation entitled "Emancipation from the Ableist Social Order: An Intersectional Reading of Contemporary Nepali Disability Literature" was prepared by Pratima Gurung under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for the final examination by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of DOCOTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in ENGLISH.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While dissertation and writing can be lonely occupations, the completion of this work would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of so many people. First, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Shiva Ram Rijal, lecturer at the Central Department of English, Kritipur for his constant support, inspiration and guidance. Similarly, I extend my sincere acknowledgement to my co-supervisor Dr. Bal Bahadur Thapa, lecturer at the Central Department of English, Kritipur. His insightful comments have remained useful to me. Both of them have always been supportive to shape my dissertation and learn from them.

I am respectful to Prof. Dr. Dubinada Dhakal, Dean and Assistant Dean, Asso. Prof. Dr. Khom Raj Kharel who provided me suggestion during my viva and during the writing process. Similarly, I am indebted to Anita Khanal and Anita Sapkota and other members of Office of Dean Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, for their constant inspiration and co-operation during my dissertation period.

I am equally indebted to my teacher, Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, former Head of the Central Department of English. His guidance has always shown me the path and inspired me to move ahead. I thank Prof. Dr. Dhruva Bahadur Karki, the Head of the English Department, who has always been a great supporter of my work. I would also like to thank the Research Committee, TU and faculties of Central Department of English, TU for the support they provided to get the documents done on time.

I would equally like to thank the current chief of Padma Kanya Multiple College, Prof. Dr. Jaya Laxmi Pradhan for her support. I would also like to thank the Head of English Department, Prof. Dr. Baldev Adhikari for his inspiration and support during my study. I thank the faculty members of Padma Kanya College for

being there throughout my struggles. Institutionally, I acknowledge Padma Kanya College and Coordination Division TU for providing me a leave for the study.

I am thankful to Prof. Dr. John Gilroy from Sidney University, Prof. Dr. Karen Soldatic from the University of Western Australia, Associate Prof. Dr. Thuy Nguyen from Carleton University, Prof. Dr. Asha Hans, Utkal University, Niluka Gunawardena from University of Colombo. Their continuous support during this journey is the treasure I carry forever in my life. It was with them; I got exposed to intersectionality approach to disability issues in academia. I thank the writers Jhamak Ghimire, Kamal Lamichhane,Shristi KC, Manisha Gauchan and Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi whom I grateful for their writings and consulted during my dissertation phase.

I thank external examiners Prof. Dr Jiblal Sapkota and Dr. Toyanath Upadhyay, pre-viva expert Prof. Bharat Prasad Upadhyay, and the final viva expert Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi. Their suggestions and comments have helped me comprehend my dissertation and shape it

To my fellows and organization associated, I acknowledge their help and moral support. My colleagues Dr. Shree Kumar Maharjan, Krishna Gahatraj, and the NIDWAN family consistently urged me to complete this study on time. I thank my family members -my source of inspiration, my grandmother, without whom I would not be completing my dissertation. I would equally like to thank Dr. Tak Raj Gurung, for his moral and intellectual support and I am equally thankful to Deerghayu Gurung. Their unwavering love, inspiration, patience, and understanding of my PhD kept me stronger throughout. At the end, I thank my family members, office staff, and colleagues. Their friendly support has helped me get things done on time.

Pratima Gurung

June2026

Abstract

This dissertation examines the intersectional social orders the writers and characters go through in Jhamak Ghimire's JīvanKāṭhākīPhūl(*A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*)(2010), Kamal Lamichhāne 's *Antardṛṣṭi*(2019), Sṛṣṭi KC's movie*Blind Rocks* (2018), Abhi Subedi's*MāyādevīkāSapanā (Dreams of Mayadevi)* (2006) and Manisha Gauchan's*White Cane* (2013). The first two texts are autobiographical, the third is a biopic and the latter two are literary works. Together they illuminate how disability is intertwined within the intersections of gender, class, age, education, language, access and other dimensions that shape individual's lives. By bringing these diverse literatures and narratives into conversation, this study challenges monolithic understandings of disability and argues that disability cannot be understood in isolation from other social identities and structures of oppression and social inequality.

The dissertation employs critical disability studies and intersectional theory as a guiding line of hermeneutics and conducted a textual analysis of these literary texts. In the meantime, it contextualizes these writings to the rise of disability consciousness in Nepal. It shares the message that disability literature is not merely 'representational' but 'transformative', both reflecting and amplifying the struggles and aspirations. It points out that social categories such as class, gender, ethnicity, age, access to resources intersect and influence individual's lived experience of disability, struggles and emancipation that is produced through interlocking systems of power and agency.

To deepen the analysis, the dissertation incorporates insights from the Nepali disability movement before and after 1990's and associates with the Western to South Asian scholars and context. The dissertation scales up the concept of 'personal

tragedy' and encompasses lives of individuals through attitudes, system, spaces and location as a site of making meaning and power they hold in Nepali society. It points out that writers Ghimire, Lamichhāne and KC and literary characters SallerīSāhinlāand Bhāśvat embody aspirations of persons and resist the hegemonic meanings of the singular definition of disability and negotiate how representation, ideology, and power intersect both as oppression and resistance.Together, they present complex, multi-layered portrayals who navigate intersecting structures of oppression while envisioning possibilities for social transformation. They struggle and achieve, sharing certain commonalities while maintaining distinct differences.

Collectively, they reveal how the political uprisings of 1990 and 2006 in Nepal infused new dynamism of disability and underscored empowerment for persons with disabilities. Struggles and storytelling rooted in lived experience aimed at individual level with empowerment andintuitional level with policy transformation, have paved the way toward emancipation, just and inclusive social order. Through individual resilience and collective spaces, their voices tempered by pain and patience envision a shared future grounded not on passive acceptance, but on active, intersectional, and transformative agency. These literary productions are interwoven with the political aspirations of the disability movement, seeking recognition, dignity, emancipation and systemic transformation.

This dissertation concludes that the life narratives and literary texts are critical sites where multiple social variables within the Nepali society order intersect as a central point of understanding disability and traces the intersectional trajectories of both lived and fictional experiences and foregrounds and disability discourse from inclusion, emancipation, and social transformation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Contexts of Nepali Disability Writings

1.1 Background

Society is composed of a diverse range of individuals - abled and disabled, male and female, rich and poor, rural and urban, high caste and low castefrom various social, cultural and geographical backgrounds. This system upholds norms that position able - bodied, rich, urban and high caste and often male identities, as the standard, while devaluing and excluding those who do not fit this ideal. An ableist social order imposes hierarchies that privilege able-bodied, often intersecting with gender and other social divisions to marginalize diverse persons with disabilities, especially women and marginalized groups. Ableist social order, thus reinforces unequal power dynamics and limits the recognition of the full humanity and dignity of persons with disabilities.

This dissertation examines various unequal power dynamics: how gender, class, ethnicity, access to education, state apparatus, information/networks, representation, demographic positions, and other social variables shape the lives of diverse persons with disabilities. To unpack these underlying issues, it focuses on the life experiences based on peoples lived realities of Jhamak Ghimire, Kamal Lamichhāne and Sṛṣṭi KC, as documented in *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*, *Antardṛṣṭi*, and *Blind Rocks* - the first two autobiographies and the third a biopic. Similarly, it also analyses the experiences of the literary characters SallerīSāhinlā and Bhāśvat from *Mayadevika Sapana(Dreams of Mayadevi)* and *White Cane*, authored by Abhi Subedi and Manisha Gauchan. By tracing the paths of both real individuals and fictional figures, the study underscores that disability-related experiences differ significantly across individuals and cultural contexts, depending largely on the

different social variables to which they are associated where meanings are produced, circulated, and contested. Factors such as the state apparatus provided services, access to information, social networks, and opportunities for social mobility vary widely from individuals. Moreover, the presence of multiple marginalized identities conceptualizes the nature of social-cultural interactions, exposure, meaning making, power influencing how lives are lived and understood and social meanings are re-produced.

Multiple intersecting and subordinate identities compel persons with disabilities to experience compounded injustices and inequalities in their daily lives in different layers. For some, gender adds another layer of difficulty; women often face heightened challenges due to entrenched patriarchal norms and systems. Others encounter multiple phases of exclusion because they belong to minority religious or linguistic communities. Many struggle more acutely when they lack education and have no power and knowledge of how to navigate or access state apparatus. Some remain socially invisible because they are unable to express themselves and live in the conditions of severe socio - economic hardships. If individuals from linguistically and economically marginalized backgrounds feel excluded due to limited education, lack of information, and restricted access to state institutions, then a critical question emerges: how do those from mainstream social echelons utilize their access to education, information, and state resources to achieve social mobility and power? This inquiry forms a critical part of the analysis undertaken in this dissertation.

Being mindful of the paucity of disability literature from the Global South particularly from Nepal, I recognize that dissertation in this area could open new avenues of inquiry and foster critical discourse on disability. My engagement with contemporary writings, many of which are grounded in the disability perspective,

drew attention to two autobiographies by writers living with disabilities: *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns* (2010) by Jhamak Ghimire and *Antardṛṣṭi*(2019) by Kamal Lamichhāne, as well as the biopic *Blind Rocks* (2018) based on the life of Sṛṣṭi. KC. These writings act as agents of their own experiences and stories and they express critical lens for understanding disability, and fight for autonomy and are politically aware and show readiness to engage with systemic and structural issues like education, access, employment, perception, representation, discrimination, and state's ignorance. In addition to this, I have also selected two literary works: *Dreams of Mayadevi* (2006) by Abhi Subedi and *White Cane* (2013) by Manisha Gauchan because these texts portray disability through nuance and varied lenses. I describe how storytelling, language, and ethnic nuances shape the experiences of SallerīSāhinlā and Bhāśvat in the play and the novel respectively. All these texts offer critical examination where dominant ideological meanings about disability such as 'deficiency', 'dependency', and 'dominant structure' are contested and can be reinterpreted through counter narrative as an 'alternative structure', 'empathy' and 'emancipation.'

Situated within broader historical, socio-political, and academic discourses, disability discourse in Nepal unfolds across five interrelated dimensions. First; it examines the representation and portrayal of disability in literary and cultural texts, tracing the ways in which evolving social consciousness has shaped perceptions of disability over time. Second; it investigates the historical and socio-political context of Nepal, paying particular attention to the structural inequalities and systems of power that have contributed to the marginalization of persons with disabilities and other excluded groups. Third; it explores disability studies as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry, drawing insights from the humanities, social sciences, law, public policy,

pedagogy, and development. Fourth; it analyses the influence of global disability rights movements and international disability discourses on development agendas, donor priorities, and institutional investments in disability-inclusive programs. Fifth; it examines policy and legislative frameworks that have emerged in response to disability rights advocacy, assessing their role in promoting inclusion, participation, and social justice for persons with disabilities.

With these five dimensions, in the first dimension, I discuss disability is a socially and culturally constructed issue and note that disability has remained a least addressed topic in literature and academia. While reviewing the literatures, I came across limited corpus of literary works on disability literatures and writings. Prior to 1950, Nepali literature did not develop a distinct tradition of disability writing. Representations of disability were largely confined to religious narratives, folklore, and occasional literary references in which impairment was understood through moral, karmic, or charitable frameworks. Gradually, from the period from the 1950s to the 1960s, early era of symbolism and psychological portrayals of characters living with disabilities in Nepali literatures was introduced. For example, Parijat's *Siris ko Phool* (1965) introduces a male protagonist burdened with deep psychological scars and possible post-traumatic symptoms. While he is not medically labelled as 'disabled', his mental instability functions as a form of impairment. This portrayal symbolizes alienation and existential loss the protagonist is living with. Likewise, short fiction by authors such as Madan Mani Dixit occasionally depict blind or crippled characters, often as moral metaphors. The 1970's represent a phase of social realism with fatalistic undertones. Lain Singh Bangdel's *Langada ko Sathi* (1974) marks a significant turning point by directly centring a physically impaired protagonist - a lame, orphaned boy who occupies a marginalized social poSumsition.

The novel blends social realism with karmic interpretation. Reading through the lens of critical disability studies, the novel exposes the structural and attitudinal forms of ableism that shape the boy's lived experience, including social exclusion, economic precarity, and moral judgment. The novel intersects disability with class, orphanhood, and social vulnerability, demonstrating how multiple axes of marginalization compound his oppression. While the novel draws on social realism to foreground material hardship, it also incorporates a karmic interpretive framework, reflecting dominant cultural beliefs that moralize disability.

Similarly, Ramesh Bikal's rural stories frequently feature physically impaired farmers, beggars, or leprosy-affected villagers. Those characters remain marginalized and excluded not only by disability but also by poverty. They reinforce structural oppression without proposing systemic remedies. The 1980s can be characterized as an era of complex psychological marginalization, exemplified by the works of Dhruba Chandra Gautam. His works explore disability as both a psychological and social condition. Some of his characters suffer from paralysis or mental illness. They project alienation, moral ambiguity, and the rural–urban divide. By the late 1980s, literature concentrated more on the psychological nuance of persons with disability. But it was only after the restoration of democracy Nepali literature adopted a social and human centred and emancipatory lens toward disability. Such a shift emerged because of the influence of global disability rights movement and the awareness that came on persons with disability.

The post 1990's Nepali arts and literature have increasingly focused on social and human-centred perspectives. They were influenced by self, socio-political consciousness and emerging disability organizations in Nepal. Works like Narayan Dhakal's *Pretkalpa* (1993) and newer short stories in journals portray disability as

part of social diversity. They frame injustice as structural consequence rather than fate. Yug Pathak's *Urgen ko Ghoda* (2009) employs allegory to interrogate entrenched social hierarchies and the invisibility of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. Keshav Dahal's short stories in the *Mero Anubhav* series portray urban disability experiences. They foreground issues of employment discrimination and pervasive attitudinal barriers. Narayan Wagle's *Mayur Times* (2010) depicts conflict-era trauma, linking political unrest to enduring psychological and physical impairments.Similarly, in his later works, Ramesh Bikal portrays disabled characters as active participants in social and political processes rather than passive recipients of charity or sympathy.

This shift towards agency, self-representation, and the articulation of lived experience became more pronounced after the 1990s with the emergence of writers with disabilities such as Jhamak Ghimire, Kamal Lamichhane, and Sṛṣṭi KC. Their disability writings occupy a significant place in Nepali disability literature, as they foreground personal experiences, struggles, aspirations, and resistance from the perspective of disabled subjects themselves. The post-1990 period thus marks an important turning point in the development of disability writing in Nepal, characterized by the rise of self-authored narratives that challenged dominant stereotypes and opened new avenues. It is for this reason that the present dissertation situates its analysis primarily within disability writings produced after the 1990s.

Engaging with this disability writings reveal that Nepali disability literature emerges from a complex intersection of historical marginalization, socio-cultural stigma, and evolving socio-political consciousness. Nepali society shaped by entrenched hierarchies of caste, structure, patriarchy and attitudinal mindset has long

relegated diverse persons with disabilities to the margins, often framing disability through ‘past sins’, ‘karmic fate’, ‘misfortune’, or ‘social shame’ are interconnected.

Against this backdrop, though the writers with disabilities such as Jhamak Ghimire, Sṛṣṭi KC, and Kamal Lamichhāne describe disability from a charitable to individual struggle however their writings mark a significant shift in the disability literatures in Nepali context by creating ample of spaces for interpretation from different aspects. Like these authors do not merely produce literature about disability; they write from embodied experience, offering insider perspectives that challenge the dominant ableist structure and paradigm. They deconstruct an ableist and other social order; a system that privileges able - bodied, male individuals and dominant groups and voices that often marginalizes diverse persons with disabilities by treating able-bodied as the norm and ideal ableist stereotypes. They debunk the social realities and systemic barriers they face both in private and public spheres. Their works portray the lived struggles of navigating social exclusion, infrastructural barriers, and intersectional oppressions, while envisioning possibilities for resistance, dignity, transformation and emancipation. Their personal narratives are a site of ideological struggle: dominant discourses of ableism, karma, and pity are reproduced and counter-hegemonic representation contributing to shifting societal perceptions.

Similarly, the literary characters SallerīSāhinlā and Bhāśvat, from *Dreams of Mayadevi* by Abhi Subedi and *White Cane* by Manisha Gauchan respectively, offer nuanced explorations of disability within the Nepali socio-cultural context. These characters embody the aspirations, struggles, and social negotiations from the margin as persons with disabilities in a rapidly changing society. Through their stories, the texts highlight how disability is experienced not merely as a physical or medical condition but how the characters’ experiences highlight state mechanism, institutional

system, and attitudinal barriers that intersect with disability to produce differentiated experiences of marginalization and exclusion. These narratives highlight culture is a contested space, where counter-hegemonic readings and alternative meanings about disability and agency can emerge. SallerīSāhinlā and Bhāśvat's journeys reveal the intersectional experience they face ranging from stigma and exclusion to moments of empowerment and resilience thus contributing to a broader understanding of disability as a dynamic, socially embedded experience.

The second-dimension highlights disability issues investigate the historical and socio-political context of Nepal, paying particular attention to the structural inequalities and systems of power. Disability rights and identity in Nepal have gained prominence particularly during periods when traditional power structures were being challenged. Stuart Hall's cultural studies framework explains that this shift by emphasizing that "culture is a site of ideological struggle, where meanings and social identities are produced, circulated, and contested, rather than fixed or neutral" (130). As the old hierarchical and centralized power structures began to erode, cultural and political spaces opened for new discourses for rights, inclusion, and social justice. For example, historians and Nepal studies scholars regard the post-1990s as the rise of the era of marginalized communities. Harka Gurung, a geographer writes,

> The *Muluki Ain* legitimized the high caste group Brahmin- Chettri rule over the other groups of the country, who were ranked lower in the Hindu caste hierarchy. The distinct cultures, spiritual traditions, and systems of social organization and governance of the marginalized groups were not recognized by the Nepal state, though subsequent constitutional reforms have formally eliminated them. (06)

Gurung firmly argues that the rise of conservative Hindu elites in the late eighteenth century laid the foundation for a socio-political order that stigmatized several socially functional values. Their dominance led to the institutionalization of certain religious beliefs and superstitions like framing disability as a curse inflicted by divinities upon individuals who had committed misdeeds in their past lives. This worldview contributed to deep-rooted social exclusion. Similarly, the historical injustices inflicted on Indigenous communities through legal instruments such as the *Muluki Ain*, Gurung highlights the potential for building a more egalitarian society in the politically liberated context following the 1990 restoration of democracy.For more than three decades, social movements in Nepal have operated as what Stuart Hall describes as "significant forces embedded in power relations," within which marginalized voices are continuously "negotiated", "resisted", and "reinterpreted dominant social and political structures" (234). Five major historical mobilizations have contributed to inspire the nation building agendas: Women, Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, Madhesis, and Disabled. During the Panchayat era (1960–1990), social movements in Nepal were acutely suppressed and marginalized by the authoritarian regime.

Historically, disability in Nepal has been marginalized through religious beliefs, legal codifications such as the Muluki Ain of 1854, and deeply entrenched caste hierarchies, resulting in multi-layered exclusions. For example, in the past persons with disabilities were taken as the matter of medical treatment in Nepal. They are still treated as 'patients' and taken as 'special people' who receive certain support from the government. This views still persists which defines that conservative responses make individuals living with such a state of corporeality face a greater problem. It is argued that societal barriers and stigma enforce persons with disabilities

feel inferior, outcast and burden. By addressing these barriers, one can bring changes in the societal perception, values, systems, structures, and attitudes along with the environment that they live in.

The third-dimension concerns disability studies as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that draws upon diverse disciplinary perspectives and broader critical debates. Informed by scholarship in disability studies, this dissertation approaches disability as an evolving and socially situated concept rather than a fixed biological condition. Disability cannot be understood in isolation from an individual's corporeal condition; rather, it must be examined within the historical, socio-cultural, political, and institutional contexts that shape its meaning and experience. From this perspective, disability is produced and mediated through social norms, cultural values, dominant narratives, stereotypes, and symbolic practices that privilege able-bodied while marginalizing disabled bodies and identities.In this connection, disability studies scholar, Semi Linton argues that disabled are connected, not by personal symptoms but by “social and political circumstances that have forge us as a group” (*Claiming Disability* 4). Linton suggests that disabled are united by societal structures and policies that shape their lives. These social and political circumstances such as access to healthcare, education, employment, and environment create common experiences and challenges for them, despite the diversity in their impairment and conditions.

Disability is as much physical as social and cultural construct; much depends on how parochial understanding about disability is replaced by liberal views. Since society everywhere is always on the move, so are the views on disability. Opinions on disabilities in one place and point of time in its history differ from the ones in practice at another place and time. It is agreed that understanding of disability follows a process of decoding the social and cultural system of a particular region and historical

time frame. To analyse these experiences and journeys, the dissertation draws on critical insights from the writings of critical disability studies and its scholars like, Lennard J. Davis. Davis writes about disability that "the problem is not with disability; in fact, the problem is with the persons who believe that they are the ideal and most abled ones" (03). This has remained the leading critical approach to the discussion in this dissertation. The notion of 'what is an ideal' or 'healthy body' directly shape persons to perceive and define what is not a 'perfect body' and also the quest for aspiring 'perfect body'. To analyse these aspects, the dissertation draws insights from Mike Oliver's writings as well. Particularly, Oliver's term 'critical social attitudes' provides further critical insight. The next scholar whose ideas the dissertation employs is Tom Shakespeare. His 'social model of disability' has remained the guiding principle of the research. Together, Davis, Oliver and Shakespeare support the views that developing and acting out policies in favour of persons with disabilities create their new identity for them. Importantly, the dissertation uses the critical insights of Semi Linton, Rose Marie Garland, Helen Meekosha, and Anita Ghai, Malini Chib's arguments from gender and intersectional interpretative tools.

The hegemony of Western framework viewing disability has motivated scholars like Anita Ghai to argue that lived realities of diverse persons with disabilities in the Global South demands a more suitable theoretical approach. Ghai asserts that such discourse "ignores the harsh realities of diverse persons with disabilities' lives in countries such as India, which are caught in social and economic marginalization" ("Disabled Women" 96). Her work underscores the importance of contextualizing disability within local socio-economic, cultural, and historical conditions, rather than relying solely on Western paradigms. Just as the complexities

of Indian society necessitate a Global South lens to meaningfully address disability issues, the same can be said for Nepal. Similarly, Stuart Hall's cultural studies states "identities including those related to disability are not fixed or natural but are culturally constructed through language, images, and narratives shaped by historical and social contexts of the society" (223). Addressing these perspectives of disability in Nepal, therefore, requires a grounded approach that engages with local cultural structures of marginalization, social attitudes, and different forms of images, language, structures, knowledge and resistance.

Such dominance has lately been discussed in the context of Nepal by scholars like Austin Lord and Bandita Sijapati and literary critic Rajendra Subedi. They argue that "the analysis of disability writings in Nepal is not only within the international frameworks for the rights of the persons with disabilities but also the larger topic of social exclusion and structural inequalities in Nepal" (8). The exclusion that persons with disabilities are bound to go through in Nepal is determined by Nepal's socio-cultural, history and literature. Due to the patriarchal Hindu conservative social fabrics in practice for ages, Nepali society is caught between the values of the past and the ones of new and liberal order. Similarly, in literary writings, according to critic Kumar Prasad Koirala, Rajendra Subedi, a renowned critic of Nepali literature, argues that "literary writing should be analytical, interpretative, comparative, and they should be grounded in research. His criticism appears analytical, interpretative, comparative, historically contextual, and ahistorical" (240). Through these approaches, Subedi highlights that literary criticism should contribute to intellectual inquiry and deeper understanding rather than merely offering surface-level appreciation.

Pointing out the limited scope of analysis and writings that Nepalis have been going through, Devendra Raj Pandey, a senior Nepali economist writes that established social discourses in Nepal are "too narrow to allow an all-inclusive social analysis which means cross-cutting the nature of caste, ethnicity, regional, gender-based relations remains of no priority at this moment" (3). Pandey's observation about the incongruous relationship between the interest of the donor countries and organizations on the one hand and the social issues as well as nature of Nepali society on the other hand are worth pondering here. By the same token, I observed that disability discourse, policies and investment in Nepal are passed upon with the influence of west and investment. As Stuart Hall explains "global power relations and cultural hegemony influence local understandings of disability" (140) matters. Western hegemony continues to shape the disability discourse in Nepal in a similar manner, even within progressive and well-intentioned initiatives. While such influence has brought visibility and policy attention to disability rights, it often does so through frameworks and models developed in Western contexts.

Highlighting the need to contextualize disability issues at the local level, scholars Austin Lord and Bandita Sijapati point,

> Decades of dissertation in Nepal have demonstrated the ways gender, caste, and ethnic classifications and identities strongly condition the level of social exclusion faced by Nepalis (Cameron 1998; Bennett 2005; Gurung 2006; Bennett, Sijapati, and Thapa 2013) and yet the ways in which these patterns intersect with discrimination faced by persons with disabilities is relatively understudied. (8)

Scholars argue that the socio-political trajectory of Nepali society since the rise of the Khas Arya elites in the last quarter of the eighteenth century has

significantly contributed to shape the existing social order. Despite experiencing various waves of liberal political change over the centuries including shifts toward democracy and inclusion, Nepali society continues to grapple with traditional thoughts and mindsets. These enduring legacies of gender, caste, and class hierarchies pose substantial challenges to progressive transformation, including in the realm of disability rights and inclusion.

The fourth-dimension states disability analysis is influence by global disability rights movements and international disability discourse on development agendas, donor priorities, and institutional investments in disability-inclusive programs. The 1990s was the decade of identity movements and rights in Nepal. It has brought enduring changes in the order of things Nepali society had followed for centuries. It is very interesting to note that Nepal has achieved political transformation at times when the impact of I/NGOs is felt historically very influential in the post-1990 Nepal. Nepali political scientist Lokraj Baral points out “the social change in Nepal is going through a safe trajectory” (1). The political opening has brought the unsolved social tensions into discussion, and disability issues in Nepal can be understood in this very context. This means to say that Nepali society has lived with problems which need to be solved or addressed in the post-1990s politically liberated context, a suitable time to create a better or egalitarian Nepali society. This dynamic contributed to the prevailing notion that ideas and models endorsed or developed in the West are universally applicable, including in the Nepali context. However, such assumption can overlook the local realities and experiences, cultural nuances, and diverse narratives of individuals within margin, raising critical questions about the relevance and effectiveness of externally driven approaches on disability inclusion in Nepal. As Devendra Raj Pandey, a prominent commentator on Nepal’s development trajectory,

has extensively critiqued the role of foreign donors in shaping national agendas. He argues that external influences have often directed local discourses, including those related to development, governance, and social justice, thereby limiting the space for local perspectives and locally grounded approaches.

As a nation dependent on development partner, Nepal is open to new liberal ideas and tries its best to liberalize the society and follow the democratic distribution of opportunities among the people. But such economic and ideological dependency on the West has undermined the urgency of understanding Nepali society and the need of repairing several historical and political discriminations caused by polity. The disability discourse and movement in Nepal are frequently found influenced by development partners, international organizations, and academic institutions, many of which operate within frameworks shaped by Western ideologies.

In this context, liberal educational ideas gradually entered Nepal's policy framework. Although disability remained largely absent from mainstream educational discourse, the National Education System Plan (NESP) of 1971 marked the first formal recognition of the educational needs of children with disabilities. It introduced provisions for the education of children categorized as blind, deaf, and physically disabled, representing the state's initial policy engagement with disability education. However, implementation remained limited and largely dependent on specialized institutions supported by international organizations and donor agencies. Subsequent initiatives, including the establishment of the Special Education Council in 1973 and the introduction of the Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme in Bhaktapur in 1985, contributed to the gradual development of disability-related services. Nevertheless, disability education continued to occupy a marginal position within the national education system, constrained by limited state investment,

inadequate institutional capacity, and dependence on external support. It is within this context of policy recognition and institutional neglect that this dissertation situates its inquiry.

After the restoration of democracy in 1990 marked a significant turning point. It opened up space for academic discourse and rights-based activism in Nepal which paved the way for diverse academic and social movements to emerge. These developments underscored the need to understand Nepali society through multiple intersecting identifiers such as gender, class, caste, ethnicity, religion, national affiliation, ability, and power dynamics and status. These intersecting domains have brought to the forefront the pervasive issues of inequality, discrimination, and systemic exclusion rooted in historical,systemicand structural oppressions. These social movements explicitly as Stuart Hall defining cultural studies states “culture as a site of making-meaning, power relation, and ideological struggle where the concepts of representation, discourse, and hegemony, through which social meanings are produced, circulated, and contested” (130). It challenges power structures, ideology, social norms, representation that intersect historically dominated by male, non-indigenous, able-bodied, elites and Kathmandu centric operating in the production of both oppression and resistance. Social norms, ideology and power structure determine the plight of the persons with disabilities have to go through. This has motivated me to define and explore the journey of the person with disabilities and fictional characters.

Since 1990, social movements in Nepal have become increasingly robust and organized in their collective actions. Yet, despite their efforts and the visibility of inclusion agendas, there remains a critical need for deeper debate around what constitutes an ‘inclusive state.’ By contesting these hegemonic cultural meanings,

marginalized groups negotiate with new understanding and call for equality, social inclusion, inclusive democracy, and ultimately social justice thereby envisioning a restructured state that acknowledges human diversity, strengthens democratic practices, and supports a peace process. The 2007 and 2015 interim and subsequent constitutions have paved the way for a greater inclusion for marginalized groups, including women, Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, Madhesis, Muslims, and persons with disabilities. However, the problems continue to persist as implementation of constitutional provisions for marginalized groups have not taken place at a fast pace. In addition, the obstacles further exasperate individuals with multiple identities through recognition of the myriads of concerns that affect their lives from several aspects.

Discrimination in Nepali society operates across multiple layers which extend far beyond the gender and patriarchal structures. These structural barriers encompass entrenched systems of casteism, classism, ageism, ableism, and other hierarchies, along with unequal access to power, resources, and socio-political awareness. A significant issue lies in the reductive categorization of marginalized groups: women are made to accept their inferiority by their 'sex,' Indigenous Peoples by their 'ethnicity,' Dalits by their 'caste' and persons with disabilities by their 'impairment' they carry. These social identifiers are often siloed with other identifiers which eulogizes a linear, one-dimensional framing that undermines the complexity of lived multiple experiences of individuals. In this line, Obindra Chand and others point out that "systematic and scientific discussion and dissertation on wider social, environmental and cultural barriers shaping individual's identities not limited to impairment within the literary text and in the movement have not been explored yet"

(12). This gap reflects the broader marginalization of disability within state priorities and public discourse in Nepal.

In this dissertation, I pointed out the urgency of introducing disability studies, critical disability, and intersectional theory in relation to multiple and intersecting layers of identity that individuals navigate - extending beyond impairment. By adopting an intersectional lens. I emphasize how disability studies by foregrounding the cultural politics of representation and power shape disability identities and their lived experiences. Nepal, as a nation ruled by generations of elites from the hilly regions - predominantly Khas Kura (Nepali-speaking) communities, and the Khas Arya Hindu social groups promoted certain patriarchal, Hindu and dominant social values. While the turn of the twenty-first century and the rise of liberal democratic politics have demanded major policy shifts. It is argued that the issues of linguistically and ethnically marginalized communities such as women, Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, and persons with disabilities were simultaneously brought into the agenda during Nepal's state restructuring process. However, the ways in which these identities are interlocked and intersected, and how such intersections either centre or marginalize individuals in the political and social landscape, have received insufficient attention.

In this context, Amartya Sen offers a crucial insight, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the multiplicity of human identities. He writes, "The hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies to a great extent in a clearer understanding of the pluralities of human identities and its impacts in several forms" (3). Sen advocates against allowing any single dominant identity to overshadow other affiliations, underscoring the need for an intersectional understanding of social justice. His perspective is particularly relevant for Nepal, where inclusive narratives must

move beyond tokenism to genuinely engage with the complexities of intersecting forms of marginalization.

Rohit Kumar Nepali underscores the significance of power as a critical tool in addressing exclusion, arguing that “enough space for the excluded groups to be empowered gradually with positive discriminatory policies should be fuelled by affirmative actions, and it can be changed through the devolution of power to the excluded communities” (11). In this context, Hall emphasizes representation that is embedded in power relations, as dominant groups seek to normalize particular meanings while marginal voices negotiate, resist, or reinterpret them. This perspective highlights the necessity of structural change and institutional support to facilitate the representation of marginalized groups. Within such a framework, the traditional narratives and power structures upheld by dominant groups must challenge the hegemonic spaces by historically excluded groups. In the aftermath of the April 2005 uprising and the subsequent political transformation, a new wave of creativity and framework has enabled critical analysis of how cultural texts and representation both reinforce and challenge hegemonic ideologies, making it particularly relevant for examining disability as a socially and culturally mediated phenomenon. These creative spaces have begun to engage more deeply with questions of identity, inclusion, and resistance capturing the tensions, aspirations, and complexities of marginalized communities. This cultural shift signals a broader societal effort to reimagine inclusion not only through political restructuring but also through narrative reclamation and artistic expression.

Within these settings, the autobiographies and a biopic, represent the disability discourse that has come to the surface by 2010s. Jhamak Ghimire, living with cerebral palsy, belongs to a *Khas Arya* community linguistically, who navigates familial

neglect, gendered oppression, and societal exclusion. Her reflections transcend the individual to expose the deep cultural ableism embedded in rural Nepali soil. Born in 1980, she began to write with her left foot and later became a renowned writer. Similarly, Sṛṣṭi KC, born in Bhaktapur, lost her eyesight when she was fifteen years old. She redefines blindness not as a limitation but as a site of empowerment, challenging dominant narratives around disability, gender, and public space. She presents herself as a role model and got specialization in dance and motivational speech, whereas Kamal Lamichhāne, a Ph.D from Tokyo University, is a visually impaired person. Born in 1975 in a village in Chitwan district, Lamichhāne is now a globally renowned disability scholar. Combining personal narrative with critical policy analysis, Lamichhāne's work advocates for inclusive education, employment rights, and systemic reform in Nepal, arguing from both academic and experiential authority.

Similarly, among the literary writers, Abhi Subedi, born in Terhathum, is a renowned playwright, poet, and academician, and Manisha Gauchan, an activist as well as creative writer, comes from the Thakali community. Both Subedi and Gauchan as writers without disabilities fictionalize the aspiration and understanding of characters living with disabilities in their literary texts. Subedi's play deals with a social and political transition that Nepali society has been going through mainly since the 2000s. Similarly, Gauchan is known for her power of fictionalizing issues of liberal lifestyles that the contemporary politically liberated Nepali youths have embraced. Gauchan's autobiographical fiction presents a nuanced portrayal of urban and rural disabled experiences, critiquing not only physical barriers but also the intersectional realities of being blind, male, and economically disadvantaged.

These writings, mainly the two autobiographies and the biopic engage deeply with the theme of intersections, intricately weaving issues of gender, class, caste, ethnicity, language, access to mobility and others illuminate the complex and multi-layered nature of oppression by the living and fictional characters. Disability is not depicted as a singular or monolithic condition; rather, it is understood as intertwined with diverse socio-cultural identities and lived experiences. These selected disability writings extend beyond literary expression to become acts of resistance and powerful tools for raising social consciousness. Through reclaiming narrative space, writers with disabilities have actively challenged entrenched stigma and demand a fundamental rethinking of societal norms related to ability, productivity, and human worth. Collectively, these autobiographies and biopic represent a paradigmatic shift in disability discourse: these discourses deconstruct that disability is no longer merely an object of representation but a subject of agency, empowerment, and emancipation for transformative change.

The fifth dimension examines disability awareness examines policy interventions and legislative frameworks that have emerged in response to disability rights advocacy, assessing their role in promoting inclusion, emancipation, and social justice for persons with disabilities. The dissertation has selected the works of the writers with disabilities and writers without disabilities. The two autobiographies project struggle, aspiration, vision,emancipationand pride of Jhamak Ghimire and Kamal Lamichhāne, and the biopic projects the similar journey taken by Sṛṣṭi KC. They undergo the phenomena of being disabled in the early years that impact their several social identifiers, and position themselves beyond the bodily landscape. They speak to the society they live in several forms, and become recognized. Two creative writers without disabilities, Abhi Subedi and Manisha Gauchan, have projected

emancipatory ideas and vision through the fictional characters with human centred language. Written in the context of the changed socio-political context of Nepal mainly from 2000, the two autobiographies and one biopic reflect the nature of struggles such individuals go through as well as the changes they make in the ways the fellow members of their society think about disability. And the two literary texts project the emancipatory ideas of persons with disabilities.

Emancipation in the classical Latin world meant an action that granted freedom to a person to be the master of his own life. The French used it as the rights of persons to be free and equal. And the Americans defined it as the end of racial discrimination. Emancipation is a broad and historically layered concept, but in the present dissertation it is employed in the specific theoretical sense articulated within disability studies. Within this field, the idea of emancipation has been developed along two influential trajectories, represented most prominently by Tom Shakespeare and Leonard J. Davis. Tom Shakespeare approaches emancipation primarily through the framework of social policy and structural reform. For Shakespeare, persons with disabilities experience emancipation when social, political, and institutional barriers are dismantled through the implementation of disability-friendly inclusive policies. Such policies promote equal access to education, employment, healthcare, and public spaces, thereby enabling persons with disabilities to participate fully in social life. As opportunities for social mobility expand, individuals are better able to resist stigma, challenge exclusionary norms, and attain the forms of social recognition that have historically been denied to them *(Disability Right and Wrong*, 104). In this perspective, emancipation emerges as a tangible outcome of inclusive structures; an effect of environments actively reshaped to accommodate diverse embodiments.

Leonard J. Davis, however, offers a more radical and epistemological intervention (*Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Bod*y, 104). While acknowledging the importance of policy and structural change, Davis argues that emancipation cannot be limited to persons with disabilities alone. He contends that the very categories of 'ability' and 'disability' are constructed within what he calls the *hegemony of normalcy*, a regime of thought that positions disability as a deficit and ability as the normative ideal. According to Davis, this narrow and deeply embedded understanding of corporeal and cognitive difference is the root cause of stigma and exclusion. Because persons without disabilities are equally shaped and constrained by the ideology of normalcy, they too require emancipation. Thus, Davis calls for a broader cultural and epistemic liberation in which all individuals, disabled and nondisabled alike, are freed from the parochial assumptions that govern perceptions of bodily difference.

Together, these perspectives broaden the conceptual aspect of emancipation within disability studies. Shakespeare emphasizes the material and institutional conditions that enable emancipatory experiences, while Davis insists on the need to transform the cultural and epistemological frameworks that define disability itself. Recognizing both dimensions allows me for a more comprehensive understanding of what emancipation entails: not only structural access and social inclusion but also a collective reimagining of normalcy, embodiment self, and value with dignity.

With these liberal views, the growing body of scholarship emphasizes the need to contextualize disability within specific historical, social, cultural, political, and economic conditions where disability scholars have increasingly highlighted the ways in which disability is produced, experienced, and negotiated through social relations, institutional structures, cultural beliefs, and systems of power. I follow the same

model and I see the academic sphere of disability studies has been expanding over the years. I have observed that the old hierarchical and centralized power structures have eroded social, cultural and political spaces andhas opened the new discourses for rights, inclusion, and social justice from 1990's in Nepal.Therefore, I analysed the evolving landscape of disability studies in Nepal as increasingly entering into a new era as there has been a discernible shift from the traditional, charitable and medical to social model grounded in human rights perspectives.

The restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1990 played a pivotal role in driving liberal changes in the disability domain, particularly by creating space for more inclusive policies and identity recognition. The 2006 political emancipation has brought shift in the views on disability. Pointing out this, Jalasa Sapkota, a younger generation Nepali disability scholar makes her opinion that "the traditional approach of projecting persons with disabilities with a "negative image" is regressive, and such "pity portrayal" does not theorize or rationalize the issue". Neither should one portray such individuals with heroic attributes or "inspirational trope" (2). Sapkota as an individual living with disability points out that such an approach is bound to romanticize or idealize the individuals.

In recent years, the issue of representations and narratives about persons with disabilities are supported by the followers of liberal political and cultural thoughts. As a result, few writings and characters are taken as 'inspirational trophies' who can assert, inspire, aspire, emancipate, and be respected. However, I argue that diverse persons with disabilities 'getting recognized' and 'being recognized' in society through still remains challenge. My reading on the existing literature and knowledge production on disability reflects a 'monolithic, siloed and fixed' approach of understanding. Persons with disabilities are often portrayed as 'sins of past deeds',

‘karmic fate’, ‘sick’, ‘impaired’, or ‘unable to function’, ‘personal suffering’ and frequently objectified and treated solely in terms of ‘disease and impairment’ as ‘non contributors’ or ‘passive recipients’ in the family and society. Both the Nepali disability rights movement and the government have largely prioritized and practised the ‘medical model of disability’, as evidenced by the issuance of national disability identity cards, which are certified by medical professionals based on ‘functional impairment’ and ‘physical condition’. This frames persons with disabilities as medically deficient patients who are in need of ‘treatment’ and ‘care’. Consequently, they are still commonly perceived as ‘passive recipients of services’ rather than ‘active agents of change’ in Nepal. It is observed that little attention is given to their potential to live fulfilling lives, participate equally, and contribute meaningfully in the development.

As a PhD scholar, analysing through this corpus, I emphasize that the impairment of individuals embodies their personal distinct experience or biological deficiency but at the same time the struggles and stories are powerful means to claim their spaces and representation in Nepali society. With this context, I recognize the need to move beyond these corporeal boundaries and adopt a broader, socio-cultural and intersectional framework on disability. This dissertation argues that the hierarchical structures embedded within the Nepali polity, persistent economic and linguistic inequalities, limited access to inclusive education, and the prevalence of superstition and discriminatory social attitudes significantly influence the lived experiences of persons with disabilities. These interconnected factors shape both the opportunities available to them and the challenges they encounter in everyday life.

I endeavour to integrate liberal views associating with multidimensional aspects through an intersectional contemporary theoretical lens. So, framing from

intersectional lens to recognize all kinds of struggles, pain, humiliation, power, recognition and emancipation in this process is essential because they carry their social, economic, and cultural attributes. Their awareness is associated with access to social networks and education. Their family background and access to technology play a significant role in bringing mobility and promoting social networks in their life. All these associations create opportunities, space, access, and power relations that are maintained, upheld and reproduced in various structures in the society where they live in.

From an intersectional perspective, ableism intersects with other forms of domination to shape differentiated experiences of marginalization and privilege. It highlights how dominant cultural narratives produce particular understandings of disability while allowing space for resistance, negotiation, and alternative meanings. By situating disability within Nepal's complex social fabric, this dissertation concentrates for a more inclusive framework that reflects the intersectional and culturally mediated dimensions of identity, representation, and social inclusion.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The existing reviews emphasize the emotional journey of Jhamak Ghimire, Sṛṣṭi KC and Kamal Lamichhāne. The reviews of these post-1990 disability narratives focus predominantly on the authors' struggles with impairment. In the case of *Dreams of Mayadevi*, critical attention has centred on the trajectories of its major character, while *White Cane* is frequently interpreted as a symbolic representation of the awakening of disabled voices within Nepal's shifting political landscape. All five texts emerge from the socio-political transformations triggered by the 1990 people's movement. They reflect a gradual but noticeable shift away from entrenched

stereotypes toward greater awareness of exclusion, marginalization towards rights, inclusion and emancipation.

Reviewers such as Manjushree Thapa have characterized Jhamak Ghimire as an inspirational figure, while Kamal Lamichhāne is portrayed as a living testament to resilience and educational achievement. Similarly, Dil Bhusan Pathak presents Sṛṣṭi KC as someone whose journey through disability transformed her into a motivational speaker. Reviews of *Maya Devika Sapana* tend to focus on the impacts of war and its aftermath on affected populations, whereas *White Cane* is primarily discussed in terms of visually impaired individual's empowerment and social stigma associated with disability. Collectively, these literary texts open discussions centred on corporeal disability experiences, and reviewers often limit their focus to a single domain, overlooking intersectional perspectives such as the nexus of gender and disability. This oversight neglects the multiple, overlapping identities shaped by intersections of disability, gender, class, access and Nepal's evolving socio-cultural contexts. Earlier critiques have not adequately highlighted the struggles of Ghimire, KC, andLamichhāneinrelation to human capacity for resilience and underscore broader social concerns regarding poverty, inequality, and personal perseverance on factors like sex, linguistic background, geographic locality, and access to state apparatus. Nor have they sufficiently addressed the intersectional consciousness embodied by characters such as Sāhinlā and Bhāśvat in their narrative trajectories.

Existing literature and critiques of all selected text tend to operate within two dominantinterpretive frameworks. First, they foreground the emotional and charitable journeys of autobiographical or fictional characters with disability, often emphasizing resilience, suffering, or personal transformation. Second, they reduce disability to a condition of impairment, framing characters with disability primarily in terms of

limitation, struggle and pain. Even when critics adopt a more progressive lensinterpreting these narratives as asymbolic articulation of marginalized voices within Nepal's sociopolitical context. They remain confined to representational or metaphorical readings with several critical gaps which are highlighted below;

- largely reinforce reductive binaries such as ability/disability, normal/abnormal, and charity/dignity
- undertheorize the role of social institutions, cultural norms, values and power relations in shaping lives of persons with disabilities
- treat disability as a fixed identity category rather than a dynamic, relational, and socially produced condition
- overlook how space, access, discourse, and representation actively construct and regulate disabled subjective.
- privilege individual experience over structural and systemic analysis,

As a result, disability is not limited to corporeal limitation, it has more nuanced understanding produced within intersecting socio-cultural and political contexts. It examines how disability interacts with questions of rights, respect, responsibilities, and resilience across multiple social contexts in Nepali soil. The dissertation situates disability studies within the broader socio-political history of the nation, deliberately resisting linear theoretical frameworks and rejecting reductive readings that frame these texts and characters merely as narratives of charity, sympathy, or benevolence language. By integrating insights from social sciences, it aims to develop a more expansive, justice-oriented framework that recognizes the diversity and complexity of lives of persons with disabilities in Nepali scenario where this dissertation outlines differentquestions.

1.3 Research Questions

The dissertation provides answer to the following dissertation questions:

a. What roles do class, gender, education, access to state apparatus, network, information, and media play in shaping the intersectional identities and emancipation in the life of Jhamak Ghimire, Sṛṣṭi KC and Kamal Lamichhāne as depicted in *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*, *Antardṛṣṭi*, and *Blind Rocks*?

b.Why do storytelling elements associate with language, education, social network, ethnic nuances, resistance and agency of hope with intersectional experiences and emancipate the literary characters SallerīSāhinlā and Bhāśvat in *Dreams of Mayadevi*and *White Cane* respectively?

c. How do intersectional approach inform and enrich the discourse on multifaceted experiences of diverse persons with disabilitieswith dignity and emancipation, and what implication does it have for disability studies in Nepal?

1.4 Objectives

a. To examine intersecting factors such as gender, disability, class, education, access to information, media, social network, and state apparatus shape the life journeys and processes of emancipation of Jhamak Ghimire, Sṛṣṭi KC, and Kamal Lamichhāne as represented in *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*, *Blind Rocks*, and *Antardṛṣṭi*.

b. To analyse storytelling elements, includinglanguage, character, ethnic nuances, resistance, access, and social networks, influence the intersectional experiences, agency of hope, voice, and emancipation of the literary characters SallerīSāhinlāand Bhāśvat in *Dreams of Mayadevi* and *White Cane* respectively.

c. To explore an intersectional approach contributes to understanding the diverse lived experiences, rights, dignity, and emancipation of diverse persons with disabilities, and to contribute to the broader development of disability studies in Nepal.

Disability writings particularly autobiographies, life narratives, literary writings, and critical literary representations collectively illuminate the multi-layered dimensions of disability discourse. These writings operate bridging the gap between literary representation and real-life experiences as counter-hegemonic narratives that resist and rearticulate ableist discourse. By reclaiming voice and agency, such texts challenge dominant representations and produce alternative meanings of disability grounded in lived experience, dignity and empowerment connecting with broader academic discourse and grassroots social movements. These writings demonstrate how intersectional approaches can amplify marginalized voices - both within and beyond traditional boundaries challenge existing power structures, and serve as instruments of agency for emancipation and social justice.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study makes a significant scholarly intervention by addressing a critical gap in both Nepali literary studies and global disability studies. Historically, Nepali literature has often marginalized or misrepresented diverse persons with disabilities voices either rendering them invisible or portraying them through reductive lenses of ‘pity’, ‘charity’, or ‘personal tragedy’. By centring the works of writers with disabilities such as Jhamak Ghimire, Sṛṣṭi KC, Manisha Gauchan, and Kamal Lamichhāne, this dissertation foregrounds narratives rooted in rights, power, dignity, intersectional agency towards emancipation. Moreover, through the application of critical disability studies, and primarily intersectional theories, this dissertation

interrogates and challenges the ableist assumptions embedded in Nepali cultural production and the processes of national identity formation through emancipation.

I argue that disability studies in Nepal should be taken to a new direction by linking with social science and other disciplines becauseit challenges dominant narratives that universalize the disability experiences, instead emphasizing the importance of diverse, context-specific realities. By situating the journeys of Ghimire, KC, and Lamichhānewithin their distinct social, linguistic, gendered, cultural and geographic locations, the study demonstrates that disability is not simply an individual or biomedical condition but it is socially and culturally constructed categories that are produced through socio-cultural narratives, stereotypes, and symbolic practices that often normalize able-bodied and marginalize disabled bodies.It intersects with structures of power shaped by historical, social, cultural, and political forces and context. From this perspective, disability emerges as an embodied experience that is simultaneously personal and political, shaped by relations of inequality, representation, and access.

Likewise, the journey the literary characters SallerīSāhinlā and Bhāśvat take exposes entrenched social hierarchies and cultural logics that are central to understanding the complexity of disability-related issues in Nepal. Their stories offer critical insights into how literature mirrors, critiques, and contests societal attitudes, prejudices, and systemic barriers. Through these narratives, the dissertation demonstrates how lived experiences of diverse persons with disabilities are shaped by broader forces including the legacy of Hindu patriarchal conservatism, the historical dominance of the *Khas Arya* community, and Nepal's autocratic political and military past. In doing so, this conversation reconceptualized disability in Nepal not as a fixed

category, but as an evolving and intersectional reality shaped by layers of power, hegemony, access, identity, resistance and emancipation in different life stages.

Thisdissertation helps to contribute to expand the epistemological boundaries of Nepali disability studies by promoting interdisciplinary discourse between literature, sociology, and human rights. It foregrounds the agency of authors with disabilities in shaping cultural discourse and advancing a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding. Through intersectional literary analysis, the study fosters a richer, more critical, and socially grounded scholarship not only for Nepal but for the South Asian region.

The study asserts for a theory and social science-based approach to disability studies in Nepal, with particular emphasis on bridging the persistent divide between academic inquiry and disability activism. While academic scholarship is often siloed and abstracted from lived realities, disability advocacy grounded in experience may lack the theoretical frameworks necessary to fully articulate and challenge structural inequalities. By integrating intersectional theoretical frameworks with lived narratives and cultural texts, this dissertation creates a space where knowledge and practice can mutually inform and strengthen each other. This synergy offers tangible potential for influencing policy, raising awareness, emancipating individual's lives and enhancing community engagement. Ultimately, the study fills a critical gap between academic theory and disability action, thereby expanding the horizon of disability studies in Nepal. In doing so, the dissertation not only enriches literary and cultural scholarship but also adds critical insights to unpack conversations around social justice, human rights, and the decolonization of knowledge production in the Global South.

1.6Methodology

This dissertation employed a textual analysis as a methodological approach grounded in both theoretical scholarship and literary production. The study conducted a theoretical analysis of themes, contexts, and conditions of critical disability studies as reflected in the selected texts, with specific attention to the social and cultural studies, theories of ableism, and interpretive practices. *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*centres on themes of disability, social exclusion, gender discrimination, and resilience through lifelong struggle. Written in an autobiographical, intimate, and emotionally raw voice, the text uses a poetic, symbolic, and confessional style to portray JhamakGhimire's lived realities. Through vivid depictions of rural Nepali society, the narrative exposes the harshness of patriarchy and the widespread stigma directed toward disability. Ghimire's story becomes not only a personal testimony of pain and endurance but also a powerful critique of a society that fails to acknowledge the humanity and capabilities of diverse persons with disabilities.

Similarly, *Antardṛṣṭi*, explores the theme of inner vision, suggesting that true understanding comes from insight rather than physical sight. The text uses a reflective and philosophical narrative voice that invites readers to rethink their assumptions about ability and perception. By contrasting physical blindness with spiritual vision, the text challenges societal prejudice and highlights the importance of inner strength. Its calm and introspective style encourages contemplation and emphasizes that real wisdom grows from inner self.

And *Blind Rocks* presents the emotional and psychological journey of a young woman who becomes blind during her school age, using a dramatic and visually driven narrative style. It critically exposes gender violence, victim-blaming, and the social barriers faced in the nexus of gender and disability. Through the protagonist's

transformation from despair to confidence, the story challenges stereotypes and emphasizes courage, independence, and hope.

White Cane uses the symbol of the white cane to represent independence, dignity, and identity for visually impaired individuals. The narrative tends to be direct, experiential, and advocacy-oriented, focusing on real-life challenges of mobility and social acceptance. Its straightforward style emphasizes the need for awareness, accessibility, and respect in a sight centred society. By presenting blindness as a different mode of living rather than a limitation, the text promotes equality and challenges discriminatory attitudes.

In *Dreams of Mayadevi* SallerīSāhinlā portrays the silent struggles, emotional burdens, and unfulfilled dreams of women living under social constraints. The narrative voice is reflective and empathetic, using symbolic imagery especially dreams to express longing, hope, and inner conflict. The text highlights gender inequality and the emotional labor women endure while fulfilling societal expectations. It's realistic and descriptive style reveal how patriarchy limits women's aspirations, while also celebrating their quiet resilience and inner strength. The dissertation critically analyses their experiences as products of the intersecting social, cultural, and political contexts they inhabit.

To frame this analysis, I applied the "intersectional approach", a key concept framework in critical disability studies and cultural studies. Coined by Black feminist legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality offers a lens to examine how overlapping identities-such as disability, gender, class, ethnicity, location, access and mobility-shape individualslived experiences. Kimberle argues that "different identities of individuals' race, class, sex, and ability are often dependent on the social privileges they are afforded by their diverse identities and are very scientific"

("Demarginalizing the Intersection" 151). Applying the intersectional approach, the study moves beyond individual impairment to explore how systemic forces and social structures, power and insightful choice influence the ways disability is experienced and represented in Nepal. In the context of Nepal, intersectional theoretical mode offers a way to explore how the experiences of diverse persons with disabilities are influenced by multiple identities. For example, how patriarchal norms and gender roles amplify the challenges faced by diverse women with disabilities in Nepali society? Or how does caste or ethnicity intersect with disability? These questions uncover the deeper social dynamics and barriers that persons with disabilities face in different forms. In addition, how do intersectional social variables shape the discourse on disability in Nepal, both within academia and in broader social or policy contexts?

I drew insights from the critical disability theory relating with the writings of Dann Goodley and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. Goodley writings critique the medical model of disability studies, and her line of argument is particularly relevant in the Nepali context. Medicalization of disability remains prevalent in many settings in Nepali society and polity. The traditional view that disability results solely from personal or biological deficiency reinforces a narrative of pity and victimhood and such notions can marginalize diverse persons with disabilities further. This perspective neglects the significant role that societal attitudes, lack of accessibility, and cultural norms play in shaping the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities. Similarly, Stuart Hall conceptualizes identity as historically situated and culturally produced rather than fixed or natural, arguing that it is shaped by shifting relations of power and hegemony. He emphasizes that cultural identity "is not a fixed essence […] lying unchanged outside history and culture" but it is continuously formed through social and historical processes (225). Extending his ideas further in

Encoding/Decoding Culture, Media, Language, heasserts that marginalized groups are not passive recipients of dominant ideology; rather, they actively negotiate and resist hegemonic meanings, generating counter-hegemonic interpretations (136). This theoretical framework is particularly relevant for disability studies, as it enables an understanding of disability as a socially regulated identity shaped by ableist ideologies, while highlighting how disability is redefined through activism, life narratives, and literary representation.

By critiquing the medical model, this dissertation underscores the necessity of a paradigm shift: disability is not merely an individual condition, but a social and culturally constructed discourse that arises through the interaction between individuals and a disabling society. Similarly, the dissertation drew insights from Rosemarie Garland Thomson works where she asserts that disability is a "universal experience" and, therefore, should not be viewed as something separate or marginalized from day-to-day life (54). Her definition deconstructs the notion that disability is an isolated condition affecting only a small segment of society. This perspective invites a broader conversation about disability as part of the human condition, suggesting that everyone, at some point, may experience disability due to aging, illness, or accidents. By recognizing the universality of disability, we can work to de-stigmatize it and create a more inclusive society where disability is seen as an integral part of human life, rather than something to be excluded or marginalized. Her work opens the door for more inclusive cultural representation. If disability is indeed a universal experience, it is crucial to see it reflected in all areas of life, including literature, media, politics, and public spaces. With this critical insight, the dissertation reached to the conclusion that instead of framing disability solely through the lens of charity or medical care, the polity must promote inclusion, participation, and equal

access, that diverse persons with disabilities are able to live their lives with full respect and dignity.Moreover, this dissertation aimed to contextualize disability studies in Nepal concerning mainstream history and the rise of marginalized voices with emphasis on the rise of disability rights movement in the post-1990 political context of Nepal.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

I am acutely aware of the scarcity of disability literature in Nepal. To date, only a handful of academic studies on disability in Nepali context have been conducted, based on my review of existing literature. However, disability studies as an interdisciplinary subjectare rapidly emerging globally. This dissertation aimed to define auto/biographical disability works and literary texts as sites to discover the way social variables in Nepal intersect. The choice of these texts is significant because disability related experiences must be understood in conjunction with the social variables that shape Nepali society. This suggests that diverse persons with disabilities who belong to dominant linguistic groups are likely to find it comparatively easier to access resources that support their social network, mobility, access and capital.

First, Nanda R. Shrestha argues, “There is limited literature from marginalized groups in Nepal because historically, Nepali society has operated within rigid hierarchies of caste, class, ethnicity, and gender, where individuals with disabilities were often positioned at the peripheries of cultural and social life” (“Historical Marginalization in Nepal” 58). As a result, persons with disabilities, particularly from marginalized communities, have limited access to education, opportunities, literacy, and platforms to voice their experiences.

Second, members of persons with disabilities and communities in Nepal have feel hesitant to express themselves. Without access to basic literacy and education,

opportunities for self-representation, they have found themselves being restricted having access to resources. On the other hand, the dominant social narratives have historically constructed disability through the lens of religious fatalism, ableism as a form of *sins of past deeds,karma* or *divine punishment*. This view not only embedded stigma and shame within everyday life but also further silenced their voices, reinforcing harmful stereotypes. As Harka Gurung's *Faces of Nepal* states, "When disability is viewed primarily as a "personal tragedy" or a "burden" on society, the space for political, creative, or critical storytelling becomes even narrower" (21). This framing significantly limits the potential for disability to be represented in ways that challenge societal norms or advocate for systemic change.

Third, structurally, the publishing industry, media, and academic institutions in Nepal are found historically marginalized disability perspectives, often favouring narratives that align with the charity model or the inspirational "overcoming" tropes. These dominant frameworks tend to overshadow authentic, critical disability perspectives, as highlighted in few texts (Upreti 42). This form of gatekeeping has made it difficult for writers with disabilities, particularly from intersecting and marginalized identity groups with disabilities to quest platforms to share their stories on their own terms.

Finally, until very recently, disability rights movements in Nepal focused primarily on legal recognition and service delivery, often side-lining cultural production and narrative empowerment. While political advocacy for disability rights grew, there was limited space for storytelling, creative writing, or literary reflection within disability communities. However, with the rise of critical disability studies, intersectional approaches, and the digital age, a slow but powerful emergence of writers with disabilities has begun. These writers are challenging dominant

representations and claiming narrative agency, pushing for a more nuanced, authentic portrayal of disability that reflects lived experiences of struggles rather than stereotypes.

With all these existing literatures, this dissertation concentrates on intersectional reading of the journey that the protagonists in *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns, Blind Rocks, Antardṛṣṭi, Dreams of Mayadevi* and *White Cane,* go through. The dissertation is limited to the works written in the post-1990 political context. This was also the period when the disability rights movement formally began and flourished in Nepal. And, the texts published during the decades, and persons with disabilities interacting with society is the focus of the study.

Similarly, taking interviews with these individual talents living with disabilities and literary writers would have provided a further dimension to this research. Instead of being remained in touch with them personally, I concentrated on textual interpretation and opened the discussion with famous individuals living with disabilities who have offered multiple dimensions of understanding in different stages of lifeinterpreting the experiences through an intersectional framework as informed by scholars like Olena Hankivsky and Doyin Atewologun. This approach distances my personal voice rather it enabled a deeper engagement with systemic structures of power within these literary texts. While doing so, this dissertation asked to reinforce the broader position that meaningfully demands social transformation.

1.8Organization of the Study

The first chapter introduced Introduction: Contexts of Nepali Disability Writings introduces the reason to choose the dissertation task and the critical perspectives the dissertation takes as the methodology of interpreting primary texts. This chapter introduces statements of the problem, dissertation questions, objectives

of the research, methodology, delimitation of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the study.

The second chapter integrated review of literature on the existing reviews on disability studies, its evolution and progress in the Western academia along with available reviews on the selected primary texts. Similarly, this chapter introduces the rise of critical disability studies and highlights the departure of intersectionality as a methodological approach.

The third chapter discussed methodology and makes an extensive reading on critical disability theory, especially the ideas of Lennard J. Davis, Tom Shakespeare, Rosemarie Garland Thomson, and Judith Butler among others. Thisdissertation also borrows critical concepts from Indian disability scholars, mainly Anita Ghai and Asha Hans because the disability contexts in India and Nepal are similar, and both countries follow the Western disability discourse. This chapter establishes the point that disability studies need to be local and develop an apt methodology.

The fourth chapteranalysed textual analysis analyses the two autobiographical texts of Jhamak Ghimire, and Kamal Lamichhāne, and one biopic of Sṛṣṭi KC focusing on the role that language, access to information and state apparatus play in the life of the personas of autobiographies.

The fifth chapter analysed textual analysis concentrates on two literary works written by writers without disabilities like Subedi and Gauchan. It analyses how these literary characters SallerīSāhinlāand Bhāśvat make use of language, access to information and state apparatus.

The sixth chapterconcluded conclusion and summary concludes asserting that glorification of the struggle of an individual which urges for a holistic understanding of disability and define the lived realities of persons with disabilities.

1.9About Translation

This dissertation drew on the English translations of *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns,* translated by Nagendra Sharma and Safal Sharma, and *Dreams of Mayadevi*, translated by Shiva Rijal and Carol Davis. The former is publicly available, while the latter is currently in press. I obtained the manuscript of *Dreams of Mayadevi* directly from Dr. Shiva Rijal, one of the translators, and used it with permission for the purposes of this dissertation.Unless otherwise stated, all lines cited from *Antardṛṣṭi*, *Blind Rocks*, and *White Cane*were my own translations from Nepali into English. Responsibility for the accuracy of these translations rests with me.

Similarly, Nepali words, titles, and personal names were transliterated using the ISO15919 system (with IAST-compatible diacritics where applicable) to ensure consistency and accuracy in representing Nepali phonology. Examples include*JīvanKāṭhākī Phūl*,Māyādevīkā Sapanā,*Antardṛṣṭi*, *Sallerī Sāhinlā, Lāmichāne, and Sṛṣṭi*.Diacritical marks generally retained for Nepali terms and names, except in some cases were published English translations or commonly accepted English spellings were used.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Critical Disability Studies in Contemporary Disability Nepali Literature

2.1 Background

This chapter traced the various phases in the development of disability studies as an academic discipline. The first half of the chapter examined the period during which disability was predominantly understood and conceptualized through the charity model. In an academic practice, the charity model articulatedpersons with disabilities primarily as 'recipients of support.' This school of thought was soon replaced by the widespread adoption of the medical model, which perceived disability chiefly as a condition requiring medical treatment. But, in the latter half of the twentieth century, social and human rights models substituted both the charity and the medical model. With it, the disability concerns are seen in terms of systemic social barriers. Persons with disabilities have their rights, and the polity needs to investigate it. In the contemporary disability studies, the intersectionality model marked a significant turning point. This school of thought emphasized the need to situate disability within broader social factors, including language, ethnicity, access to social networks, state institutions, and other intersecting social variables.

The second part of the chapter provided reviews on the selected text and film. The available reviews focus on the personal journey of protagonists. Most of the reviews highlight the resilient nature of Ghimire, KC and Lamichhāne. However, the chapter concluded by proposing an intersectional approach to these characters' journeys that offers a deeper understanding of their experiences of disability. By analysing their lived experiences, struggles, and strategies, the chapter demonstrated that disability is best understood when situated within the intersecting social, cultural, and political dynamics of Nepali society. The chapter further articulated the departure

that an intersectional framework enabled, establishing a rationale for interpreting these texts through such a lens and offering a more nuanced and contextually grounded understanding of disability in Nepal.

2.2 Disability Studies on the Move

The Disability studies went through a major shift in an academia in the West mainly in the USA. The existing views on disability defines subject as potential recipients of donation or help. Claiming that persons with disabilities are not mere patients, the new discourses sought to redefine disability identity through the rights-based approach. Such ideological debate within a academic discipline of a disability studies created two streams. The first stream addressed the issues as subjects of concern for health and human service professionals. Such an approach to persons with disabilities promoted the disability as a 'subject of pathology' or 'anomaly'. It generally called for services the persons with disabilities needed urgently and focused on individual rehabilitation or adaptation of the environment to accommodate the disabling condition. This approach was later called the 'medical model'.

Mike Oliver, often regarded as the first disability scholar and activist, critiques this model in the following way, "The medical model ignores the social and personal concerns of persons with disabilities in favour of a physicalist approach. The medical concept isolates the persons with disabilities as a consequence of their impairment and refuses to recognize how social attitudes to disability are formative to an individual with disability's identity" ("Understanding Disability" 45). Persons with disabilities may require medical interventions, but equally important is their recognition as conscious, autonomous persons who are valuable contributors to society. Highlighting this need, Mike Oliver asserts for replacing the prevailing medical model of disability. He critiques the medical model for isolating individuals based solely on impairment

while neglecting the broader social, cultural, and personal contexts that shape identities of individuals with disabilities.

Similarly, Dann Goodley critiques that traditional medicalized approaches situated disability at the individual level of the subject, specifically, as a "personal tragedy, biological deficiency, and psychical trauma" ("Feeling Disability" 217). Such an approach of looking at disability as an individual's personal life in crisis cases went through the reformation in the context of the Civil Rights Movement. Starting in the late 1960s, disability rights in the United States and the United Kingdom began to build on the Civil Rights Movement and this later on paved the way for the global spread out. Kim Nielsen points out a case in which leader Ed Roberts called persons with disabilities "one of the largest minority groups in the nation" (168), emphasizing their new feeling of a shared identity.

Erving Goffman, a leading twentieth-century American sociologist, observed that persons with disabilities often internalize a sense of inferior selfhood. He argues that "abominations of the body differ from the expected norm, and how easily stigmatized persons can internalize rather than oppose dominant standards by which they are deemed inferior" (4). Psychologically individuals with impairments are expected to live with a certain 'sense of lack', struggle to be 'abled' or 'normal' or desire to be 'fit individuals. Deep down society nurtures a gap between abled and disabled individuals. In a similar line of thought, Carol Thomas, the British academic and expert on disability studies, uses the term "disablism" to highlight the social characteristics or psychology that persons often live with on the issue of disability. Every society has one or the other kind of disablism. Disablism for him is "a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on persons

with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being" (*Female Forms* 60).

Disability studies puts efforts to explore the nature of disablism that a society in a certain time lives with. Then it explores the way out for individuals to free from such order of disablism. It looks for an eclectic approach with the ultimate goal of emancipation and self-fulfilment in all areas of life forpersons with disabilities. Lennard J. Davis argues that genuine emancipation for persons with disabilities begins with challenging the cultural authority of "normalcy," a concept he demonstrates to be a historical invention rather than a natural human condition. Thomas further points out that "there had been some problems with the social and psychological assumptions about disability and such assumptions needed to be corrected" (60). Such concepts of looking into disability issues were later termed a "social model", and it gradually grew popular as an emerging school of disability studies.

The social model defines disability as a socially constructed category and related series of experiences external to the body. The social model examines that persons with disabilities' experiences reinforce their marginality and inferior status in society. First and foremost, it critiques the old-world view on disability that the condition that persons with disabilities live in is the outcome of their actions in their past lives. Second, this model looks at disability not as lack or treatment based-philosophy of the medical model. Claire Edwards and Rob Imrie critique that "the medical model is primarily concerned with an analysis of the physical body, or propagating a medical orthodoxy that conceives of bodies as objects to be cared for through the application of medicine and rehabilitative techniques" (241). Such views undermine the political self of the persons with disabilities. Third, the social model

emphasizes the point that individuals can create a force and act out ideas to create a more liberal social and psychological order. As political beings the ‘disabled’ too can contribute in the making of society through their visions, the social model disability scholars emphasize. The disability is the body being transformed by ‘living in society’. They support the view that a person with an impairment is disabled through the attitudes, norms, perceptions, and systems. There exists a dialectical relationship between an individual’s needs and society’s constructed values where intersubjective and subjective experiences are intertwined. Philip M. Ferguson and Emily Nusbaum, disability studies scholars, point out the shifts the disability studies have gone through over the decades: “Through research, artistic production, teaching, and activism, disability studies seek to argue understanding of disability in all cultures and historical periods, to promote greater awareness of the experiences of individuals with disabilities, and to advocate for social change” (80). It underscores how disability studies have moved beyond medicalized frameworks, and become interdisciplinary, committed to equity and representation. The field's evolution mirrors and contributes to a redefinition of disability as a political and cultural identity as much as a lived experience. In the contemporary changed social and ideological contexts, persons with disabilities are defined as the subjects of social and political inclusion.

With such shifts, the disability studies in the 1970s became a subject matter to be addressed through social sciences theories along with medicinal sciences. At the same time, Cultural Studies emerged in British academia during the late 1950s and 1960s as an interdisciplinary field concerned with analysing culture in relation to power, ideology, and social change. Grounded in the foundational work of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E. P. Thompson, and later shaped decisively by Stuart Hall at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, the field challenged

elitist definitions of culture by foregrounding everyday practices, popular media, and lived experiences. Drawing on Marxism and Gramsci's theory of hegemony, and poststructuralist approaches, Cultural Studies conceptualizes culture as a site of ideological struggle in which meanings are produced, circulated, and contested within unequal power relations (Hall, *Representation* 15). Under Stuart Hall's leadership, the field expanded its focus on representation, identity, and discourse, emphasizing that identities are historically situated, culturally constructed, and continuously negotiated ("Cultural Identity" 225), thereby establishing a critical framework for examining marginalization, resistance, and difference.

Both disability and cultural studies started stressing on the critical framework on emphasizing identities and its marginalization and difference as, Dan Goodley et. al writes, "Disability studies have arrived in the intellectual world: as an object of study and a driving subject of analysis" ("Key Concerns" 30). Soon it was celebrated as a subject of academic studies, a force to create a better liberal society. Along with its focus on the lived experiences of persons with disabilities in practical terms, disability studies promoted discourses that aimed at social and moral values as human-made constructs. Much focus was given to the fact that persons with disabilities need to have access to civil rights and deserve to live a dignified life from the right-based approach.

In a similar line of argument, Simi Linton, the American disability studies scholar and artmaker, welcomes the changes taking place in disability studies in the following manner:

> In our past efforts, we worked to debunk the notion of continuum and critiqued the idea that 'everyone is disabled in some way'. This was a strategic endeavour, and it has been enormously useful but now we need to find a new

> way of talking about the place of persons with disabilities in the universe and to find the place of disability in some universal sense. (“What is Disability Studies?” 519)

Since society is in motion, noble ideas and opinions keep on shaping the mindset of the persons on disability studies. In this context, two types of progress have happened. On the one hand, the academic discourse of disability studies has progressed with a broader understanding i.e., with critical disability studies looking at the multi-layered understanding of disability. On the other hand, disability rights as a movement involving scholarly experts and activists with their lived experiences have put their efforts into setting legal normative standards. So, in recent years, the progress and epistemology of medical and traditional models have been challenged as there has been an increased focus on understanding disability from interdisciplinary intersectional theoretical models integrated into academia and in normative standards settings like the United Nations (UN) and national instruments.

In this process, Hall’s framework strengthens disability studies by foregrounding the cultural politics of representation and the role of power in shaping persons with disabilities diverseidentities and lived experiences questioning themselves ‘who we are’ and how ‘disability is constructed’ and ‘embedded in their lives’ and ‘how to unify themselves for resistance through emancipation’ is at the heart of these developments. They brought national and international responses, including the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The potency of persons with disabilities and the International Disability Alliance is a testimony to the growing interconnectedness of the politics of disability across the globe. With this progress on the ground, disability studiesentered through training, educational contexts, social policies, legislative discourses, and professional

practices. In the late-twentieth-century, disability studies were associated with establishing the factors that led to the structural, economic, and cultural exclusion of persons with sensory, physical, and cognitive impairments. Then, it developed its diverse scope toward theoretical responses to these factors.

2.3 Rise of Critical Disability Studies (CDS)

Dann Goodley defines that "critical disability studies start with a disability but never end with it. Disability is the space from which to think through a host of political, theoretical, and practical issues that are relevant to all" (*Disability Studies* 134). The emergence of a critical approach to the analysis of disability has scaled up to several recent developments. Goodley argues that the word 'critical' denotes a sense of 'self-appraisal'; re-assessing where one has come from, where one is at, and where one might be going. With the term critical, this discipline of studies draws more interpretative insights and carries the meta-studies awareness. This means to say that as a branch of studies, it is aware of its limitations and scopes and addresses the fact that it is 'studies'. Importantly, it departs from the studies practiced or being in practice.

Defining the departure that the critical disability studies has made, Susan Flynn claims that it does not only question the nature of dis/ability, able-bodied, and existing theoretical responses, but also toward the veracity of its conventions (1). In addition, Flynn asserts that critical disability studies categorically do depart from the "biological essentialist" reading of disabled bodies, arguing,

> . . . there is nothing called the ideal body but discourses about bodies, and such discourses cannot be separated from power politics. This means that the group or the class of persons in power often project their ideas of body, colour, sex,

> and attitudes towards persons from other races and communities play a major role in setting out scripts for the members of the society to be followed. (7)

Since power politics are shaped by the profit motive, the group that conquers or manages to cast influence defines the ideals of the time. One particular group of persons often grab such opportunities and hold decision making power within their fold, and pave the way for discourses about normalcy. Such a nature of human power ignores the universal fact that nobody is perfect as one is bound to live with one or the other kind of functioning ability.

Scholars who support the critical disability studies promote the views that persons with disabilities need to live with critical views that no one is perfect. Highlighting such social and political dimensions of critical disability studies, Goodley and et al assert that "critical disability theory is an emancipatory and developing discourse of the present time" (*Feeling Disability* 206). They point out that the spirit of disability studies ideologically shares with the liberal politics of contemporary society globally. Given the political order that dictatorship is a thing fought against everywhere, the road to emancipation and liberalism is bound to welcome the spirit of critical disability studies, the scholars seem to support the view.

Helen Meekosha and Russell Shuttleworth opine that critical disability studies follow four primary principles. First, "critical social theory is irreducible to facts", meaning that the methods of such a theory outstrip quantitative analysis and reject reduction to the quantitative and rejects "atheoretical, context-free science", claiming that science is an inappropriate way to access phenomena under analysis ("What's so 'Critical'" 52). Second, "critical social theory links theory with praxis in the struggle for an autonomous and participatory society" ("What's so 'Critical'" 52). This praxis involves viewing autonomy as "emancipation from hegemonic and hierarchical

ideologies" rather than reducing autonomy to independence, as was common in disability theorizing in the 1970s–1990s ("What's so 'Critical'" 52–53). Third, "critical social theory is self-aware of its historicity", meaning that it sees its work as embedded within a time and place, reflexively targeting itself with the historical analysis it applies to social structures and institutions ("What's so 'Critical' about Critical" 53–54). Fourth, "critical social theory engages in dialogue among cultures and "calls for an explicit dialogue with human rights and emancipatory thinking from the diversity of cultures" and hopes to avoid "projecting an international ideal" from Western to non-Western cultures ("What's so 'Critical'" 54).

Since the social sciences-based researches ranging from Marxist to Feminists pointed out the gap between and among individuals due to unscientific distributions of resources, critical disability draws insights from various schools of thoughts which expose the order of society. Highlighting this nature of critical disability studies, Rosemarie Garland Thomson, a feminist disability scholar, argues, "Critical theory acts as a catalyst between critical disability theory and feminist theory and drives an integrated feminist disability analysis" ("Integrating Disability" 03). She argues a point that the way gender as a concept is widespread, the disability too is experienced throughout the world. Understanding the way social discourses on gender or sexuality function can enable one to follow the social practices on disability too. She engages, "Disability like gender is a concept that pervades all aspects of culture: its structuring institutions, social identities, cultural practices, political positions, historical communities, and the shared human experience of embodiment" (6). Critical disability studies have moved forward with new trajectories and disparate lines of reasoning and analysing assemblages. It offers crucial resources to other analyses, including but not limited to those conducted in feminist philosophy and philosophy

more generally but it categorizes within this larger system and can better engage in conversations and contribute to philosophy in a broad range of ways.

In this context, Rose Mary Garland further argues that emancipation of disabled persons requires expanding cultural notions of who counts as fully human. In *Extraordinary Bodies*, she shows how literary and cultural representations construct disabled persons as spectacles, anomalies, or objects of pity rather than as full subjects with agency (8–9). Her concept of "the politics of staring," developed further in *Staring: How We Look*, explains "how visual encounters reinforce power relations by positioning disabled persons as passive sites of curiosity or discomfort" (56–58). For, her emancipation means transforming these visual and cultural practices so that disabled persons are seen as legitimate participants in public life, not as aberrations to be managed. She emphasizes that "liberation is not only about physical access to spaces but it is about access to representation to stories, images, and cultural discourses that frame disabled persons as complex, relational, and fully human" (13). By reshaping the visual landscape, she argues, society can challenge deeply ingrained ableist assumptions and broaden the boundaries of the human.

Critical disability studies critique traditional disability studies pointing at latter's limits, including exclusions and framing. Critical disability studies explore interdisciplinary areas where there are overlaps and tensions. It actively seeks alliances and produces work in conversation with other key areas of critical thought: critical race theory, indigenous and postcolonial theory, queer theory, and continental philosophy, among other studies. It reflexively considers the exclusions, framing, and normative presuppositions of disability studies, supporting intersectional approaches and expansive inclusion.

Asha Hans and Annie Patri, the disability scholars point out that the nomenclature “disability” is insufficient to understand the problems female with disabilities have to live with: “This is proved by the fact that disabled women are a nearly invisible entities, not only in the general disability movement but more so in the women’s movement” (14). They argue that within the category of disabled, certain sections are more marginalized than others. Among female disabled, the ones who lack access to resources instrumental for social mobility such as education, technologies and jobs are bound to go through severe challenges. Moreover, once disabled women are taken as the subjects of greater burden by the patriarchal society since the girls are supposed to get married on time and run their families. Tobin Seibers, arguing in a similar vein, puts the ideas forward that “bodies do not seem to matter to who we are. They contain or dress up the spirit, the soul, the mind, the self” (“Introduction” 7). The implication is that to surpass the finitude of physical worlds, one must venture past the body toward the immateriality of meaning, aspirations, identity formation, and so forth. Michelle La Fontaine states that diverse persons with disabilities become minorities, and as minorities, they become “others” and are “viewed as different and not well tolerated” (43).

Minorities in different communities across times and places have always been judged on the social and cultural principles comfortable to the majority. Person with disabilities were treated as incomplete beings. Fontaine observes, “Different cultures at different times in history have believed that perfection was attainable and thereby attempted to achieve it by engaging appropriate means. Perfection in human terms has always been related to physical, emotional, sensorial, and intellectual states” (44). Discourses about the perfect and the imperfect human body have been integral part of persons with disabilities. Fiona Kumari Campbell explains “how ableist norms

produce a cultural desire for bodily perfection and normalize the erasure or fixing of disabled bodies, reinforcing the dominance of the 'so-called normal' body" (200).

Academic discourses about the perfect and the imperfect body are the subjects of change from time to time and place to place. Since the majority has always remained the opinion makers throughout the history, persons with disabilities have mostly been taken as incomplete beings, and they have also been taken as strangers in the world led by 'normal' people. Meenu Bhambani highlights connectivity between the plight of disabled women and the making of myths and beliefs about such corporeality since time immemorial in the India region. She argues that disabled women in India have been regarded as fallen creatures, someone who needed to realize the mistakes done in past lives and prepare to live a better body in the next life: "They have not set any precedence which some of the disabled men have, although like men they too have been projected in a very negative spirit. Individuals with disabilities in Indian mythology as well as history have been depicted as cruel and spiteful" (78). This leads one to believe that discourses about disabled women set the miserable conditions for individuals.

Madeleine A. Cahil and Martin F. Norden made a very important intervention that discourses about what is ability and what is not are not only produced in the past; they are being produced and circulated right in the present times as well. They point out that one should not harp on the belief that only the old and traditional institutions and social systems are responsible for shaping people's opinions and assumptions about the lives of persons living with disabilities. They ask their readers to turn around the latest technology and media disseminated stories about individuals living with disabilities: "... social institutions such as families, schools, religious organizations, and the various levels of government certainly provide frameworks for

understanding disability (however skewed those understandings may), but it is certainly arguable that the ideas are derived to a large extent from the mass-produced popular culture environment of which movies are an important part" (72).

One may make a hypothesis that liberal discourse about persons with disabilities is here to guide human society. But the fact is that discourses, since they are produced in modern times, are not necessarily gender-friendly or persons with disabilities - inclusive. Regarding this, Sandhya Limaye cautions:

> Women with sensory disabilities are assumed to be asexual not only socially but also biologically and psychologically. This is because society projects the message that serious physical imperfections condemn a person to asexuality. Such stigma of negative attitudes and the social barriers that still pervade our society... (94)

Notions about disability and gender roles pervade all over social and cultural institutions and cultural practices, political positions and historical communities. However, in reality women with disabilities are assumed as asexual, abnormal, imperfect with bodily nature and are excluded in all spheres of lives. The class, gender, locality, ethnicity, and other social and cultural contexts of the person determine his or her mode and manners of suffering and struggle that one has to undergo. For disability, the most central institutions remain those associated with the medical profession, rehabilitation, and social support. Many other institutions also reproduce patterns of gender discrimination in norms, behaviours, and others, such as in education, employment, and transport.

One of the most potent patterns of discrimination is in the access to and use of public space. The leading feminist scholar of contemporary time Judith Butler defines the connectivity between the social assumptions about the body and the materiality of

the body. She does it to expose the arbitrariness of social rules and principles developed and practiced to establish the superiority of males in the patriarchal society. With the following remarks Butler makes, one comes to an important realization that since laws, customs, and familial roles nurture certain habits and thinking practices that directly impact the gestures and behaviours of individuals, it is by bringing changes in such rules and norms that bring changes in human society i.e., across genders: “And there will be no way to understand "gender" as a cultural construct that is imposed upon the surface of matter, understood either as "the body" or its given sex. Rather, once "sex" itself is understood in its normativity, the materiality of the body will not be thinkable apart from the materialization of that regulatory norm” (2).

Human society is always and already guided by certain laws and order. Similarly, the members of society approve certain faiths and beliefs as truths and interpret social phenomena accordingly. Based on Butler’s views cited above, one can further state that corporeal experiences that one lives through are inseparable from the discourse about the existing political class that produce, perform, and promote particular forms of truths over the others. Butler further expands her views on how an individual starts to regard herself as a woman and learns to project herself bodily and ideologically in her society in this manner: “A rethinking of the process by which a bodily norm is assumed, appropriated, taken on as not, strictly speaking, undergone *by a* subject, but rather that the subject, the speaking ‘I,’ is formed by having gone through such a process of assuming sex” (3). Butler’s focus here is to create gender equality in society. She promotes the idea that humans, both males and females, can create a better society and less gender discriminatory society by exposing the fact that gender roles are performed.

To sum, critical disability studies emerge as an interdisciplinary field that challenges medicalized and individualistic understandings of disability by foregrounding its social, cultural, political, and ideological production. Rather than treating disability as a fixed bodily deficit, it conceptualizes it as a category shaped by historical conditions, social relations, and power structures as defined by Goodley. This approach aligns closely with Stuart Hall's cultural studies framework, particularly his emphasis on representation, hegemony, and the cultural construction of identity. Hall argues that identities are not natural or essential but are produced through representation and discourse within unequal power relations ("Cultural Identity" 225). Furthermore, Hall emphasizes that hegemony is never complete and that marginalized groups actively contest and rearticulate dominant meanings ("Encoding/Decoding" 136) in different context.

This insight is central to critical disability, which foregrounds disability activism, life narratives, and cultural production as counter-hegemonic practices that challenge ableist ideologies and reclaim agency, voice, and self-definition ("Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality" 129). In this sense, Hall's theory on critical disability studies enables us to analyse disability not only as a site of oppression but also as a space of resistance and transformative politics. By integrating Hall's cultural studies with critical disability studies, disability is repositioned as a socially regulated and culturally mediated identity, produced through discourse yet open to reinterpretation and change. This theoretical convergence provides a powerful framework for examining how disability is represented, negotiated, and transformed within specific socio-cultural contexts, including in non-Western settings such as Nepal.

To explore further, it is important to explore the corporeal experience of persons with different types of impairment groups their lived experiences and challenges they face in their daily lives that are most often unknown and undebated among most of us. These lived realities, historical conditions, social relations, and power structures are interlinked to the definition and interconnection of polity with a focus on how polity should also address the aspirations and knowledge of such individuals. Given the multiple definitions and perspectives on the meaning of disability, how disability is explained by those who are disabled, by providers, and by policymakers is critical within specific socio-cultural contexts, in determining the nature of community support, services, legislation, and overall quality of life. It was this critical juncture with critical disability studies that led some of the discussion around disability writing, writers with disabilities, and the rise of intersectional approaches which are discussed below.

2.4Disability Writings

Disability writings approach mainly highlights in three forms. First, they look at how critics in literary disability studies investigate characters with disabilities in canonical works by mostly writers without disabilities. Ato Quayson argues,

> Meanings of disability in characters are not constant, but vary from work to work, just as in reality they vary with bodily condition, time, and place. Probing representations of such characters has become a staple of literary disability studies, revealed hidden patterns and expand the way canonical narratives are read. (112)

Early literary disability studies expressed misgivings about figurative uses of disability, pointing out how such tropes frequently are quick ways vividly to depict something bad, broken, or wrong, even if that thing is unrelated to the disability itself.

Lennard J. Davis notes that certain discourse "increases the negative cultural meanings and the stigma of having a disability" (*The End of Normal* 242). As a result, certain societies become unfriendly places for individuals to live in. A stronger and more prevalent such discourses with 'negative cultural meanings', a harder becomes the life for diverse person with disabilities. Most recently, Michael Berube revised the view of disability metaphor. Berube acknowledges the value of objecting to representations that simply invoke pity or horror but writes that rejecting disability tropes because they are not realistic and seems "incompatible with the enterprise of professional literary study" ("Disability and Narrative" 570). Instead, Berube argues for an approach that raises awareness of how many familiar metaphors and narrative devices are "grounded in the underrecognized and undertheorized facts of bodily difference" (570). Based on his line of thought one can further say that individuals belonging to the economically, politically and socially marginalized community, locations and caste are bound to go through greater exclusion. Similarly, much also depends on the inner drives the individual lives with.

Along the same lines, Amy Vidali argues against simply policing harmful metaphors, urging artists and scholars instead to find ways to work "critically, ethically, transgressively, and creatively at the edges of disability metaphor" (51). Scholars in the field seem to have grown more open to rich varieties of disability metaphors in narratives. Scholars have pointed out how disability can shape the very form of narratives like the narratives around normalcy. Michael Berube argues that "writing and decoding text bound up in disability, the rise of mass literacy and the advent of deaf education, intellectual disability with motive, temporality, and self-awareness in narrative disability deserves greater recognition and exploration these days" (*The Secret Life of Story* 1). In these ways, scholars working in literary

disability studies have called attention to how disability works in literature, complicating texts, expanding their relevance, and changing the way we understand both popular and canonical narratives.

Disability writings foreground emancipation as liberation from the social, cultural, and political structures that produce disability. Lennard J. Davis emphasizes that disability is socially constructed through the ideology of "normalcy," and emancipation requires dismantling the cultural authority of norms that label some bodies and minds as deviant (30). He critiques the established conservative views on body and mind of individuals living with disability. Because of the damage such views create on the mind of individuals, persons in general need to live with a corrected version of disability. In a similar line, Rosemarie Garland Thomson points out that individuals with disability are "often framed as spectacles or anomalies" (56) and further points out the need of bringing transformation through "cultural and visual representation" in order to define such individuals as "full subjects with agency" (56–58). There is a need of (re)presenting disability through discourses and opinions, through arts and policies. Society can be guided to a more disability inclusive order. Bringing society to such a disability inclusive state requires reformulation of policies. Pointing out it, Nirmala Erevelles states "disability within intersecting systems of race, class, gender, and global capitalism, asserting that emancipation requires addressing structural inequalities like poverty and racism, rather than focusing solely on individual accommodation" (4–6). Collectively, disability writings, particularly life narratives and activist texts, function as counter-hegemonic interventions that rearticulate disability in terms of agency, rights, and collective identity. These writers demonstrate that true liberation involves systemic change, representation and emancipation of individuals' insights to understand disability not only as a site of

oppression but also as a space of cultural struggle, resistance, and transformative social politics.

On the other hand, writings of persons with disabilities provide a valuable counterpoint to depictions by writers without disabilities. However, as Leonard Cassuto explains, such writings present the "wretched treatment of persons with disabilities over history" because those authors who did publish did not want the highly stigmatized label of "disabled" (219). In this landscape of writings, Alice Hall and other scholars have pointed out that since 1990 there has been an outpouring of life writing by authors with disabilities. According to them, because of new interest in disability, improved access to publication, several autobiographical works by writers across the disability spectrum have come to circulate. Such writings have given a voice to authors with disabilities directly, who often testify to their journey from isolation to membership in a larger community (03). In Thomas Courser's words, such writings as "autobiography warrants study not just as all too rare first-person testimony about disabling conditions but also as potentially powerful counter-discourse to the prevailing discourse on disability" (109). As in other identity-based fields, life writing autobiographies, life narratives, activist writings, and critical literary writings and representations operate as counter-hegemonic narratives that resist and rearticulate ableist discourse.

By reclaiming voice and agency, such texts challenge dominant representations and produce alternative meanings of disability grounded in lived experience, rights, and social participation. In this context, such nuanced reading of disability as a site of cultural struggle, where dominant ableist ideologies are exposed and contested through representation becomes more revealing. Together, both critical disability and cultural studies in this setting, illuminate how disabled counter-

narratives destabilize hegemonic meanings and open possibilities for more inclusive and emancipatory understandings of disability. And, disability studies through individuals with disabilities' lives and their writings have open critical and innovative approaches to literary investigation.

The representation of disability and characters with disabilities in Nepali literature has evolved slowly and unevenly. Traditionally, disability was framed through religious, moral, and tragic narratives, often rendering characters with disabilities invisible, passive, or symbolic. Unlike traditional writers, writers with disabilities themselves have entered the literary space, crafting authentic, counter-hegemonic representations. The writer's deliberate efforts to reclaim narrative authority and redefine alternative meanings. This section critically examines how characters with disabilities have been portrayed in Nepali literature, analysing the shift from traditional stereotypes to more empowered, self-declared with intersectional narratives.

2.5Nepali Disability Writings

In a nation where school education was provided to general peoples only in 1940's and a separate school and pedagogy for persons with disabilities was run only in the early 1970's, one can assume the conditions of disability writings in Nepal. Mahesh Raj Maharjan points out the "paucity of academic disability research, studies, and literature in Nepali creative writings in fiction, biography, drama, and poems. It is limited and not satisfactory" (17). As an emerging issue, disability discussions were initiated only from 2000 onwards when academic studies on disability began to appear especially from researchers with disabilities themselves and writers without disabilities. Maharjan further classifies studies on disability in Nepal by both Nepali

and foreigners into three parts: the enumerative, social model, and substantive type (12).

As a researcher with a lived experience of disability, Ifound the landscape of disability studies in Nepal increasingly shifted from a charitable model to structural injustices and intersectional marginalization. Most of the disability writings and studies in Nepal can be categorized in three phases: the first is ‘social awareness phase’. Writings in this category highlight impairment as socially produced stigma and stereotypes. The second phase is ‘social transformation phase’. Disability writings of this category call for formulation of laws and policies made for persons with disabilities. And the third phase is‘interdisciplinary phase’. All these phases take a nuanced and layered concept and experience of biological, cultural, linguistic, and other dimensions reflected with “multilayered understanding of disability identities” both from academia and activism both by writer with disabilities and writers withoutdisabilities (*Global Perspectives on Disability* 155).The emerging body of disability studies scholarship in Nepal demonstrates a decisive shift from traditional, charity based frameworks to a nuanced, intersectional understanding of disability as a structural and socio-political issue. The first and second phase is limited with minimal literatures and in the third phase, scholars like Bishnu Maya Dunghana, Austin Lord, Bandita Sijapati, Tulasa Acharya, Pratima Gurung, Mahesh Raj Maharjan, and others have progressively discussed about critical disability studies, feminism, intersectional theoretical modes, human rights approach with several themes on gender, sexuality, body, violence and discrimination as political agendas.

In Nepal, an emerging discussion of critical disability, cultural, feminist, and intersectional disability studies have not been debated intensively, systematically, and scientifically yet. Mahesh Raj Maharjan argues that no or limited research and

discussion on caste and ethnic issues related with diverse person with disabilities has been conducted. Even disability studies in general regard disability as “asexual”, it seems scholars consider the person with disabilities “an- ethnic” because most scholars on disability writings in Nepal are from one ethnic group (16). This dissertation considers these realities and tries to address the gap by unfolding and unpacking the discussions from various limited literatures. Writings from the ground of peoples from the margin with a myriad of broader, cultural, social, and historical isolation have not fully embraced and acknowledged these connections through academic disciplines and activism. Limited writings that are produced have given a voice to authors with disabilities directly, who often testify to their journey from isolation to membership in a larger community.

I, as a researcher with lived experiences of disabilities assert that the existing disability literature highlights that persons with disabilities are not fully aware of their rights and different dimensions that rights are associated with. They are extremely embedded with the stereotypes and traditional mindset that are still aggravating prejudiced practices towards them (*Global Perspectives on Disability* 149). This has led to the voices of persons with disabilities limiting themselves to amplifying their collective voices and agencies. Arguing in a similar line of thought, Madhusudan Subedi claims “lived experiences of persons with disabilities on the fundamental rights like education, health, rehabilitation, employment and focuses on the distinctive understandings and expectations about their disability situation” (22). Subedi points out the need to develop social and legal mechanisms to monitor the rights and opportunities provided to individuals living with disabilities. Correspondingly, scholars Ram Prasad Aryal and Badri Aryal argue about the embedded stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities. They explain, “social prejudice cuts

deeper than infrastructural barriers" (27). The root causes of stigma and discrimination for persons with disabilities are more likely to be considered as economic and social burden in family and society. They believe that there would not be reciprocity from persons with disabilities, presuming them, only receivers not givers in family and society. This means that any economic opportunity or support provided to persons with disabilities is bound to be very impactful on the side of the caretaker's family members as well as themselves.

In addition, Austin Lord and Bandita Sijapati highlight “limited literature on disability studies and the rich scholarship on social exclusion in Nepal and they have mentioned that gender, caste, and ethnic classifications and identities strongly condition the level of social exclusion faced by Nepalis and yet how these patterns intersect with discrimination faced by persons with disabilities is relatively understudied” (8). Personswith disabilities and their organizations in the changed political context, i.e., the 1990 restoration of democracy found themselves speaking for their rights for the first time.

As the ‘left out’ citizens of a donor-dependent country that came out of an autocratic political regime, activists speaking for the rights and recognition of persons with disabilities found themselves making a historical breakthrough. Analysing the narrative of self as reflected in the writings of Nepali female authors Parijat and Jhamak Ghimire, Tulasi Acharya reaches to the conclusion: “Stigmatization excludes persons who do not fit the category of normal. The narratives have problematized these categories for the disabled and advocate for the ability of the disabled saying disabled are sexual, ready for marriage, and capable of doing anything that an able-bodied person can do” (“Disability and Sex” 65).

Acharya rightly points out that most persons with disabilities are often treated as subjects without any primal desires and emotions. The study reveals that women with disabilities often face compounded challenges due to prevailing societal norms and inadequate policy support, highlighting the necessity for gender-sensitive disability policies that address their emotional and psychological needs. Rupashree Niraula documents how women with disabilities face "double discrimination, experiencing both gender-based violence and systemic economic marginalization" (58). Her work further complicates this picture by highlighting the compounded marginalization faced by women with disabilities, emphasizing how gender intensifies economic and social vulnerabilities. This dissertation adds an essential layer to understanding disability oppression as multi-dimensional and socially constructed rather than merely medical.

Since family space has often remained conservative, talking about such strong human desires is often taken as taboo in Nepali society. Most of the family members take persons with disabilities as burden and non-contributors and most often families seek institutions for children with disabilities to settle. In this line of thought, Pratima Gurung questions family's role in the life of individual with disabilities and points the role of the private sphere that leads to public sphere:

> Family as a primary social institution; bond of affection, a safe place, emotional care, and space for bridging community activities and independence for all human beings reiterates that such institution remains a paradox as women with disabilities undergo violence, abuse, injustices, inequalities, lacking collective voice and support in the private sphere. (*A Study on Familial Discrimination* 113-114)

Gurung argues that women with disabilities often face several forms of discrimination that intersect with disability, gender, awareness, family access, stigma and family realities. She asserts that intersectional forms of discrimination begin first from the family knowingly and unknowingly. The way such individuals are treated at home affect them. They gradually become the victims of deprivation, pessimism, and isolation. Such familial experiences remain detrimental to the images in the public sphere. Most persons with disabilities are situated at the lowest social hierarchy and are mostly perceived as "unwanted and unproductive human resources" and are silenced in private settings (113). Family members can reduce stigma, stereotypes and taboos to disability and support their child to be educated with skills and take the expression of exercising life in the public sphere. Scholars have pointed out the issue of disability is inseparable from the characteristics of Nepali society. They view that social caste and ethnicity play an important role in the lives of persons with disabilities. Hridaya Raj Devkota and Andrew Clarke, et. al. argues

> . . . intersection of caste and disability in the context of Nepal including maternal healthcare service access and utilization" needs to be taken as a subject of serious studies. They further argue that there exists a "complex relationship between disability and caste in the utilization of maternal healthcare services, compound marginalization and impact on access to care by disabled women and their newborns. (218-232)

The nexus of gender and disability experiences Nepali women undergo are ways of systematic discrimination with neglect. Bishnu Maya Dhungana argues that the issues of gender experiences that women with disabilities in the social, political, familial, and economic aspects face are routinely marginalized by "double discrimination with inferior status, making them one of the world's most disadvantaged groups" (138).

Given the social orders of Nepali society where women and "Dalits" were given access to resources only recently i.e., 1950s, one can easily find them to be at the bottom of social order. Correspondingly, a report produced by the Norwegian Agency for Development NORAD mentions that marginalized groups like persons with disabilities are among those who have been historically excluded from mainstream socio-politics and economic development. If they are women and/or belong to marginalized castes, classes, or ethnic groups, then they often face multiple discriminations (7). On top of that if the women happen to be disabled ones, they are bound to be marginalized more. Needless to say, that women with disabilities living in conservative societies i.e. countryside or remote areas are bound to suffer more pathetically than the one from the urban areas. In this setting, Dipendra Upreti argues, "Without attending to caste, ethnicity, gender, class and geography, disability rights movement risks replicating the very exclusions it seeks to dismantle" (45), pointing to the necessity of an intersectional framework.

Austin Lord and Bandita Sijapati state that, "the intersection of disability and social exclusion reinforces the disadvantages that are linked to the identity of the socially excluded groups and manifest themselves in their exclusion from access, opportunities, and resources" (17). Certainly, the socially excluded groups in Nepal are Dalits, Indigenous Peoples, women, and persons with disabilities coming from such excluded castes, ethnic and gender background. They highlight the historical exclusion of marginalized groups with different marginalized identities. Adding to this conversation, Pratima Gurung and Rena Thapa argue,

> The marginalized movements and the exclusion of intersectional identity groups like Indigenous peoples with disabilities and their recognition in state mechanisms are urgent. Despite having several national normative frameworks,

> they have not been included so a call for recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples with disabilities is critical. (*Situations of Indigenous* 1)

Representing disability in Nepal remains a complex and daunting task. Among persons with disabilities, men and those belonging to dominant caste or ethnic groups are often the first to benefit from opportunities generated by political change, thereby reinforcing existing social hierarchies even within marginalized communities. Basu Dev Kafle has carried out evaluation and policy dissertation on special education from the perspective of social inclusion. His work critically evaluates special education in Nepal, and Kafle focuses on inclusive education policy intervention required to include persons with disabilities (24). Finally, Anita Maharjan reframes narrative storytelling, like individuals with disabilities "are not merely self-reflection, but as a vital site of political resistance, demonstrating how disabled individuals contest hegemonic cultural imaginaries through reclaiming their narrative authority" (18). This insight deepens the understanding of disability literature as a counter-hegemonic practice in Nepal's evolving socio-political fabric.

Rajani Dhakal, in her article "Politics on Physically Disabled in Nepal Stories", examines how disabled bodies are represented in contemporary Nepali short stories. Dhakal analyses power relations, social prejudices, and oppression that emerge when authors depict characters with disabilities. She focuses on five stories to explore how "body-politics" operates in literature. Dhakal argues that while many stories reflect marginalization and societal oppression, some deliberately raise a resistant voice, challenging dominant ableist norms and social prejudices. By conceptualizing disability as a social and political agenda rather than merely a medical or personal issue, the article positions literary representation as a site of

emancipation, where the dignity, agency, and social inclusion of disabled bodies are asserted (Dhakal 197–209).

Reviewing the existing literature on disability by the aforementioned scholars reveals a discernible trend: the integration of critical disability studies with emerging trajectories and diverse lines of reasoning. These analyses engage with assemblage cultural theory, feminist thought, and disability philosophy, offering essential nuances that move beyond reductive interpretations. Collectively, these studies dismantle electing a shift away from reductive and essentialist interpretations of disability. These writings argue that meaning and identity are produced through representationin relation of power. Such analyses challenge dominant ableist discourse that naturalize disability as deficit, instead emphasizing its entanglement with social, economic, cultural, and political forces towards emancipation within the Nepali context. In doing so, they advocate for policies and scholarly approaches that transcend traditional models and embrace inclusive, intersectional, and decolonial perspectives.

Extending this discourse, the present dissertation introduces an explicitly intersectional theoretical lens, positioning selected literary texts not merely as representations of lived experience but as cultural sites where meanings of disability are contested and transformed. Situated within the broader framework of critical disability studies, this dissertation seeks to consolidate disability studies as an interdisciplinary academic field in Nepal, attentive to questions of representation, power, and social emancipation.

2.6Reviews on Primary Texts

As previously discussed, disability writings and literature remain limited in the Nepali context. However, this dissertation seeks to contribute meaningfully to the emerging discourse by critically engaging with the available texts through the lens of

critical disability studies. The selected autobiographies and literary works have, to date, largely received linear or siloed interpretations, often focusing narrowly on individual emotional journeys or narratives of personal triumph. This dissertation, by contrast, underscores the importance of analysing these texts with intersectional and socio-political framework. Since the authors themselves live with various forms of impairment, and are embedded with social identities, their experiences are shaped by how they navigate life, construct meaning from their challenges, and respond to the structures of society and emancipate themselves through several aspects. Abhi Subedi and Manisha Gauchan, regarded as one of the talented young generation Nepali novelists and their works, (re)present the characters with disabilities in the changed social and political Nepali contexts.

2.6.1*A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*

In the early 2000s, news that a girl named Jhamak Ghimire, who is living with cerebral palsy at Dhankuta, a small town in the Eastern part of Nepal was composing literary works in Nepali through her foot became well known. In the aftermath of the news coverage, Ghimire's poems and essays were published in print media, while her interviews were aired on television and radio. Over the later years of the decade, her photographs and videos increasingly gained viral attention. Upon reading about the struggle that Ghimire, a girl with a disability, had gone through before becoming a creative writer, readers and magazines started referring to her as Hellen Keller who was deaf-blind, the famous American writer, academic, and activist. When popular newspapers and magazines were making the best of Ghimire images with tags such as 'most aspiring and promising authors' and 'an innocent child growing up amidst the hatred of the society', Manjushree Thapa, Nepali English novelist, and translator who has translated Ghimire's two poems writes about her. She writes under a single topic,

"What is the interpretation of the new Millennium" for the *Nepali Times*, a fortnight newspaper. Introducing Ghimire and her poetic style, Thapa claims:

> With a skill that rivals that of the best progressive writers of today, she explores hard political, intellectual, feminist, and social issues, without shying away from emotional expressions of love, regret, joy, and sadness. The intensity of her voice is riveting: while there are, obviously, more stylish, clever poets and writers in Nepal, there may not be anyone for whom the written word carries so much urgency. Here is someone who palpably lives by her word. (16)

Already a published author and translator, as her *Tutor of History* (2001) had already come out, Thapa's remark about Ghimire's writings, especially the poems, came as contributor intervention at times when the latest writings were discussed in the popular reading sphere. Thapa appreciates Ghimire's style and ideological standpoint and sets her as a distinctly genuine and original writer of the generation. Thapa's recognition of Ghimire was not as a mere "writer with disabiliites" but a "talented and skilful writer" who created an important shift with critical debates and reforming the polity in her later works (16). Thapa's particular translation and introduction can be regarded as the first major effort made to introduce Ghimire to readers and writers in Nepal and abroad which provides her space in Nepali literature.

As an aspiring and emerging writer, Ghimire engaged with *Kantipur;* Daily Newspaperto publish her articles in recent years when her book, *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*of her image, gradually started drawing attention across the world. Later on, she was awarded *Madan Purashkar,* one of the most prestigious awards given to Nepali creative writers, in 2010. With such awards and efforts towards creative writing, Ghimire became the epitome of creative power. Most of the reviews and the dissertation came across addressing her progress and the struggle the

protagonists of the works go through. Reaching the wider readers and understanding its essence that it arose in Nepali polity and literature; the book is eventually translated as *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns* by Nagendra Sharma.

The protagonist of her autobiography, Ghimire represents the image of persons with disabilities and provides new meanings that "disability is a beauty of life, not a disfigurement" (preface). Her hope, aspiration, enthusiasm, and analysis through her biography drew the attention of most readers to understand her hardships, wisdom, and courage. Filled with persons who understand her and the one who failed to understand her aspirations, unlike other books, it is not limited to an 'autobiography' but a 'symbolic book'; a source of inspiration that unfolds suffering and the struggle for freedom and choice.

Having cerebral palsy: physical and mental impairment, with no formal education, and beyond people's imagination, Ghimire drew the lines of her destiny by holding the power of intelligence, wisdom, and courage to be a well-known writer all over the world. Her parents did not have any hope that she would be a woman of letters and a symbol of inspiration to the rest of the ableist world. Crossing across the difficult journey, Ghimire, a girl coming from an economically lower class, embedded with Hindu patriarchal values, had to go through several obstacles in her life both at private and public sphere where her words, feelings, and voices did not exist and were siloed.

In her review for the blog on Facebook wall of Nepal's leading publication house Ekta Books, Sewa Bhattarai, a bilingual journalist and multimedia content writer, highlights the daring nature of Ghimire's ideas. Bhattarai particularly praises the narrative Ghimire builds on her menstruation experience. Under the title "Hard to be as Honest as Jhamak", Bhattarai appreciates *A Flower in the Midst of*

ThornsKanda Ki Phool for containing several powerful expressions, metaphors, and symbols: “Jhamak expresses strongly feminist viewpoints at the start, with which every woman can identify. She mentioned in her book how everyone treated her worse and “unproductive” just because she was a woman. She mentions how terrified she was at her menstruation, and how she blanched at being confined indoors during her periods” (Ekta Books’ Facebook Post).

Bhattarai highlights the way Ghimire achieves confidence and modes of expression in her life at home and beyond. Indirectly, she pleads with the readers to regard Ghimire as a serious writer, not as a mere aspiring author, someone writing to gratify her desire, a mere wish-fulfilment act. Thomas Bell, pays tribute to Ghimire’s journey and the inspiring task she has completed: “At 30, Ghimire has now been thrust into celebrityhood with an autobiography that describes her struggle for self-expression, battling discrimination from the community and family, fighting fatalism and superstition in Nepali culture at the same time” (15). Bell’s references to “fatalism” and “superstition” deserve some attention here. Ghimire’s journey, a corporeal experience, is determined by the abstract values her society has nurtured for ages. Her struggle attempts to wipe out the cloud created out of such abstract and groundless assumptions about disability from people’s minds. Ghimire struggles to make persons realize groundless hypotheses they have lived with particularly about disabilities. Highlighting the nature of the struggle Ghimire had to bear, Ashok Sapkota points out that the book records the tension that exists between society and Ghimire’s body:

> Ghimire’s life writing is about her body, the body she experienced, and the body a culture embedded and imposed on her, her physical identities, feelings, and bodily encounters, giving the reader a clear overview of multiple issues and

> concerns such as who can speak and who cannot, how culture creates subject and object in the subject position of marginalized persons with disabilities, and whether the body speaks or not. (198)

A Flower in the Midst of Thorns shares the experience with readers that individuals around Ghimire misunderstood her, failed to appreciate her power, and hesitated to listen to her dream. But as Ghimire kept on working hard to become a writer, the same individuals started approaching her with different attitudes. Balkrishna Pokharel, often regarded as Nepal's most respected senior linguist and historian, composed a verse that was to be included as the prologue to the book. The verse composed in a fine rhyme pattern honours Ghimire as the epitome of the human race for having such inner strength of creativity (i). Pokharel defines Ghimire's success as the marker of progress of the human race. Pokharel calls her journey an epic.

Researcher like Tulasi Acharya compares Ghimire along with the famous Marxist writer Parijat and puts his claim that they have challenged the normative assumptions about their bodies and explored their sexual selves and gendered identities. By writing about their bodies and desires in their narratives, both literary figures have also shown their concern for women with disabilities' sexual identity" (*Gender, Disability and Literature* 12). He comes at the conclusion that Parijat, a modern Nepali writer from a marginalized indigenous community who lived her life with paralysis had to struggled to gain recognition in the mainstream Nepali literary field.

Govinda Bhattarai, a novelist, critic, and essayist and importantly someone who played an important role in inspiring Ghimire to write this book, assures readers that this book is going to be famous in the field of autobiographical writing in Nepal. Bhattarai, a renowned Nepali literary critic, claims that the book is going to be world-

famous very soon (13). A long introductory essay Bhattarai has written for the book introduces readers that a group of writers, publishers, readers, and media persons have made a collective effort not only to produce the book but also to carve the image of the author. With such skills and talents and with such conditionality and the journey Ghimire had already gone through, particular attention was paid to keeping her image as a creative writer that Nepalis need to be proud of.

Since Ghimire belongs to the post-1990 Nepali society that has been going through, it is natural for critics to highlight the reflective nature of Ghimire's writing. Roughly, 2000-2010 was a decade of turbulence in Nepal. Many plays and novels, poetry and paintings, cinemas and documentaries, and autobiographies among others had already addressed the experiences Nepalis had to go through during that decade.Unlike many writers with disabilities, Ghimire has engaged with and perceived society; its systems, structures, and sensivities through uniquely critical perspectives. Highlighting this side of the book, Gopal Guragain, a media person, who had played an important role in popularizing the work of Ghimire across Nepali media, writes that "the book is a reflection of the society that has been going through social and political changes through the perspective of a physically challenged girl coming from the economically struggling family" (18). Critics praise Ghimire's works, arguing that they merit discussion at a global level.

While grounded in her experience as an author with disability, Ghimire's writing extends beyond corporeality to engage directly with intellectual debates. She emerges as an interpreter of political issues and ideological deadlocks, and, as a writer shaped by political transitions, she addresses controversial questions through liberal frameworks aligned with twenty-first-century ideals.

Vishwas Deep Tigela, who played an important role in publishing the book, regards Ghimire's creativity as a challenge to the able persons (20). As a publisher, Tigela seems to appeal to aspiring writers to come up with fresh and original stories that could move readers as well as inspire persons around. His stand is one of the dominant statements critics have made about Ghimire's writing. Tigela's logic appears to suggest that if someone like Ghimire, writing under such conditions, can produce work of such quality, then why are writers without disabilities unable to produce a similar kind of writing? Within this context, I argue that much of the popular criticism of Ghimire and her work are largely framed around inspiring Ghimire and her work from disability perspectives and her struggles.

Sapkota writes how Ghimire liberates herself from Nepali patriarchal understanding and defining of female sexuality. Sapkota states, "Ghimire narrates the word "Kumari" and its connotation in the text which is taken as a gender difference to distinguish a girl from a boy and she challenges the sexist semiotics which were the result of patriarchal values. These ideas are related with the feminist claim as in the first and second wave to gain status in the socio-cultural situation" (194). Though left at the corner like an immobile body, Ghimire definitely spent her years in the conservative society. As a girl with cerebral palsy, she was not free of patriarchal gazes and assumptions about sexuality. The visitors showed great concern and sympathy to Ghimire's parents for being the parents of a girl of such corporeality.

Sharma and Guragain pointed the dichotomy of abled and disabled worldviews prominently with one linear interpretation. In the process of discussion, critics like Manjushree Thapa and Govinda Bhattarai discuss Ghimire's dedication, symbols of courage and her creative writings and her contribution in Nepali society. Scholars Bhattarai, Thapa, Paudel, Acharya, Tigela and Sapkota focused that her

writings that her writingsscale up gender, patriarchal normative and sociocultural values that control female body, femininity, sexuality and ableist ideologies. They focus on personal triumph of Ghimire and regard the autobiography as an important inspiring text.

However, I differ that Ghimire's autobiography is not limited to inspiring text but a powerful lens to explore the broader structures of exclusion, marginalization, and resilience of person with disabilities. While most critics have explained gender and disability as an isolated domain in Ghimire's work, I argue that such analyses remain limited by treating her identity as singular domain either as a 'woman' or as a 'disabled' individual. Ghimire embodies what Crenshaw terms 'intersectional identities,' do not experience oppression or identity in isolated categories but through multiple, overlapping axes of social positioning that manifest in diverse and layered ways within the socio-cultural and historical context. Aligning with Crenshaw, I emphasize that her autobiography, should not be read merely through the isolated lens of gender or disability, but it has to be analysed as a product of complex and compounded processes of socialization and embedded experiences shaped by gender, disability, and other social variables. Previous analyses of her work have largely overlooked her linguistic background, regional identity, education, access, media outreach and broader socio-political structures that equally reinforce her identity as a famous writer.

This dissertation proposes reading Ghimire's autobiography as an intersectional narrative that reflects the multi-layered and exacerbated forms of realities in her life. Intersectionality becomes a crucial framework for understanding both 'the kind of disability she lived through' and 'the kind of society she belongs to.' Her autobiography, in this sense, becomes a dialogic text-engaging in conversation

with broader political, cultural, and social structures both within and beyond Nepal. Ghimire's lived experience cannot be reduced solely to her physical impairment. Her position offers a nuanced perspective that challenges, stereotypes, traditional views on disability and profound emancipatory perspective by foregrounding her lived experience not limited as a woman with a disability but from a lower economic class in a traditionally conservative and patriarchal Nepali society with limited access. Instead, her narrative reflects how disability intersects with other identity markers such as her gender, class, caste, geographic location, linguistic background, and access to social network and resources. These overlapping layers of social positioning illustrate how deeply entrenched ideologies and institutional frameworks shape the experiences of individuals with disabilities like Ghimire.

Identifying these gaps, this dissertation proposes an intersectional theoretical framework to reinterpret her stories and narratives, offering a new dimension to literary writings in Nepal. Applying an intersectional approach to her work introduces a new and significant theoretical standpoint in the study of Nepali literature and disability, this dissertation offers both critical insight and scholarly innovation in Nepal.

2.6.2 *Antardṛṣṭi*

Kamal Lamichhāne, a renowned disability and academic scholar, made his recognition long before through his autobiography *Antardṛṣṭi*which was published by Fine Prints in 2019. Lamichhāne's experiences demonstrate that he had already run an FM program before he was awarded a scholarship to pursue PhD in Japan. Lamichhānehad contributed articles to national dailies for a decade, and his PhD from Tokyo University has already earned him the first visually impaired PhD scholar recognition in Nepal. *The Himalayan Times,* the national daily, covers

Lamichhānebeing awarded with PhD as the news and reports that he, a visually impaired person, who hails from Jutpani of Chitwan is all set to be conferred with Doctor of Philosophy on March 24. The PhD degree was received as a sign of hope and affirmation of life force by the media. On top of that, his 2015 book had already been published by Cambridge University Press. Lamichhāneis already a renowned name in academia, as his book about the "importance of human capital of persons with disabilities" has become shared news. But after his autobiography appeared in 2019, his life story reached to a larger public sphere within Nepal and beyond. Lamichhānehimself while unveiling the cover of the book *Antardṛṣṭi*on his Facebook wall posts:

> Education in my life did the same as the sun's rays do though piercing the cloud. It did open the veil over me. More than an opportunity, education brought massive changes in my life… With the hope that this book is reaching your hands very soon, I am releasing the cover of the book "*Antardṛṣṭi*". My memoir: coming soon. (Facebook Post 11 June 2019)

Once the book came out, it was received as Lamichhāne's life journey. It was taken as an inspirational story of an important person that a nation should be proud of. The book covers the unravelling journey that Lamichhānemakes from the state of a helpless child to an internationally recognized scholar. As a personal narrative aboutLamichhāne's relationship with his parents, siblings, neighbours, and professional world, he shapes his individual ways of seeing himself, and his body. He minutely depicts several phenomena and aspects of his life and interacts with the world.

Janakraj Sapkota sums that the book is "inspiring for the dreamers", "Lamichhāne's story is, more than a story of a person earning a Ph.D, a story of a

person living with disability. Most importantly, it is the book that covers the journey he has made, and this journey passes through a labyrinth of pain and humiliation, and heart-wrenching comments from neighbours and relatives" (18). A man who saw school when he was already twelve years old did manage to achieve his higher academic studies at Japan's famous Chukuwa University and Tokyo University and finally became a dissertation fellow at Harvard University.

In a similar line of appreciation of the book, journalist Bimal Acharyastates in the review of the book for *The Annapurna Post*'s online publication that *Antardṛṣṭi*helps readers to know about the complex life that a person with disabilities has to live and pass through in a country like Nepal. One can realize the inner struggles person with disabilities have to go through against prejudices, pain, indifferences, sense of inferiority, superstitions, etc. Acharya, a literary journalist, highlights Lamichhāne's journey into the world of learning and writing. Acharya's review supports and justifies the need to change disability policies and change the change-making spirit of Lamichhāne(16).

Namrata Pandey, another critic on *Antardṛṣṭi*regards the book as a record of determination that Lamichhāne as an individual lives through challenging norms and assumptions about disabilities his society and family imposed on him. Pandey further notes thatLamichhāne's struggle is praiseworthy in that "one can still rise despite all kinds of humiliation that relatives and neighbours would impinge in a conservative society like Nepal" ("Social Inclusion" 287). All the critics highlight the journey that Lamichhānemakes from a very critical point of time of his life to the one thatLamichhāneis living as an internationally renowned scholar on disability studies.

Reviews by Sapkota, Acharya, and Pandey explain the book as inspirational, struggle, and hope. Lamichhānestruggles as a person with visually impaired and goes

through prejudices, pain, indifferences, and superstitions in Nepali society. He overcomes them through learning and acquiring higher education. Lamichhāne's journey from Chitwan to Kathmandu is not merely a personal or geographical transition, it intersects with broader social, cultural, and structural dynamics. Drawing on Elizabeth Grosz's assertion that identity is shaped through the "contestation of social, economic, political and intellectual struggles" (19), this dissertation interprets Lamichhāne's trajectory as embedded within and shaped by intersecting forces such as disability, class, regional origin, and limited access to social capital and professional networks.

While *Antardṛṣṭi* has received considerable attention within disability discourse, much of the existing scholarship has primarily interpreted the text through a disability-centred lens, focusing on themes of impairment, resilience, personal determination, and individual achievement. Although such readings have contributed to recognizing the significance of Lamichhane's experiences as a person with disabilities, they often overlook the complex interplay of social, economic, regional, and institutional factors that have shaped his life trajectory. By moving beyond a singular focus on disability and adopting an intersectional framework, this dissertation seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of *Antardṛṣṭi*. It argues that Lamichhane's experiences cannot be adequately understood through disability alone; rather, they emerge at the intersection of multiple structures of power and marginalization that have influenced his educational, professional, and social experiences. These layers cannot be disentangled from the broader socio-political fabric within which his academic journey unfolds. Such an approach enables a richer analysis of both the text and the broader socio-political realities within which Lamichhane's life and scholarship are situated.

2.6.3*Blind Rocks*

Blind Rocks directed by Milan Chams is a film based on the life story of Sṛṣṭi KC, who had lost her eyesight at the age of 16. The film highlights the adversities and challenges thatSṛṣṭi struggles with her disablity. She challenges the worldview of the 'able' and 'disabled world' and gender-defined roles that hinder her life as a 'woman with disability' in patriarchal Nepali society. Although women and men with disabilities share similar experiences of devaluation, isolation, marginalization, and discrimination, their fortunes diverge in important ways. Introducing herself, KC blogs that "striving through life as a visually impaired person gave me the courage and strength to fight for a cause" (Personal Blog)

In her interview with Bikas Udhyami, one of the pioneer Indian media organizations, KC shares the objectives behind setting up the foundation of *Blind Rocks*. Her movie takes the name after the organization she had set earlier the same year. She wanted to challenge the misconception persons have about disabilities: "The one that stood out for me was: "If you are disabled, you are the government's problem. I was shocked" (Personal Blog). KC further complains that persons with disabilities are seen as the objects of charity. This was one of the forces that made her look for another side of life: "So I asked, where are the colorful aspects of their life? Do able-bodied persons only go to school and work, do they not enjoy other things in life?" (Personal Blog). With such questions in mind, she commenced the foundation named Blind Rocks, and the movie also more or less shares a similar line of thought. In an interview with *Nepali Times,* KC shared her experience of setting up the foundation and gave credit to her mother: "When I first lost my sight, I was rejected. But then I realized that it was only my eyes that were missing and not my hands and my feet" (*Interview with Nepali Times*). Blind Rocks, as an institute, trains persons

who are visually impaired on interpersonal skills, dance, fashion, and adventure sports to change society's attitude towards them.

Similarly, in *Tough Talk* program hosted by Dilbhusan Pathak, one of the senior journalists for *Kantipur Television*, KC shared her experience of coping communication skills and strategies after losing her eyesight in the episode by "episode" that was a shocking experience: "But then I came to realize that one remains focused. Without many distractions, I get into concentration. I developed my communication skills faster. It came as a survival strategy." Similarly, in the podcast of George Abrahams "Eyeway Conversations with Sṛṣṭi KC," one of the knowledge-based platforms for persons living with visual impairment, she shares:

> We also teach dance to individuals without disabilities, you know, so when they come, we sometimes blindfold them. So, it's kind of reverse inclusion, what I mean with that is like, we bring them to our world to experience our world in a complete, positive way to make them understand that, like when you can't see is actually when you activate your other senses, and then you can explore your other senses and enjoy, you know. ("Interview with Abrahams" 1:25-1:30)

With such dance methodology, KC shares the message that losing the eye is entering into another mode of existence, it is not the end of the mind: "Actually not to see is to be focused and enjoy. It opens up a different way of seeing the world, you know and that's quite rewarding for us to make persons understand that, you know, to be blind is not horrible. It's just a different way of being and it's beautiful in its way" (15:20-15: 24).

Once the *Blind Rocks* was released, it created a further wave of KC's identity dissemination. *A* national daily remark "The movie is a ground breaker. As a biopic, it

is sure to create another wave in the mini world of Nepali cinema," the review highlights (*My República* 12). Milan Chams has made an effort to break the traditional mode of cinema with *Blind Rocks* based on KC's life story. In his statement, Chams further highlights that the movie tells "the true story of KC, who is rendered blind at the age of 16 and despite her eye challenges, she embraces her new reality of life and makes the truth as a light of her life" (*My República* 12). In an interview with Naresh Bhattarai, a radio programmer for Image FM, and also a YouTuber, KC shares her experience of being into the cinematic text. As a person living with a visual impairment and someone fighting for the dignity of such people, she says that "she wanted to share with the audience that determination and enabling environment can bring changes in the perspectives of persons usually live with disabilities, especially girls" (Personal Interview with Bhattarai).

KC is addressed with a term "single name with multiple identities" in the beginning of the movie" (5.34-5:36) symbolizing her multiple intersecting identities. She struggles for recognition. She runs an organization that support person with visual impairment. All her multiple identities are inter-connected and overlapped with her life journeys of struggles which are multilayered with diverse interpretations and orientations that shape her life from a fragile, depressed, dependent character to an independent and courageous character.

Most of the reviews on Sṛṣṭi KC define her life story as extraordinary in nature. They highlight the resilience power she demonstrates in overcoming a life-altering experience. Her narrative is often framed through the lens of personal triumph, emphasizing the transformation from adversity to empowerment. While such reviews are significant, they frequently simplify her story into a linear narrative of inspiration. What is often overlooked that I found and contested is the broader cultural

impact she makes particularly how her visibility and activism contribute to shifting public perceptions of blindness and disability in Nepal. KC herself engages with these shifting perceptions in her public dialogues. However, these portrayals largely remain surface-level, neglecting the deeper structural and intersectional issues; such as gender, urban privilege, and access to media platforms that shape both her journey and her acceptance. This dissertation proposes a more critical and layered analysis of KC's narrative that goes beyond celebrating individual resilience. It interrogates the social conditions that both enable and limit such breakthroughs.

Drawing on theory of intersectionality both the experiential and intersubjective levels, the analysis plans to situate KC's identity formation within the broader socio-cultural fabric of Nepali society. It points out that her rise to public prominence, while a testament to individual agency, is deeply influenced by contextual social variables such as gender, urban geography, caste, ethnicities language, media access, and institutional support that are often obscured in dominant narratives. By doing so, it invites readers to see disability not as a limitation, but as a powerful lens through which alternative modes of knowing, being, advocating and emancipating in the society.

2.6.4*Dreams of Mayadevi*

*Dreams of Mayadevi*was written to be staged and performed by actors under the direction of Nisha Sharma Pokharel, which received various opinions and criticism. Reviewing the performance, in *The Himalayan Times*, Rita Dhital concludes, "This play addresses the most current issue in Nepali history that has become a predicament now. An old woman who has lost her son, and an armless man who has seen the futility of war bring three dimensions of time together, past, present, and the future" (8). Peace is the solution to all kinds of problems, and peace has

always worked, it should be allowed to work in the present, Indira Mishra reads the play from an ecofeminist perspective and puts SallerīSāhinlāalong with a war-loving, violent male. She reads him as the image of a violent male psyche that favours war in the past but is worried when the war comes to his door. Mishra argues that: "Mayadevi, the protagonist of the play minutely analyses violence against women and nature in patriarchy during the Maoist War in Nepal. Traditional gender roles based on hierarchy and dualism treat men as superior to women and nature" (36). Mishra puts all the male characters into a single basket with a singular linear interpretation. SallerīSāhinlāfor Mishra is someone bound to go through suffering since he too had promoted war in the past. Sāhinlā cannot be separated from the patriarchal social norms and psychological values. Mishra highlights a point that with Mayadevi a certain sanity prevails in the play.

Badri Pokharel reads the play as the representation of trauma that persons lived through during the time of conflicts in Nepal. Pokharel takes *Dreams of Mayadevi* as "a testimony of the war victims who were badly crippled during the war. Mayadevi, the protagonist of this play who has lost her husband in the Indian war and son, Siddhartha in the insurgency, and SallerīSāhinlāwho loses all his family members are the victims and liable to share their painful testimony" (1).

Shiva Rijal highlights SallerīSāhinlā's journey as the plight of indigenous persons in Nepal: "while presenting the indigenous characters, the playwright, directly and indirectly, addresses the social and political ills of the Nepal society. These indigenous characters' attitude towards their masters and the representatives of the state around them reflects the political and historical courses that Nepal has gone through over the centuries" (43). This war and the political revolution or public uprising paved the way for a drastic change in 2006. This change brought an end to

the dominance of powerful groups and the voices of marginalized groups like Indigenous SallerīSāhinlāvoices need to be heard as they have contributed to the society.

The reviews convey the message that war has cost people's lives. Maya Devi carries the war with her pain but characters like SallerīSāhinlāsymbolize the bitter reality of war. Critics like Shiva Rijal connect characters from marginalized groups who have lineage with history and nation formation process as contributors to the society and their voices should be heard. While existing critics of the play provide insightful summaries of Nepal's socio-political context and the broader impacts of war, none have critically analysed the war's consequences through the lens of disability as embodied by characters like Sāhinlā. This dissertation departs from previous scholarship by foregrounding the intersectional experiences ofSāhinlā, whose disability acquired during wartime serves as a profound site for examining the entanglements of trauma, identity, and social exclusion. Through his poignant monologues, Sāhinlā reveals a tapestry of emotional and psychological struggles that reflect broader societal attitudes toward disability. These expressions are not merely personal but embed layers of intersectional nuance touching on issues of class, masculinity, national identity, and bodily autonomy. By analysing these dimensions, the dissertation positions Sāhinlā's narrative within the framework of disability justice, which emphasizes lived experience, systemic critique, and the need for structural transformation. The character's shifting perceptions of war and self, shaped by the various social and geographic spaces he inhabits, offer a critical lens to understand how disability is experienced in relation to historical violence and cultural ideology. This intersectional reading sets the study apart from prior analyses and

contributes a necessary dimension to the discourse on post-conflict literature and disability in Nepal.

Sāhinlā does not accept disability as a static condition but embraces and amplifies it, transforming it into a powerful narrative of resilience and resistance. In doing so, Sāhinlā's character becomes a metaphor for the nation itself, one that has endured the crossfire of conflict, violence, and political turmoil. His disability reflects the collective trauma of a nation in upheaval. Through his journey, Sāhinlā challenges dominant understandings of disability and offers a nuanced perspective that intertwines personal suffering with broader socio-political realities, thereby redefining disability as both a personal, collective and cultural experience through emancipation.

2.6.5 *White Cane*

White Cane, set in the post-2005 political context of Nepal, is important from the perspective of how a young female creative writer responds to the world of experiences lived by visually impaired characters. As a creative writer, Manisha Gauchan creates Bhāśvat, a visually impaired character who concentrates on his profession despite being an orphan.

In an interview with Sagar Budhathoki for *The Himal Weekly,* Manisha Gauchan shares her experience of writing the novel in the following manner:

> While writing it, I tried to live through what it would be like to live with visual impairment. I had to imagine differently. I sometimes think that I almost lived the life of a visually impaired person while writing it. As an activist involved in the rights of persons living with disabilities, I got much closer to individuals living with visual impairment while writing this novel. It was almost like a dissertation paper for me. I sometimes feel as if I have tried to encroach into someone else's territory. (1-2)

Gauchan accepts the role that she had to invent. She seems to be sharing the message that persons with disabilities should not be misrepresented. She defines herself as an outsider using imaginative power and literary writing skills to venture into the issues related to individuals living with disabilities.

But the fact that Gauchan had worked for the I/NGOs involved in the rights ofpersons with disabilities, she had acquired vital information about such individuals. In an interview with Anish Ghimire for *The Kathmandu Post*, Gauchan shares that her experience of working with persons with disabilities had directly helped us design characters and their life stories in the novel and other short stories: “While sometimes my personal life and experiences serve as inspiration for my writing, more often, it encounters with characters in our society and events unfolding around us that fuel my creative drive” (8). Gauchan’s creative engagement with the issues is mainly guided by the liberal values of the twenty-first century that an individual subject to personal freedom seems to be the guiding principle of the protagonist in her novel.

Sulochana Manandhar defines ‘White Cane’ as Bhāśvat ’s identity card. The female characters who come one after another function as the white cane in his life. Bhāśvat moves forward after meeting each female friend in his life. Being himself a visually impaired, Bhāśvat becomes a source of inspiration for characters without disabilities” writes Sulochana Manandhar.

The critics on *White Cane* have highlighted Bhāśvat’s distinct and reflective journey. They focused on the central theme of disability. However, Bhāśvat’s struggles transcend his life, not limiting himself only to disability. Bhāśvat operates within several intersecting modes that challenge the conventional, fixed notions of disability. Bhāśvat navigates the professional world. He engages with new ideas, networks, practices, interpretations, and political orientations, demonstrating a keen

awareness of his surroundings. His journey synthesizes diverse experiences and reflects the contradictions and complexities of human life. Bhāśvat does not just represent a person with a disability; he embodies a new way of thinking and interacting with the world as other able bodied. He communicates the crucial idea that all voices deserve to be heard and treated equally. He asserts the importance of inclusivity and responsiveness in the public sphere. I argue that *White Cane* is not merely the story of an individual with visual impairment, but a broader narrative about how disability intersects with class, access, social network and with social justice. *White Cane* thus serves as an embodiment of the intersectional aspects of social transformation and emancipation, blending the personal and collective in its exploration of disability.

2.7Research Gap

With aforementioned, literature and critics, Irespond that most reviews and existing literature on the works of Ghimire, Lamichhāne, and KC tend to emphasize their personal struggles with disability, framing their narratives primarily from ability/disability overcoming adversity and explaining their hardship. While such recognitions of individual resilience are significant, they often obscure the broader socio-structural and cultural forces that shape person with disabilities lives primarily from charity and passive recipients. These interpretations also reinforce who are normal, fit and perfect and who are abnormal and do not fit in the societal standard neglecting the complex realities that inform their lived experiences.

I pointedout that reading their writings only as personal journeys of struggles simplifies the intricate socio-political conditions that both constrain and enable their identities. So, I assert that these individuals are not individuals themselves but a part of social intuitions where their lives are deeply embedded within wider socio-cultural

values, institutional arrangements, cultural expectations, and power relations they hold in different time interval.A more critical understanding recognizes that their emancipation emerges not merely from overcoming impairment but from deconstructing the structural and cultural norms that construct and sustain disability in society.

The dissertation asserts that the existing literatures and criticson the autobiographical and literary texts treat disability as a fixed identity category rather it is dynamic, relational, and socially produced condition. It is acollective experience of social groups shaped by multiple positionalities in several spectrum of lives. These positionalities operate simultaneously at the micro level of personal identity and the macro level of socio-structural forces.

I provide some examples like most reviews of the works of Ghimire,Lamichhāne, and KC praise them for their courage, resilience, and creativity, yet such readings often overlook how space, access, discourse, and representation actively construct disabled subjective and the deeper structural factors that shape their experiences. I emphasize that the challenges faced by these writers are not solely attributable to disability itself but are intricately connected to the issues of access and mobility; access to state language, state institutions, social network and public spaces, and broader socio-cultural system and structure. Their linguistic confidence, social networks, and resource availability are profoundly influenced by Nepal's historical process of modern nation-building, which has privileged certain social identities and excluded others. Addressing the scarcity of literature and creative works that engage disability through critical disability studies and intersectionality, this dissertation contributesto a necessary critical discourse. It examines the evolving understanding of disability in Nepal, unequal access to resources, representations, hegemony and intersections of power relations of individuals withdisabilities from marginalized

communities don’t hold. Thisdissertation seeks to reclaim and reinforce intellectual and cultural spaces for marginalized voices and contribute to a more inclusive understanding of disability diversity in Nepal.

As a scholar with disability, I argue that disability cannot be understood solely as bodily impairment; rather, it has historically been constituted through its entanglement with caste hierarchies, ritual status, gendered roles, patriarchal norms, access to resources, social contribution, and dominant regimes of economic productivity and holding power. Although disability has increasingly been recognized as a social phenomenon in Nepal, these intersecting dimensions remain largely marginalized within public discourse and literary representation. Much of the existing scholarship insufficiently engages with these complexities, frequently individualizing disability and neglecting the structural conditions that shape lived experiences of diverse person with disabilities. This dissertation addresses this critical gap by adopting an intersectional analytical framework that attends simultaneously to embodied realities and the social, cultural, and political forces that enable and constrain od person with disabilities. By moving beyond reductive interpretations of disability, the study foregrounds the multidimensional dynamics of marginalization and agency within the Nepali context.

The dissertation opens avenues for a deeper conversation about the historical trajectory of disability in Nepal and the ways the country has undergone significant transformation, particularly in the post-1990 era. Disability is now increasingly recognized as a socially and culturally constructed and evolving concept, one that reflects diversity and calls for structural change rather than individual ‘fixing.’ This shift signifies an important movement toward more inclusive and emancipatory perspectives within Nepali society.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introducing Critical Disability Studies and Intersectionality

3.1Background

Linking critical disability studies to intersectionality, this chapter explains the critical aspect of disability studies that challenges the traditional, medicalized understandings of disability. It primarily introduces the ideas of Leonard J. Davis, Tom Shakespeare, Rosemarie Garland Thomson and Stuart Hall who argue together to dismantle essentialist views of disability and lay the groundwork for intersectional and culturally specific readings. While critical disability studies destabilize normative assumptions about disability as a personal or medical ‘deficit’, the chapter further points out that intersectionality sharpens the analysis by revealing how disability is co-constructed with different aspects other axes that stimulate power that challenge dominant norms and articulate disability subjectivities, agency, and resistance.

Over the past 20 years, the evolvement of both a worldwide disabilityrights movement and the academic field of disability studies have inspired the meaning, nature, and consequences of disability. Disability studies as an academic discipline focused on the division between ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’, where ‘impairment’ was an impairment of an individual's mind or body, while ‘disability’ was considered a socially constructed phenomenon.Critical disability studies emerged in the universities in the US, UK, and Canada in the 1980s. According to this mode of disability studies, disability is both a lived reality in which the experiences of persons with disabilities are central to interpreting their place in the world, and as a social and political realities. Emerged from the activism of persons with disabilities in the 1970s, this area of study involves both academics and activists representing multiple

disciplines and perspectives. The term ‘critical’ shows that it is more interpretative in nature. Importantly, it departs from the approaches to disability studies practiced earlier. Defining the departures that critical disability studies have made, Susan Flynn writes “it critiques, not just outwardly, but toward the questions about the nature of dis/ability, able-bodied, and existing theoretical responses, but also inwardly, toward questions about the veracity of its conventions” (1). Critical disability approach calls for re-defining the very terms ‘able’ and ‘disable’ in order to shake the foundational level of human understanding of the issue. It points out the need to depart from the “biological essentialist” reading of disabled bodies. It puts the point forward that there is nothing called the ideal body but only society made discourses about bodies. Such discourses, according to critical disability studies, cannot be separated from power politics.

Critical disability studies expose the social fact that a particular group or class of persons in power often project their ideas of body, colour and sexuality as the ideal one. Attitudes towards persons from other races and communities, according to critical disability studies, play major roles in setting out scripts. Dan Goodley argues that disability is a starting point for understanding the meaning of the body for all human beings. This underpins a better way to conceptualize the body, which continually probes traditional medicalized approaches that situate disability at the individual level of the person, specifically, as a “personal tragedy, biological deficiency, and psychical trauma” (634). Personwith disabilities live not only with physical difficulties but also some fear of getting obliterated. And such fear is the product of discoursepersons live with around them. One can say that a disabled body is not a mere physical body, it is a body codified with metaphysics, faiths, and politics.

Lennard J. Davis makes the claim that there is nothing wrong with being born with disability, what is wrong is the very notion of who is able and the false ideals about perfect body and mind. Davis associates the "idea of normal" with "monocultural society" (*The Disability Reader* 02). He exposes that the problem is not with person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the "problem" of person with disabilities. The problem lies in the very assumptions persons live with about who is disabled and who is able. Davis claims, "On the surface, we are better off abandoning some universal standard for bodies and cultures and acknowledging that there isn't one pregnant or ideal body or culture - that all are in play concerning each other and should be equally valued" (*The Disability Reader 2*). Davis's point is remarkable from the perspective ofpersons withdisabilities.

Living with a disability, according to him, is a condition and perceiving life and society around. Persons with disabilities explore life and the world in different manners, through different methods and more or less reach the conclusion that persons who claim to have lived without disabilities also do. He also points out that persons in general tend to think of disabled bodies as "fixed identities" not as social constructs in the ways "as other embodied identities" (*The Disability Reader 7*). Davis emphasizes the point that disability identity comes not as a matter of choice. Being born with disabilities is different from taking birth in an ethnic or rich or community or family. Nobody chooses to be a disabled. Once it becomes a corporeal state, one struggles along with it as well as against the discourses on such a physical state. Davis further makes his point that "disability is the ultimate modifier of identity, holding identity to its original meaning of being one with oneself, which after all is the foundation of difference" (*The Disability Reader 9*). Disability, as he argues, is a

condition of existence. This condition does not mean an inferior one. As a condition, it has its mode of operation. An individual living with this condition is a subject of precipitation and interpretation of his or her life and the social phenomenon the individual comes across. Understanding their worldview is a new frontier of life for the persons who belong to the non-disabilities category. Artists and philosophers always try to fathom their worldviews and the need to communicate with them. For many creative writers living without disability, understanding the life-view or worldview of individuals living with disability is a poetic exercise. Highlighting this mode of creativity, he further says that literature and arts can develop critical disability consciousness. Literary texts can be sites to understand and engage with the world views of individuals living with a disability. He asserts:

> … I have come to see that almost any literary work will have some reference to the abnormal, to disability, and so on. I would explain this phenomenon as a result of the hegemony of normalcy. This normalcy must constantly be enforced in public venues (like the novel), and must always be creating and bolstering its image by processing, comparing, constructing, and deconstructing images of normalcy and the abnormal. (*The Disability Reader* 12)

Davis's argument is significant as it defines literary creations as sites where disability as a social issue can be brought into light through characters and their life journeys. With literature, one can understand the social as well as psychological world the characters live with.

Since social values are always on the move, once taken as the universal and common features of disability are no longer accepted as the norms. One can further say that even the persons with disabilities may not like to be recognized as disabled person. Pointing out such psychosocial individual characteristics Tom Shakespeare

claims, “Apart from the diversity of experiences, the main reason persons do not want to be labelled as disabled, is because disability remains a stigmatized identity. Nobody wants to be categorized in a way that seems limiting or negative. They want to stress their similarity to others, not their differences; what they can do, not what they cannot do” (*Disability: The Basics* 5).

This further means the definition of disability in societal space, in general, may not necessarily be the one that the person living with such a physical state. Therefore, one should be very careful when one uses the term. Pointing out the paradox, the social and personal definition of disability might create, Shakespeare states, “Disability is a social category, so any prevalence estimate will depend on the definition of disability we adopt and the boundaries of the category” (*Disability: The Basics* 7). Persons with disabilities experience or can develop understanding about such corporeality very differently from the persons who hold certain beliefs and assumptions about such a state of experience. Therefore, individuals who live with disabilities experiences hold more real understanding about it than the ones who hold hypothetical assumptions about it.

Tom Shakespeare’s notions that disability-related misunderstanding can go through correction and transformation provided that the experts and policy makers are given rights to address the issues. Shakespeare’s remark exposes the social reality that disability and non-disability demarcation lines are very fuzzy. Individuals living with a disability may not like to be recognized with such a nomenclature. Moreover, persons being recognized with non-disabled or ‘perfect’ identity or recognition may possess several corporeal features that can prove them just the opposite. On the other hand, someone who is defined as disabled person may act out issues and visions that persons without disabilities may not be able to do so. This makes one realize that

individuals defined as disabled are gifted with one or the other kind of skills and visions.

Historically speaking too, persons regarded as person with disabilities in one era are not regarded the same in another era. The diseases that caused persons to live with disability in one era and the fear and superstitions such diseases created in society are no longer that dangerously demonic in another era. In this context, Michel Foucault writes that bodies differ from the norm in the nineteenth century, bodies are seen as problems sequestered, controlled, diagnosed, and otherwise socially managed (*The History of Sexuality* 112). Foucault's insights about madness, docile bodies, and the clinical gaze also proved fertile space for discussion for later disability scholars.

In a similar line of thought, Asha Hans puts her remark, "The heterogeneity of disability issues is linked to the diversity of disability groups. In the persisting hierarchy, some groups find themselves at the bottom. Among these, near-excluded are women with multiple disabilities, those with psychological disability and women from indigenous populations" (13). Since minorities in different communities across times and places have often been judged on the social and cultural principles comfortable to the majority, persons with disabilities have always been treated as incomplete beings.

Michella La Fontaine points out that the notions of perfect body and mind, sound corporeality, and ideal body have nurtured miseducation and misconception about such persons living with certain disabilities: "Human perfection, in the biological sense, has long been sought after" (44). Since there is nothing called a perfect body, and everyone is trying to reach or discover a balance between what one can perform from what one cannot, there is always a tacit understanding between and among persons about not being able to accomplish all the jobs in life. But dominant

social discourse on disability often regards someone living with impairment as not having a perfect body. This is the main cause of misunderstanding about ability and disability She further adds, “Different cultures at different times in history have believed that perfection was attainable and thereby attempted to achieve it by engaging appropriate means. Perfection in human terms has always been related to physical, emotional, sensorial, and intellectual states” (44). Discourses about the perfect and the imperfect human body and mind are subjects of change from time and place. But since the majority has always remained the opinion makers throughout history, persons with disabilities have always been taken as incomplete beings, and they have also been taken as ‘strangers’ in the world led by ‘normal’ people. Defining ‘disability’ as culture transcends internal determinations of disability. It subsumes social and political definitions, and creates a cultural discourse that characterizes the collective of disabled persons. But the fact that such social factors from general impressions about persons with disabilities and the unequal distribution of resources are man-made or socially constructed makes one hopeful of the possibility of recreating discourses, revamping systems, and reformulating new values.

The global disability rights movement strongly criticized the existing views on disability, and argued how it influenced individuals with disabilities’ lives, limiting themselves within ‘care’, ‘incapable’, and ‘invisible’. This paradigm insists that disability is not simply lodged in the body, but created by the material conditions that ‘disable’ the full participation of a variety of minds and bodies. It is recognized as the result of negative interactions between a person with an impairment and his or her social environment.

Disability is as much biomedical as ‘political’ concept. Shakespeare defines the “social model as a process of oppression and social exclusion” (“Individuals with

disabilities' Self-organization" 259). Shakespeare states that critical disability studies define individuals with a disability as active members of society. He claims, "In making 'personal troubles' into 'public issues', persons with disabilities are affirming the validity and importance of their own identity, rejecting both the victimizing tendencies of society at large and their socialization" ("Individuals with disabilities 's Self-organization" 263). He supports the social model and also makes the limitations of social model approach to disability issues.

Shakespeare argues that more sophisticated and complex approaches are needed, perhaps building on the WHO initiative to create the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health. One strength of this approach is the recognition that "disability is a complex phenomenon, requiring different levels of analysis and intervention, ranging from the medical to the socio-political. Another is the insight that disability is not a minority issue, affecting only those persons defined as individuals with disabilities" (269). This insight has questioned the very assumptions about disability, based upon which persons have defined disability. Since there are fundamental errors on the very foundation of lines which separate disability and ability, highlighting such errors is bound to pave the way for the new definitions of the issues.

The very tendency of taking disability as a bodily problem in the past had guided peoples' views on assumption. But with the approach of taking disability as a social problem, it was pointed out that persons may regard disability as the problem but for the individuals living it, disability becomes a part of life and mode of interpretation of life and the world. Shakespeare argues, "suddenly persons were able to understand that they weren't at fault: it is society. They didn't need to change: society needed to change. They didn't have to be sorry for themselves: they could be

angry" ("Individuals with disabilities 's Self-organization" 264). With such an approach, person with disabilities were motivated to assert their lived experience of disability as a valid mode of understanding. It was pointed out that if someone makes "wrong" assumptions about disability, it is not the problem of the person living with such corporeality but of the person holding such assumptions. Shakespeare exposes the mask that society in general lives with in the following manner: "the responsibility of oppression is seen as that of "society", not of the "disabled person", therefore society should "rehabilitate" them rather than disabled persons themselves" ("The Social Model of Disability" 219-220). Such views on disability dominated the academia for more than twenty years till the rise of feminist disability scholars in the years 1990 - 2000.

Rosemarie Garland Thomson stands as a major influential figure in the development of critical disability studies. Her ideas have fundamentally reshaped how disability is theorized, represented, and politicized in academic discourse. She introduces a groundbreaking argument that "disability must be understood not merely as a medical or biological condition but as a system of representation akin to race, gender, or class that organizes social power and cultural meaning. She asserts, "Disability, like gender, is a system of representation that defines the value and significance of bodies" ("Extraordinary Bodies" 6). By foregrounding the cultural production of disability, Garland-Thomson moves the discussion beyond medical or charitable frameworks toward an understanding of disability as a key analytic for examining social structures of exclusion, normalization, and embodiment.

Garland Thomson's contribution is particularly influential in emphasizing the intersectionality of disability with other axes of identity. In her later work, she explores how individuals with disabled bodies are hyper-visible in public spaces,

subjected to the gaze that both objectifies and marginalizes. Through her concept of ‘staring,’she demonstrates that disability is not just experienced at the level of the body but is continuously produced through social interactions, expectations, and perceptions. She writes, “Staring is an interrogative gesture that asks what’s going on and demands the story” (“Staring: How We Look” p. 14), thus highlighting how the act of looking becomes a mechanism of othering and control. In this sense, persons with disabilities, experiences are intimately tied to broader cultural scripts about normalcy, beauty, productivity, and human worth.

In addition, Garland Thomson has played a crucial role in advocating for a politics of visibility and narrative agency for person with disabilities. In her essay, she insists that disability must not be an afterthought in theories of social justice but a central category that transforms understandings of autonomy, dependence, and relationality. Disability, she argues, exposes the false universality of liberal humanist ideals and invites more expansive visions of human diversity. She contends that "the disabled body forces a critical rethinking of dominant narratives of progress, independence, and perfection” (“Integrating Disability” 5). The voice for liberal approach to sexuality also supported the call for liberal views on the very notion of dis/ability. Garland-Thomson argues that since every person feels certain physical, or loses one or the other forms of vitality, disability needs to be taken as universal experience.

Garland’s view is linked with Stuart Hall’s cultural studies framework which provides a critical lens for understanding disability as a “socially and culturally produced category rather than a purely medical condition” (234). His concepts of representation and discourse illuminate how disability is constructed through cultural narratives, stereotypes, and symbolic practices that often normalize able-bodied and

marginalize disabled bodies. From this perspective, disability functions as an effect of hegemonic power relations, where dominant meanings - such as dependency, deficiency, or moral failure are institutionalized through literature, media, and social practices. Disability studies draw this framework to expose ableism as an ideological system embedded in cultural representation, while also attending to counter-hegemonic representations that challenge dominant norms and articulate disability subjectivities, agency, and resistance. Thus, Hall's framework strengthens disability studies by foregrounding the cultural politics of representation and the role of power in shaping disability identities and lived experiences (232-236).

Dan Goodley adds, "Disability affects us all, transcending class, gender, nation and wealth. The notion of the TAB – Temporarily Able Bodied recognizes that many persons will at some point become disabled" (131). Among the feminist scholars whose ideas moved the critical disability studies to intersectionality-based approach to disability are Dan Goodley, DINIZ Debora and Anita Ghai. They point out the need of interpreting disability from the lived experience of the individuals. The gender, class and other social variables the individual belongs to do determine the trajectories of his or her suffering. Debora argues that even among the individuals of the same gender of the same community may experience disability differently due to the economic factors. She terms it as "diversity of disability experiences" ("Marginalization and Disability" 39). In a similar line of thought, Ghai critiques the government for putting all the persons with disabilities into a single basket. Critiquing the Indian government and the policies, she points that most government efforts are targeted at strengthening nongovernmental organizations without making any direct interventions. She further adds "feminism with its emphasis on multiple oppressions is the key to guiding disability studies and dissertation toward an understanding of the

pluralities that characterize the experience of disability in India" ("Disability in the Indian Context" 92). Since sexuality varies from place to place and time to time, class to class, and family to family, similar views were held on the issue of disability.

The disability issue now is taken in relation to social categories such as generation, sex, ethnicity, class, age and region that persons with disabilities live with. Tina Goethal et al argue instead of making generalizations about ability, one needs to be particular about the community, class, family and other social variables. Instead of essentializing disability, emphasis was made to regard each case as distinct: "inclusive, reflexive, and anti-essentialist approaches are required for conducting critical and intersectional disability studies research" (76). The social model of disability studies highlights the legal and political rights of persons with disabilities. One of these legal landmarks was the United Nations Convention passing the bill "the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (CRPD). This Convention was built on the view that persons with disabilities are the ones who know what is best for them and should therefore be heard in all actions involving them. According to the Convention, the new understanding of disability should not ignore the bodily impairments, nor is it restricted to listing the impairments groups. The redefinition of disability is a combination of a biomedical framework, that lists bodily impairments, and a human rights perspective, that denounces several types of oppression. It begins by acknowledging that how societies are constructed shape whether a given condition is disabling. Therefore, DINIZ Debora Pereira Natalia Santos and Wenderson highlight that "the Convention is not inherent to the body, but the result of values, attitudes, and practices that discriminate against persons with disabilities" (21).

Scholars in the later phase have critically argued that the social model has focused on the broader discussions of race, class, gender, and sexuality that have to go

hand in hand with discussions on disability. The disability that women experience is bound to be different from the males. Marla Morris claims that "disability is fundamentally gendered" (19). This means to say males were regarded as fit enough to carry out certain jobs whereas females were not seen as fit enough. Such feminist approach to dis/ability further paved the way for studying it with reference to other social variables such as ethnicity, race, caste and other social variables. It encouraged persons to regard disability as individual experience. Explaining the departure that approach to disability issues has been making, Beau Champ Pryor asserts "Personswith disabilities are not a homogeneous social group, and the social model is criticized for neglecting experiences of disablism based on gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age and class" (178). The plea here is to move beyond definitions that often provide fixity to the lives of persons with disabilities to evaluate how persons live through their disability.

In academia, critical disability studies share intersectional locations with other branches of studies and theoretical modes, and in activism, the convention on persons with disabilities adds value. In this convention, disability is increasingly viewed as a human rights agenda and integrated, an intersectional approach defining disability as an “evolving concept” and ingredients on intersectionality in the preamble. Furthermore, the recommendations provided to member states from the CRPD committee as a Concluding Observation on intersectional discrimination have been increasing every year. The disability discourse today in academia and activism has been shaped by the lived experiences of persons with disabilities from multiple locations and settings.

3.2 Intersectionality Mode

Narratives of persons with disabilities about their own lived experience problematize concepts such as oppressed or normalized. People go through all these good and bad experiences in their lives that often stem. Myriad events in life give way to different kinds of emotions that call for a complex understanding of the lives of persons with disabilities from several grounds of categories and identities. So, after the human rights model, the discourse around disability justice has evolved to trace persons with disabilities' worldviews and their experiences. Disability justice means engaging directly with persons with disabilities and valuing their agency to evaluate the different events of their lives on their multiple identities/registers as Patricia Berne explicates:

> . . . disability justice means all bodies are unique and essential, and all bodies have strengths and needs that must be met. And we are powerful not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them. We are in a global system that is incompatible with life. There is no way to stop a single gear in motion – we must dismantle this machine. (7)

Pointing to the need of contextualizing bodies to the existing social order the individuals come from, scholars regard that each society is formed differently. With different social characteristics, each society paves the way for its members to experience life. They rightly point out that there exist certain "positions" from which persons with disabilities struggle. And such positionality differs from time to time, place to place. Each individual's disability is a separate case. Intersectional approach to disability understanding celebrates the diversity of experiences the individuals are bound to go through.

Highlighting the departure that the intersectionality-based approach to disability issue has made, Ange Marie Hancock states, disability is “now recognized as a relatively new dissertation paradigm that builds on several assumptions regarding interactions of multiple systems at multiple and often simultaneous levels” (“Intersectionality as a Normative and Empirical Paradigm” 250). The course of the journey thatpersons with disabilitiesare seen as subject of impact from issues of multiple origins. The gender of the person, the location the individual comes from, the network one is part or not part of, the ethnic background such individual comes from and the agency that the person is in touch with among other factors determine the mode of disability experience individuals are bound to go through. Supporting the dynamism that the intersectionality approach to disability has paved the way for, Emily Grabham, Davina Cooper, Jane Kransniqi, and Cecilia Hermanin view that intersectionality can “be understood as one effect of the “postmodern turn” in academia: an attempt to trace account for a supposed fragmentation of identities within political movements of the late twentieth century” (1). With such a “postmodern turn”, understanding about disability, as the researchers claim, is bound to go through re-formulation. Since changes have taken place in the very foundation, the old ways of perceiving disability issues are bound to give way to new or more liberal approaches.

Although intersectionality theory emerged in the late 1970s, its roots can be traced back to Black Feminism. Female black pioneers such as Sojourner Truth in 1851 used their own lives to illustrate the experience of intersectionality. In Truth’s famous “Ain’t I A Woman?” speech, she implied that all too often “woman” actually meant “white woman”. Later on, the term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by the feminist legal scholar Kimberley Crenshaw, and since then it has been

travellingthe world. It was first a promising concept offering an understanding of how different axes of power intersect and the complex, cumulative manner in which the different forms of discrimination combine, overlap and intersect. She coined the term intersectionality to describe the exclusion of Black women from white feminist discourse (which equated women with white) and antiracist discourse (which equated black with men) in the 1990s, the intersectionality concept, after that this term and critical concept has been used in various fields. It simply means that different forms of discrimination do not exist in vacuum or isolation. For those who embody different marginalized identities, these often overlap and amplify each other to create unique experiences of discrimination that are more than just the sum of its parts. Kathy Davis regards intersectionality as a theory that goes far beyond its appearance as a "buzzword" as it offers new potential and perspectives for the connectivity of a broad range of social science scholars' approaches (269).

Kimberle Crenshaw was the first scholar to introduce and explain the term intersectionality. She used the term to highlight the "multidimensionality" of individuals lived experiences ("Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" 139). While this theoretical framework and analytical tool developed out of black feminist scholarship, critical race theory, legal studies, and feminist scholars in a wide range of disciplines are interdisciplinary which have adopted intersectionality to examine the co-construction of race, gender, and class in shaping individual, collective, and structural conditions.

As all these emerging paradigms, theories, and interdisciplinary approaches, scholars remark that intersectionality constitutes "diverse set of practices, interpretations, methodologies, and political orientations, and we cannot assume that we are studying a fixed body of knowledge" (Collins 2) and also "a set of terms,

theoretical interventions, premises, problem definitions, and suggested solutions" (Walgenbach 248). It challenges the traditional disciplinary boundaries and the compartmentalization and fixity of ideas by re-examining old issues in new ways but also shifting the lens through which humanity and social life. Summarizing the spirit of intersectionality in the field of disability studies, Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana observe:

> Intersectional theory reflects the ongoing intellectual and social justice mission that seeks to: reformulate the world of ideas so that it incorporates many contradictory and overlapping ways that human life is experienced; convey this knowledge by rethinking curricula and promoting institutional change in higher education institutions; apply knowledge to create a society in which all voices are heard and advocate for public policies that are responsive to multiple voices. (2)

The intersectional discussion and scholarship matter both in a series of linked propositions that begin with the research, writings, and teaching by and about women of colour as well as an effort to improve society in part by understanding and explaining the lives and experiences of marginalized groups. Intersectional scholars consider intersectionality as a methodology, currently debating the level at the structural or the individual level. Scholar Floya Anthias suggests a multi-level analysis that works on four levels; "the level of discrimination (experience); the actor's level (inter-subjective praxis); the institutional level (institutional regimes) and the level of representation" (symbolic and discursive) (518). Such a view enables one to systematize the approach one takes while addressing disability issues. Not that all individuals living with the disabilities do share a similar experience. So much depends on his or her gender, class, linguistic, community, geographical location, and so on.

Similarly, Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix opine that “intersectionality moves beyond traditional frameworks that separate social life into discrete or pure strands” (76). Peoplehave multiple roles and are members of more than one “group”, they can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. “Disability” cannot be defined in isolation from other categories such as gender, religion, income, age, cultural background, family status, and many others. Dynamic and contradictory power dynamics become more apparent and it becomes clear that every social category is more important than any other. Second, A.M. Hancock elsewhere states that “intersectionality strives to understand the unique experiences and perspectives at the intersection of two or more social or cultural categories and positions that intertwine as complex, overlapping, interacting, and often contradicting systems” (When Multiplication Doesn’t Equal” 66). The concept of intersectionality can be used to analyse how power and power relations are maintained and reproduced.

Intersectional scholars tend to look to the perspectives and experiences of unmarked and unheard groups. In addition, intersectionality's theoretical intervention focuses on centring the experiences of persons of colour, and their complex identity, unveiling power in interconnected structures of inequality, structural, hegemonic, and interpersonal power by promoting social justice and social change are some fundamental aspects of intersectional work. Hence, the transformation of knowledge and individual lives is a fundamental aspect of intersectional work. Arguing in a similar line of thought, Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana state that "the knowledge based upon and derived from where intersectional scholars have called intersectionality theory as the outsider-within, subaltern, borderland voices of society, creating counter histories and counter-narratives to those primarily on the experiences of social elites" (6).

The term intersectionality as an academic study did emerge along with the critical race theory. Patrick R. Grzanka defines intersectionality as “a structural analysis” that concerns mainly “with how social inequalities are formed and maintained” and also firmly believes that “identities and the politics thereof are the *products* of historically entrenched, institutional systems of domination and violence” (xv). Viewed from this perspective, disability is not merely an issue of medical treatment, but it is also a subject that needs to be studied along with political, economic, and social history. This means that every society has its own distinct social fabrics and nurtures distinct social views on issues like disability. Peoplebelonging to a society in a particular time live with certain distinct views on disability. Once they find intervention into their mode of perception, they drop certain world views and adopt new ones. Highlighting such shifting nature of views on disability, S. Gabel and Peters S. state, “disability cannot be reduced to a singular identity: it is a multiplicity, a plurality” (588). Such assumptions about disability have guided persons to study disability as local practices. To be precise, it has promoted the scholarship of listening to each individual’s lived experience as the authentic views on disability. Since every individual is the subject of social categories or variables and such variables keep on changing across times, his or her story is bound to be distinctly valid.

Pointing at the intersection of biology, agency and social structures that persons with disabilities has to pass or live through Mike Oliver states “disability cannot be placed squarely in society as the social model suggests” (142). Oliver makes this statement to critique the social model approach to disability and to promote the intersectionality approach. Pointing to the need of accepting the validity of diverse experiences persons with disabilities live through both spatially as well as temporarily, scholars support the view that a single policy adopted by the government

cannot be applied as national mode. There is a need for “more complete understanding of disability and impairment as social concepts, with recognition for individual experiences of the body over time and in variable circumstances” (Crow 58). This further implies that the model used or implemented in the West can no longer be regarded as modular, thus fit enough to be applied in other non-western societies, nor one fixed policy adopted by the government at one historical period be taken as fit enough to be applied throughout the nation.

Since the intersectionality approach within disability studies is academic and activist practice, there is an agreement among the scholars and the activists that it should “intervene in such dominant, ‘normative’ discourses”. Patrick R. Grzanka further says that the objectives of intersectional scholars should “cultivate ‘new knowledge’ and channel ‘their energies toward critiquing the racist, classist, masculinist, and colonialist epistemologies that have produced oppressive pieces of knowledge and, consequently, oppressive social structures, institutions, and inequalities” (31). Intersectional scholars and activists speak for redrawing the boundaries in the domain of representation of persons with disabilities.

Kimberly Crenshaw defined intersectionality as “a conceptualization of the problem” (“The structural and political dimensions” 17). As a concept of looking at social problems, this mode of interpretation, she points out, “attempts to capture both the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more axes of subordination” (“The structural and political dimensions” 17). Explaining the term further Crenshaw observes:

> It specifically addresses how racism, patriarchy, class oppression, and other discriminatory systems create background inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes and the like. Moreover, it

> addresses the way that specific acts and policies create burdens that flow along these axes constituting the dynamic or active aspects of disempowerment. ("The structural and political dimensions" 17)

As an African American scholar, Crenshaw is mindful of the "axes of subordination" in American society. She intends to demonstrate that an African Woman coming from an economically poor family, someone coming from the margin can share several similarities with the individuals coming from the other races and ethnic backgrounds. Instead of treating such individuals only with the section called Black Studies, it would be wise to treat her in terms of the intersectionality that she and like many do share and the forces that are responsible for creating such intersectionality in society.

Donna Haraway, one of the leading feminist scholars of the twenty-first century, speaks for the need to bring transformation in the field of "gaze" that the marginalized need to develop look within and outside and as well as develop the capability of reading the "gaze" of the dominant groups. Explaining the metaphysical and political nature of such "gaze" that the persons in power often throw upon their subjects, she writes, "This is the gaze that mythically inscribes all the marked bodies, that makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation" (44). The same thing can be said about the spirit of the intersectionality approach that the academics and activists from the domain of disability studies fight with. They too suggest reading such official, recorded, and unrecorded "gazes" the individuals belonging to the dominant class have and expect the members of the marginalized community to associate with such "gazes".

While explaining the characteristics of an intersectional approach to social issues, Patricia Hills Collins relates intersectionality with the postmodern project of

questioning mainstream history and knowledge. She concludes, “In this sense, the postmodern legitimation of ongoing projects of oppressed groups to the centre power, deconstruct western metanarratives, and rethink differences legitimates efforts to understand race, class, and gender intersectionality” (54). Along with this line of argument, disability studies itself share intersectional locations with other branches of studies. As per Chandra Talpande Mohanty, intersectionality should also be looked at in a contemporary geopolitical context. She strongly puts her critical opinion:

> Categories like gender, race, and caste, class are profoundly and visibly unstable at such times of crisis. These categories must be analysed about contemporary reconstructions of womanhood and manhood in a global arena increasingly dominated by religious fundamentalist movements, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and ideological colonization world by multinationals. (85)

Mohanty puts the idea forward that the formation of social sections needs to be seen not only in terms of the historical forces and events but also in the economically and politically decisive forces of the contemporary geopolitical order.

Stephane Shields explains the intersectionality with the example of being lesbians in the USA. He makes an important point that being a third gender can be a different experience according to the class, race, and ethnicity of the person:

> The white lesbian may be disadvantaged because of divergence from the heterosexual norm and standard, but relative to other lesbians she enjoys racial privilege. Identities instantiate social stratification and identity, such as gender or social class, may be experienced as a feature of individual selves, but it also reflects the operation of power relations among groups. (93)

Since one is always and already a part of one or the other social groups or sections, and even two persons belonging to the same section may also live with different experiences given access to education and job or social mobility.

Olena Hankivsky suggests readers regard intersectional relationships themselves as a fluid state. An individual sharing certain social and economic intersectionality with one particular group moves to another echelon of society after the person achieves success or fails to do so. Hankivsky claims, “Relationships and power dynamics between social locations and processes (e.g., racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, sexism) are linked. They can also change over time and be different depending on geographic settings” (1). Hankivsky further exposes an important social fact that intersectional gaps can be filled in, for this, the relevant policies need to be designed and executed: “Equality organizations can build greater unity through developing shared understandings of intersectionality, and work to balance acting in solidarity while prioritizing the leadership of those who are intersectionally marginalized” (8). Such views support the school of thought that disability is a social construct, and since it is a social construct, by its nature it can be re-defined, edited, and remade.

Doyin Atewologun calls intersectionality as “critical framework” and “mindset and language” which enable scholars and activists to explain “how heterogeneous members of specific groups (such as women) might experience the workplace differently depending on their ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or class and other social locations”. Atewologun further points out that the approach focuses on “maximizing the chance of social change” (787). The intersectional approach enables one to realize the injustice and the urgency of designing new policies. This is the very point that Cho Sumi, Kimberley Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall

highlight about the capacity to move the nature of the intersectional approach: “Intersectionality’s insistence on examining the dynamics of difference and sameness has played a major role in facilitating consideration of gender, race, and other axes of power in a wide range of political discussions and academic disciplines, including new developments in fields such as geography and organizational studies” (“Toward a Field of Intersectionality” 787). The intersectional approach takes disability both as a common as well as an individual experience. As a common experience, persons with disability are often seen as individuals who lack certain fundamental features of being a perfect human being. As an individual experience, intersectionality looks at the disability experience as a diverse experience.

‘Power relations’ and ‘social inequality’ have been central to intersectional knowledge and understanding. In this regard, Lynn Weber further elaborates that the term intersectionality can best be understood by taking it to individual and social levels: at the individual level, it reveals the way the intermeshing of these systems creates a broad range of opportunities for the expression and performance of individual identities. At the societal level, it reveals the ways systems of power are implicated in the development organization, and maintenance of inequalities and social injustices (21). Individuals in modern society are often argued to have equal opportunity. However, the fact that there exists an unequal distribution of resources makes one realize the fact that certain sections of society are bound to remain cut off from the opportunities that are being offered to other sections of society.

Since patriarchy has remained the major social structure, the intersectional approach makes one think of women at the margin. Within the section of women at the margin, certain sections are more marginalized, and above all, women with disabilities coming from poor ethnic backgrounds make one think of the most

marginalized section of human society. Explaining this issue Gina Miranda Samuels and Ross-Sheriff relate an intersectional perspective on women. They write "as a whole being; to recognize that not all women experience their womanhood in the same ways; many women face multiple forms of oppression" (5). For example, foregrounding the centrality of race to other experiences of difference, such as gender, class, sexuality, and ethnicity, and how these identities collectively create individuals in an integrated structure of oppression is important. They add that intersectionality, in contrast to accumulated disadvantages or an additive model, sees identity as a web of "mutually constitutive relations" (302).

Intersectionality elaborates that identity categories do not exist in isolation but occur simultaneously. Multiple, sometimes seemingly unrelated, dimensions of social structure and social identity might influence a category's operation and meaning. The experience of multiple categories is diverse; individuals who share categories may not experience them similarly. In this same vein, Anita Ghai, reflecting on the global south context argues that disability is not only a matter of social barriers or intrinsic hardships specific to impairments but it is multiple, intertwined oppressions marked by a "complex amalgam of class, gender, and caste issues" (“Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda” 50-51). A woman navigates her social location every day by all these intersecting identities weaving a web with complexities when negotiating lived experiences enacting both roles and the nature of oppression.

With a distinct history of discourses on disability, each society calls upon to understand the disability issue locally. As a cultural and social construct rather than a characteristic feature of the person concerned, the disability studies according to the intersectional approach concentrates on the lived experience of each individual. The lives of persons with disabilities throughout the world are usually confined to some

limitations by prevailing social, cultural, and economic constraints rather than by physical, sensory, psychological, or mental impairments. Throughout history, persons with disabilities have been considered to be oppressed and repressed groups. They have been defined by the gaze and needs of the non-disabled world. They are usually looked down upon with stigma, prejudices, segregation, injustice, and hatred by the non-disabled society.

In the past, slaves, criminals, and traitors were given the sign of cuts and burns, and the blemished persons were to be avoided in public places. Today the term is often used to refer to 'disgrace' and 'undesired differences.' Erving Goffman divides stigma into three categories: the first is a blemish in a person's character such as unnatural passions, treacherous, rigid beliefs, and dishonesty. The second is the mental disorder, addiction, imprisonment, alcoholism, suicidal attempts, radical political behaviour, etc., and the third category is the tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion that can be transmitted through lineage which can contaminate all members of the family, race, and nation (*Stigma: Notes* 4). The normal belief is that the person with a stigma is not a human being at all. With this assumption, the persons exercise a variety of discrimination and exclusion against the stigmatized person or group. In her essay, Lerita M. Coleman argues that stigma represents a view of life, a set of personal and social constructs that reflects a property, a process, a form of social categorization, and an effective state (216). The countless variety of humans shows that the stigma depends on the social context and arbitrariness. All human differences are potentially stigmatized. It differs from one social context to another and from the conceptualization of stigma in which human differences are desired and undesired. Stigma leads to the superiority and inferiority complex in the relationship between non-stigmatized and stigmatized individuals.

Claire Edwards and Rob Imrie point out that “persons with physical and mental impairments whose bodily functions are influenced and are often compromised by the broader social and structural relations” (9). The dissertation and writings about disability have focused disability as an object of study just like the study of race. Lennard J. Davis concludes that “the concept of ‘norm’ implies that the majority of the population must somehow be part of the norm” (13). Davis contextualizes the norm called “normalcy” to the evolution of modern science in the West. He writes that science justified the theory of normalcy. Even the theory of evolution developed by Charles Darwin gave a new impetus to the theory of normalcy. Darwin's ideas put persons with disabilities in the category of evolutionary defectives that have been surpassed by natural selection. This idea further encouraged eugenics to eliminate the “defectives” or “disabled” (17). Even in the field of literature, especially in novels, disability is rarely centrally represented. The main character is never found to be a person with disabilities. Manystudieshave shown that the villains, not the heroes, are usually given such abnormal qualities as scars, deformities, amputations, etc.

There is often a tendency to perceive disability in a binary opposition to ability. This means that anybody having one or the other kind of deficiency is taken as an individual with disabilities, homogenous term or category. However, theorists and activists who have worked in the domain of disability studies point out the fact that each person with disabilities is a different individual. One should have a scientific approach to look at each case as an individual one. A person with such physical and mental attributes though often taken under a common nomenclature ‘disabled’ or ‘differently abled’ needs to be understood in terms of the similarity as well as differences the individual is from others living with similar corporeality.

Highlighting this essence, Mark Sherry argues, “Disability is a very diverse experience. It affects some people’s minds, some people’s senses, other people’s bodies, and so on. Someone with hard of hearing is likely to have very different life experiences from someone who is blind, or another person who has a developmental disability” (5). The term intersectionality itself is composed of two words, ‘inter’ and ‘sectionality’. Explaining the term and the reason why she coined it, Crenshaw states, “I build on those observations here by exploring the various ways in which race and gender intersection shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of colour” (“Mapping the Margins” 1244). Explaining her dissertation activity that was conducted in the shelter provided for the victims, mainly Black women, Kimberly Crenshaw further explains that a black woman suffers domestic violence not only because she is poor or her family is economically poor but also of the fact that the area where she grew up does not provide education that could help her to earn a new social status (145-146).

The term ‘intersectionality’ has come to refer to the web-like structures that individuals are bound to live through. Concluding her discussion about the term Kimberle Crenshaw coins, Sherry states: “Recognizing that identity politics takes place at the site where categories intersect thus seems more fruitful than challenging the possibility of talking about categories at all. Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate how these differences will find expression in constructing group politics” (1299). Sherry concludes her argument with the philosophy that every individual has certain identity markers that do “intersect and interact” with the members of his or her community and beyond. Even among diverse persons with disabilities, there are differences in terms of their impairments and the social categories they hold in

different contexts and settings they live in. We need to be mindful of the diversity among persons with disabilities as one of the starting points for understanding any particular disability (5). To contribute to the development of concrete intersectional methods in disability studies research, Tina Goethals, Elisabeth De Schauwer and Geert Van Hove describe methodological approaches namely inclusion, reflexivity, and anti-essentialism:

> It is important to point out that these approaches do not represent a unified way or one-size-fits-all solution, instead, they offer opportunities to demonstrate the different ways in which an intersectional perspective can be applied to disability studies research. The common characteristic is that they bring processes into the dissertation leading to more differentiation and embracing complexities in people's lives. (78)

They further elaborate that the first approach "inclusive path" refers to inclusive/ collaborative/ cooperative dissertation where persons with disabilities are involved not simply as dissertation subjects, but play a central role as researchers and dissertation participants with active participants. The inclusive approach in dissertation gives insight into the complexities and multi-layered of participants' lives and allows for the in-depth study of individuals' personal and unique social locations and experiences with power and privilege (80-81). Second is reflexivity intended here as "storying" lived experiences and multiple intersections through individual and collective narratives together with continuously acknowledging your own positionalities, experiences, roles, and political and theoretical frameworks as a researcher. According to this point of view, stories of the lived experience of both the subject and the researcher are co-constructed and negotiated between the persons involved to capture complex, multi-layered, and nuanced understandings. These lived

experience approaches have become increasingly recognized as an important strategy in disability studies dissertation (82). Lived experience does not only bring the life story out, it also brings the issues which help the individuals to have access to network and other important factors which help one understand the diversity of disability related experience. Highlighting the significance of such auto/biographical narratives, J. Rinaldi states that such writings or texts possess “engaging reflexively with positionalities and how they affect the production of knowledge can be particularly beneficial in disability studies, adding to the paradigmatic shift from dissertation about, to dissertation by and for, individuals with disabilities” (2). Since such narratives carry first-hand experience, they can be very helpful materials for one to understand or explore the modes and manners of experiencing temporally and spatially. T. Titchkosky accounts, “lived experiences have the power to disrupt dominant normative accounts of disability; they can illuminate the embodied reality and complexity of experience in contrast with professional and dominant biological models of disability” (28). One always falls into the trap of measuring all experiences with a single paradigm. But each personal narrative brings or opens up a different mode of experience. Crenshaw points out that “storying lived experiences can take into account intra-group differences, an important feature of intersectionality” (“Mapping the Margins” 1242). These narratives help to reclaim the stories of persons with disabilities as suitable dissertation material and allow differences among these experiences.

3.3 Literature on Person with Disabilities

The literature onpersons with disabilities refers to a growing and transformative body of writings where persons with disabilities are no longer silent objects but active narrators of their own diverse experiences. Historically, mainstream

literary portrayals on disability largely served able-bodied agendas. It represented characters with disabilities as tragic, villainous, inspirational and symbolic figures. Elizabeth Grosz states that in all these instances, individual bodies intermingle with broader social, and cultural relations to produce what to as sites of "contestation in a series of social, economic, political, sexual and intellectual struggles" (19). A novel or fiction for that matter too is like a society. Literary characters carry their social characteristics and while behaving with each other, they automatically happen to bear reflectivity of the society they are from.

It is natural that in many literary texts, an individual character belonging to one marginalized community understands the pain and frustration of the individual belonging to another marginalized community. Such instances from fiction are also a reflection of social practices where persons from marginalized communities in real life feel a natural or spontaneous bond between and among each other. In this setting, Martha Lynn Edwards puts a similar idea forward that women and persons with disabilities have more or less similar predicaments, both sections of the society feel marginalized and have to struggle to define their potentiality and their meanings of life. Edwards draws the similarities in the following manner, "Just as the nature of traditional scholarship rendered women in the ancient world inconsequential and invisible – save a few, remarkable ladies – persons with disabilities have been all but invisible, save a handful or blind prophets" (29).

In this setting, Hall argues that one can examine how characters with disabilities and their lived experiences in literature are positioned socially and culturally. For him how societal ideologies shape their narratives, and how texts may produce counter-hegemonic representations is important so across all these works illuminates how Nepali literature both reflects and critiques cultural ideologies of

disability. Representation in these texts is never neutral: it is shaped by social power, cultural norms, and intersecting hierarchies, yet it also opens spaces for agency, resistance, and redefinition of disability identities.

In recent years the landscape of Nepali disability narratives has begun to shift profoundly, driven by the courageous interventions of writers with disabilities and allies who are reclaiming their narrative agency. Figures like Jhamak Ghimire, through her autobiographical masterpiece, shattered conventional representations of disability as passive suffering, instead foregrounds resilience, interiority, and complex emotional lives. Sṛṣṭi KC shared not only the personal but the political struggle for space and recognition, directly challenging ableist assumptions in public life. Similarly, Manisha Gauchan offers a textured exploration of the intersections of disability, gender, and rural-urban divides. Scholars like Kamal Lamichhāne integrate personal narrative with policy critique, linking lived experience with demands for structural justice. Even intellectual without disabilities like Abhi Subedi, participate in opening critical conversations by respectfully representing characters with disabilities navigating layered social barriers.

With this emergence, central is Hall's concept of representation, through which cultural textsliterature, media, policy discourse, and everyday languageconstruct social meaning. These representations of persons with disabilities are embedded in power relations and reflect dominant ideological positions, while also remaining open to negotiation, resistance, and reinterpretation. Hall's model of encoding/decoding further explains how dominant meanings may be accepted, negotiated, or opposed by different audiences, revealing culture as a dynamic site of struggle rather than a fixed system.

3.4 Conclusion

Narratives of life stories and representation of persons with disabilities reflect the image of Nepali society. Nepali society from the rise of the Shah dynasty in the 1770s to the fall of that dynasty in the 2000s has been caught between tradition and modernity. Nepali polity under the Shah and the Rana rulers played an important role in defining and declaring who is rich, poor, superior, accepted, or excluded through the promulgation of the Muluki Ain and other policies. The rise of social movements in Nepal especially after the 1990s cannot be isolated without linking this agenda of social inclusion either in rights movement or in normative framework. In addition, Nepal's liberal policy and commitment both to the international human rights movements and the reintroduction of democracy in Nepal is part of the social movement. Written and created during the Nepali contemporary political transitional contexts, the selected literary texts including the movie are the assets that help us to understand what has continued from the past and what new departures is taking place in the field of disability rights movement. Integrating the concept of emerging intersectional theory within critical disability studies, the literary texts can be analysed to explain the Nepali mode of intersectionality and the diverse modes of struggles and power relation the individual with disabilities makes in their life. With this, I aimed to highlight the academic as well as social importance of intersectionality in the domain of disabled studies in Nepal. The growing body of disabled literature introduces a critical disability studies perspective into Nepali cultural production, moving beyond the limited understanding toward narratives grounded in dignity, rights, and intersectional justice. In doing so, they expand the literary canon to reflect the true diversity of Nepali society and challenge dominant constructions of normalcy, progress, and worth.

CHAPTER IV: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Intersectionality in *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns, Blind Rocks* and *Antardṛṣṭi*

4.1 Background

This chapter contends that the narratives in *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*, *Blind Rocks*, and *Antardṛṣṭi*collectively illuminate how systemic neglect, religious fatalism, and social exclusion are perpetuated through intersecting structures of oppression. These texts revealed that disability in Nepal cannot be fully understood within a medical or individual frameworks; instead, it must be situated within the broader matrices of caste, ethnicity class, gender, region, and socio-political location. While Ghimire, KC, and Lamichhāneall live with disabilities and confront Nepal's ableist social order, their experiences differ significantly due to the social locations and categories they inhabit. When analysed through an intersectional lens, their life narratives reveal how disability can be understood in relation to structures of power, identity, social structures, social position towards emancipation.

This chapter further emphasized the autobiographies of Ghimire, KC, andLamichhānereflect the complex intersectionality they embody. Ghimire's bodily condition, geographic origin, and the socio-cultural structures she is embedded in significantly shape the trajectory of her life. KC, a woman with a disability, experienced a distinct set of influences like her locality, corporeality, and access to social capital contributed uniquely to her journey. Notably, both Ghimire and KC hailing from the Khas Arya linguistic community, communicate in the dominant language of mainstream media, bureaucracy, and state apparatus came from families with increased level of awareness. These factors like family background, geographic location, and access to state-sanctioned opportunities played a critical role in shaping their respective narratives. Similarly, Lamichhāne's access to a supportive family and

social network, information systems, and academic resources charted a distinct path in his life. These variations among the three individuals underscore how disability is not experienced in isolation but is deeply entangled with other social identifiers and forms of privilege or marginalization. Before delving into a detailed intersectional analysis of their life narratives, this chapter first introduces the broader social context from which their experiences emerge.

4.2 Intersectionality and Nepali Society

Nepal was historically governed by feudal lords and autocratic kings, where unequal distribution of resources, power relations, and hegemonic structures were the primary causes of discrimination. With the political changes that began in the 1950s, including the introduction of democracy, the call for social inclusion gained broader support. In the post-1990 political context, the rights of marginalized communities became a central discourse in contemporary Nepali politics. This shift also led to the realization that being part of a marginalized community do not automatically equate to equality in all social, political, and economic aspects. Efforts to address these inequalities emerged through initiatives for social inclusion, an inclusive state, and a more inclusive democracy. Today, issues of marginalization are increasingly approached through the lens of intersectionality, in alignment with the complex social fabric of Nepali society.

Nepali society embody certain political and social values that are shaped by their gender, race, ethnicity, and class. For instance, following the unification of Nepal, the Brahmins and Kshetris from the Gorkha region emerged as the first elite class in the nation. Mahesh Chandra Regmi notes that the Gorkhali political elite, a small minority from the hill region, was largely composed of individuals and families who accompanied Prithvi Narayan Shah in his conquest. Regmi writes, “Most of its

members came from Gorkha and consisted of individuals and families who had accompanied Prithvi Narayan Shah. The political leadership, in essence, was thus a Shah-Chhetri coalition that retained state power in its hands to wring economic surpluses from the peasantry and share the proceeds" (46). This Shah-Chhetri coalition not only solidified their political control but also contributed to internal rifts, while maintaining a firm grip on power for generations. Over time, this coalition underwent several rounds of transformation, marking their political and social dominance in Nepal's early state formation.

It is argued that the more they got resourceful, the more they got alienated from social responsibility and egalitarian governance. The rise of this class paved the class of poor and marginalized communities. Stiller F. Ludwig writes that "By 1795 the conversion of Nepal's elite was complete. Whatever their motives during Prithvi Narayan Shah's time, they were now interested in prosperity for themselves and their families" (*Nepal: Growth of a Nation* 44). This new elite class in no time pave the way for internal rivalries. As a result, conspiracies and blood baths became regular historical phenomena in Nepal.

Summing up the political spirit of the Shah dynasty the Britain-born English historian of Nepal, John Whelpton writes "consistent with the practice of the hill principalities which had been amalgamated to form the new kingdom, Prithvi Narayan and his successors followed the classical Hindu pattern of reinforcing their legitimacy through extensive lands grants to Brahmans" (23). Jung Bahadur Rana and the Rana regime he laid the foundation did pave the way for the 1854 Muluki Ain that institutionalized caste hierarchies and set the foundation of legally superior status to Brahmins and Chhetris of the hill region, known as *Khas-Arya* community. Families and communities placed at low rank were made to accept their inferior social and

political status. Hofer Andras writes that the *Muluki Ain* (MA) did not go through change for a century:

> The social values preached by the MA, however, were proving restrictive, anachronic, and out of step with the spirit of the times. They were seen as a potent instrument of Rana's political repression. In the third decade of the 20th century, the educated middle-class youth of Kathmandu started an anti-Rana political movement that increasingly gathered force. (xxvi)

Andras makes the point that the MA became synonymous with the Rana regime. The Rana autocracy promulgated such legal policies as part of creating a traditional Hindu order at the cost of marginalizing women, Dalits, and Indigenous communities. Such legal code passed by the government created social hierarchies unique to Nepal. In a similar line of thought, Prayag Raj Sharma argues "In much of the intervening historical period, social order was maintained either based on the dictates of classical Hindu law books directly or through the announcement of periodic royal decrees which also were based again on customary laws or ancient Hindu laws" (xix). With this, a new psychosocial reality did rule over Nepalis' minds. Since social status in terms of caste is given, one is bound to live through it. An individual is helpless to the laws stated by Dharmasastra. Nepalis were made to believe in their fate. Nobody had the right to question authority. Once declared Dalit and *Matawali,* the individual and the entire community remained or have remained the same till date. The *Muluki Ain* provided power to male, dominant caste groups like Brahmin and Chhetris. The other groups such as women, Indigenous, Dalit, and persons with disabilities were left to live with the psychosocial reality that they are 'lower' or 'secondary' or 'ignorant' or 'made to serve' and it is their *karma*, the result of the actions they had committed in

their past lives. Their *karma*, language, and religion started to acquire national status and were shaped as a system, structure and reality.

Harka Gurung, one of the leading geographers and social activists of Nepal highlights Nepal's unjust history in the following manner: "Hinduisation was accompanied by colonization of tribal areas and social ordering of tribes into hierarchical castes. Therefore, national identity and later Nepalese nationalism was rooted in the image of hill Hindu elites and their Nepali (khasa-kura) mother-tongue" ("Trident and Thunderbolt" 02). Gurung was writing or making this observation in the 1990s, right after democracy was introduced in Nepal and the rise of the indigenous movement had started to gain momentum. Social movements in Nepal have come across several collective actions by different social groups in different contexts have raised significant forces in the Nepali socio-political landscape for more than two decades.

Harka Gurung, argues that "There is much disparity among development regions and their sub-regional components. This is due both to the region's intrinsic locational factor and development activities that favour accessible ones. The latter aspect becomes obvious when comparing the change over time across various sectors of development activity" ("Social Inclusion" 07). Gurung's observation made immediately after the 2005 people's uprising was meaningful as it offered a new more revolutionary approach to development. Many changes have happened since Gurung made this observation. Several rounds of elections took place and representatives of the marginalized community brought new hopes. Lok Raj Baral, a Nepali political analyst points out that despite being elected and nominated at policy-making bodies, Dalit representatives are often to have "got portfolios of less significance because of weak bargaining capacity to get their other portfolios (related to be more important

and lucrative) (xxi). Both Baral and Gurung accept the fact that steps towards inclusivity in the post-1990 political change are affirmative though not very significant. The same thing can also be said about persons with disabilities in Nepal. They too have formed their union with other marginalized sections of society to stage their voice and vision after the late 1990s. The organizations of persons with disabilities community set out to generate a force to influence at policy making level.

After 1990, these social movements and their agendas against long-standing suppression and new trends with collective organized actions became more robust. In their efforts to influence the state discourse, these movementsreacted, resisted, and reshaped, asserting an inclusive society for all. These movements explicitly challenged and deconstructed the prevalent political power structure and mindsets of peoples. They exposed the unfair treatment, unequal system and distribution in Nepal which highly dominated largely by males, nonindigenous, and able-bodied world from the central location. They contested the imposition of constructed narratives, perceptions, symbols, attitudes, and meanings that legitimize inequality. These movements called for equality, social justice, and inclusion by reinventing or restructuring the state that underpins understanding and respecting human diversity, deepening democracy, and inclusive peace process in Nepal.

Discrimination faced by Nepali society in several layers and structures goes beyond the gender binary and patriarchal structure. Coupled with other intersectional barriers which include deeply entrenched ethnic, caste, class and geographic discrimination. The homogenization of all these marginalized groups into ‘one single basket’ with ‘one dominant identity’ or ‘social status’with a siloed approach became dominant with an autocratic power system of ‘one language” (i.e. the dominant Nepali language) ‘one caste’ (i.e. Brahmin and Chhetri) and ‘one class’ (i.e. elite, powerful

privileged), ‘one religion’ (i.e. Hindu religion) and from one location (central or Kathmandu). Historically speaking it was said that while the autocratic monarchy was in power, the movement was severely suppressed and closed. Recently, after this inclusive state discourse, they further openly discussed the multiple and intersecting identity groups and the barrier they face in different locations and contexts.

These discussions significantly influenced literary and creative works such as *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*, *Blind Rocks*, and *Antardṛṣṭi*. While these interpretations are centralized on disability, they equally highlight the essential role that historical context, situational factors, and socio-cultural elements play in shaping the ‘characterswith disabilities’ identity and their journey they struggled and the meaning they produced. These struggles are not static; rather, they evolve as the characters' sociocultural understanding of disability evolves over time. Through their mode of expression, the writers and artists in these literary texts came to realize that their identities are not fixed or inherent, but constructed and continuously reshaped as they journey through life, encountering a myriad of context. Once regarded as non-human beings, hopeless, and non-contributors, these individuals proved themselves as powerful agents of change and emancipated not only their own lives but their families and in shaping broader definitionon disability. Through their intersectional journeys, they asserted their right to live with dignity, challenged the social perceptions that have marginalized them since centuries.

Through their lived experiences, these individuals came to recognize that their social status and multiple social identities can only be transformed through access, formulating policies that explicitly support marginalized groups. They understood that such policiesenacted by writing, influenced political leaders, advocated for expert interventions, and ensured access to technological innovations for them. In this

process, they have inspired their family members to shift their mindsets and peers to amplify voices and form organizations, building collective momentum to raise awareness of disability rights and integrate these issues into education, media, and the arts. Ultimately, they came to realize that their personal 'fate' is deeply intertwined with the struggles of other marginalized groups in Nepali society, and that their collective fight for dignity, justice and emancipation is shared across social divides.

On top of that, the rise of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) in Nepal has created a conducive environment that encourages persons with disabilities to assert their rights across various spaces and institutions. Global human rights frameworks, technological breakthroughs, innovations in social apps, and advancements in medicine have played a pivotal role in redefining their corporeality. As Elizabeth Grosz posits, "the body is not merely a biological entity but a 'site of contestation, responsive to social processes" (23). She suggests that the relationship between the biological and societal realms should be reimagined, exploring "the openness of organic processes to cultural intervention, transformation, or even production". These societal activities, normative frameworks, and texts contribute to raising awareness of the experiences of person with disabilities, allowing them to assert their rights more effectively and advocate for broader social change.

4.3 Intersectionality and the Nepali Ableist Order

These texts challenge monolithic perceptions of disability. Caught in the turmoil of their own lives, these talents realize another turmoil their nation and society have been going through. They are 'living histories' of the community of Nepali disabled society. During the struggles, the talents have encountered outdated views on human nature and they comprehend that persons around them are misguided and misinformed about disabilities. Satiated with superstitious and illogical opinions on

disabilities, neighbours of Ghimire, KC and Lamichhāneregard one born with a disability as the result of some deeds or crimes done in a past life. Such is the existence.

Similarly, ensnared with myths and traditional stories, their neighbours indulge in claiming an opinion that disability is another name for 'gods wrath' and Nepali society failed to understand and inspire these creative talents to lead meaningful lives. But these writers and artists understand Nepali society, movement, and the world around them engage themselves in making meaning in life, and exercise their rights to define opinions on disability. As active persons engaged in knowing things and persons around, these writers and artists travel down the lane of life that is unknown to the persons with a 'normal' world and accept their disability with great effort. They come to realize that their bodies are unable to cure from corporeal problems or impairment that they have been suffering from so they transform themselves if they could bring changes in the prevalent discourse on disability. *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns, Blind Rocks and Antardṛṣṭi*offer important and common space to explore and debate on the process of how persons with disabilities rewrite history and deconstruct the discourse on disability in the changed social and political context. Nepali disability narratives, ranging from autobiographical testimonies to fictional and academic works, articulate the complex realities of living with impairments under conditions shaped by gender, class, spatial inequality, and socio-cultural norms.

Engulfed with superstitious and traditional beliefs, Nepali society continued to frame narratives with a fixed definition of disability and persons with disabilities as a 'lack', 'loss', 'weak', 'passive recipients' and 'non-contributor'. By reading these three texts, one gets an observation that members of society, i.e., individuals with

'normal bodies and 'normalcy' regarded themselves as 'judges' and the persons with disabilities like Ghimire, KC and Lamichhānetoo are situated at social locations defining 'norms', 'normalcy' and 'so-called normal'. On the other hand, reading these autobiographies reveals that Ghimire, KC and Lamichhāne do not have any fixed location of their identities as their conditions and context kept on shifting. In the process of discovering themselves, they found themselves in a fragile state. Frustrated and isolated, they feel the pain. They all live in conflict and dilemma; a sense of another phase of discovery and understanding themselves. To highlight such a psychosocial state that the victims have to go through Anita Ghai puts her own experience. Now a prominent disability scholar, Ghai as a victim of polio from the age of two narrates her struggles in the following manner:

> With a body that was/is socially stigmatized as the "Other" and labelled as disabled, my dilemma, like that of others like me, had been about whether to situate myself as a "positive mind" or a "negative body" in a largely unfriendly social environment. It was not till I was in my early thirties, that a certain objectivity entered my world view and I began questioning ... (16-17)

This brings an important revelation that persons with disabilities live through struggles of pain, perception, and a physically challenging corporeal experience. Persons with disabilities might find it difficult to walk, see, interact, feel, and function. On top of that, individuals have to fight with the 'assumptions', 'stigma' 'stereotypes', 'norms'and 'normalcy' that exist in society and persons with disabilities struggled in proving that they fit into the "norm" and are like other human beings. Hence, persons with disabilities fought two battles: one with their corporeal physical conditionality and the other with the social narratives of "normalcy": to be "normal", "fit", and "perfect" in all. By emphasizing the later stages of the challenges

confronted by persons with disabilities, Lennard J. Davis redirects attention toward "normal" and able-bodied individuals (*Enforcing Normalcy* 01). Davis does it in order to deconstruct the views that individuals living with one or the other kind of physical impairment is the one who is living with certain inferiority. He emphasized the point that individuals living with disability are equally or differently equipped to comprehend society and life. He puts the argument forward that discourses that "normal" persons have about disabled individuals are the root cause of misunderstanding (*Enforcing Normalcy* 1).

Peoplenormally believe that disability is the problem of the persons who have been going through such physical conditionality or they are 'sick' and need 'to be cured' but the fact is that normal persons need to understand persons with disabilities live 'normal life' as others. Able bodied are living with outdated, superstitious and inhuman views, opinions and psychology aboutpersons with disabilities so they need to realize, educate, sensitize and enlighten themselves in understanding the values and systems that keep on changing with valid and logical epistemology. Davis explicates:

> To understand the disabled body, one must return to the concept of the norm, the normal body. … I would like to focus not so much on the construction of disability as on the construction of normalcy. I do this because the ''problem'' is not the persons with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the ''problem'' of the disabled person. (*The End of Normalcy* 1-2)

From a critical disability perspective, Davis's observations are essential for understanding the struggles of Ghimire, KC, and Lamichhāne. Despite their impairments, in their early days they strive to appear 'normal' and perfect. They internalize their physical conditions as inferior or limiting, living with the sense that

they may not fully understand life. However, through engagement with society and social interactions, they begin to discover meaning and a process of identity formation. Rather than being defined solely by their impairments, they realize they have their own unique ways of understanding and expressing their worldviews. Ultimately, they come to understand that the problem lies not within themselves, but within the societal structures in which they live.

Kama Lamichhāne ’s *Antardṛṣṭi*stands as a landmark contribution to Nepali disability literature. It offers a profound autobiographical account that challenges conventional narratives around disability. Lamichhāne, himself visually impaired, rejects the traditional frames of pity and charity. Instead, he emphasizes agency, rights, and structural discrimination. Through vivid personal storytelling, Lamichhāneexposes how systemic barriers ranging from inaccessible education to social stigma restrict the lives of persons with disabilities far more than impairment itself. As Lamichhānewrites, "It was not my blindness that most confined me, but the world’s blindness to my potential" (*Antardṛṣṭi*43*)*. Drawing on critical disability studies principles, *Antardṛṣṭi*reframes disability as a socio-political issue rather than a personal deficit. It also intersects with broader questions of class, rural-urban divide, limited access and educational inequality in Nepal, making it a significant text for intersectional analysis. Lamichhāne’s journey from a marginalized student in Nepal to an internationally recognized academic serves as both testimony and critique, urging Nepali society to dismantle ableist structures and embrace a more inclusive vision of citizenship and human rights.

Lamichhānevividly portrays how deeply entrenched superstitions, prejudices, and traditional assumptions about disability shape the experiences of persons with disabilities in Nepali society. From an early age, Lamichhāneis confronted not only by

physical barriers but by the social attitudes of his family members, relatives, and neighbours, who often view disability through a fatalistic and pity-based lens. He recounts, “Some relatives whispered that it must have been sins from a past life that caused my blindness” (*Antardṛṣṭi*16), revealing how religious fatalism justifies social exclusion and stigma. At this juncture, Lamichhāne, reminisces about his past life with others, he states, “Do visually impaired persons have life? It was my thought and perception like other persons and such pessimistic perception embedded in me for a long time” (*Antardṛṣṭi1*). Such pessimistic experiences gradually shift him, when he gradually moves from Chitwan to Kathmandu.

Coming from a family that faced significant economic hardship, Lamichhānereflects on his marginalized position within society. Lamichhāne’s narrative vividly illustrates the intersections of class, disability, entrenched cultural beliefs and systems. He emphasizes how economic precarity not only intensified the challenges of living with a disability but also shaped the way his disability was perceived and responded to by the community revealing the compounded impact of material deprivation on his lived experience. He recalls, "The extreme poverty at home and the inability to reach the city created a major barrier on my path to education" (23). His statement directly aligns with Erevelle’s assertion that "poverty disables, not simply by the lack of resources but by structuring systemic exclusions from education, healthcare, and public life” (“*Disability and Difference”* 27). Lamichhāne’s mobility was not merely restricted by physical impairment but also by his rural location, economic environment, and his parents’ will and commitment for education and other necessities which are intersectional elements. If he had been located in a privileged urban setting, his access to assistive technologies, inclusive schooling, and social capital would have dramatically altered his early experiences.

Lamichhānesystematically demonstrated through empirical dissertation that persons with disabilities in Nepal are disproportionately represented among the economically marginalized, particularly in rural and indigenous communities (*Antardṛṣṭi*90–95). Thus, Lamichhāne's disability cannot be understood in isolation from the socio-economic condition, infrastructures or lack thereof within which it is embedded.

Rather than receiving encouragement, Lamichhāne often finds that his aspirations are met with scepticism or silence, underscoring how societal attitudes operate as disabling forces. This critical reflection resonates with broader disability studies frameworks, where disability is understood as a product of oppressive social structures rather than individual impairment. When he is introduced to the wider social world through education, social network, and exposure, he is gradually understood and recognized in different ways by the ‘so-called society’ who used to see him differently when he was in his village. His family’s willingness, structural nexus of close proximity with peoples in Chitwan and Kathmandu, who are aware and educated, along with access to information in the language they could express without difficulty to tell the disability challenges of their child led the journey to move from Chitwan.

In *Antardṛṣṭi*, he presents education as both a site of profound exclusion and a pathway to emancipation for persons with disabilities. His narrative critically exposes how structural inequalities, not personal impairments, systematically limit educational opportunities for persons with disabilities in Nepal. He recalls, “The school building had steps I could not see, but no one thought to build a ramp; they only told me to be careful” (*Antardṛṣṭi*28*)*. Such powerful reflection underscores how ableism is materially embedded into educational spaces, rendering them inaccessible by default. He systematically exposes the state's failure to create accessible public environments,

reinforcing the social model of disability (*Antardṛṣṭi*123). Throughout the text, Lamichhānechallenges the charity model prevalent in Nepali schooling, where learners with disabilities are treated as “objects of pity” rather than “active learners” with rights and emancipation. His perseverance to attain higher education, despite discriminatory attitudes and lack of reasonable accommodations, illustrates that disability-related barriers are constructed socially rather than naturally inevitable. As he emphasizes, "My desire to learn was never broken, but the system tried its best to discourage it" (*Antardṛṣṭi*71). This aligns closely with the theoretical modes of critical disability studies, where education is understood not just as an individual achievement but as a political site demanding systemic transformation to emancipate himself/herself.

Education opens avenues and awareness in his life and Lamichhānewants to be like other ‘normal people’ while he studies in Kathmandu. His pursuit of education forms a central axis of his narrative and highlights how institutional ableism intersects with class and spatial exclusion. He describes how, despite excelling academically, he faced systemic discrimination, "Due to lack of sight, mainstream schools did not pay attention to me, and although some teachers supported me, I still felt left behind compared to other students" (*Antardṛṣṭi*37). His experience of educational exclusion is not purely personal but a structurally produced system that exists with inaccessible pedagogical methods, attitudinal and structural barriers, and systemic neglect.

Lamichhāne’s reflection on his past journey is particularly meaningful when it is viewed through an intersectional lens that accounts for homely culture, family members’ awareness, his quest for education and opportunities, and their commitment to taking him beyond the confines of home for schooling. Despite the delay in his formal education until the age of twelve, his family’s awareness and commitment

played a crucial role in his transformation. This experience echoes findings across existing research, which consistently demonstrate that familial attitudes significantly shape access to education for children with disabilities.

As a boy with visual impairment growing up in a village, he gets distressed and disturbed multiple times when persons around him dismiss and disrespect him. With exposure to education and language, his journey mirrors the theoretical model that education fosters critical self-awareness, empowerment and emancipation in his later stage of life. Having engaged in formal learning at 12, he notices changes in the behaviour of persons around him and also the transformation of understanding life. Education paved a creative and critical journey ahead for him: “I looked at myself, critically reflecting, I started to search for my inner self who I am, what is the good part of my life, wanted to identify myself then I came to know who I was” (*Antardṛṣṭi*1). The intersectional tenets such as recognizing discrimination, acting across individual and institutional levels, self-representation to access education, familiarity with the state language and modes of expression, and connections with organizations played a major role in shaping his personal growth. His networks, engagement with disability experts, and access to technology directly contributed to expanding access, stronger social relationships, greater mobility, and broader participation in the wider world, feel emancipated in his life and entering professional life.

Such structural foundations directly shape individuals’ worldviews, bringing changes in perspective, attitude, and understanding that extend beyond disability alone. Lamichhāne’s access to higher education and proficiency in the English language enabled greater mobility and broader exposure in his life. These opportunities convey an important message: disability is not inherently a hindrance,

limitation, or lack; rather, it emerges from the interaction between functional impairment and social barriers across different contexts. When social, cultural, and environmental barriers are reduced and enabling environments are provided by family and society as in Lamichhāne's later life, individuals can become scholars and academic figures with diverse forms of exposure. At the same time, the intersection of disability and rurality compounded his challenges, since accessible educational infrastructures are largely concentrated in urban spaces. His eventual access to higher education, including opportunities to study abroad, is therefore not framed as a simple personal triumph but as a continuous negotiation with intersecting barriers of class, geography, gender, and ableism.

Disability is not merely about impairment; it is the result of impairment compounded by a social environment shaped by intersecting factors such as identity, social status, awareness, structural inequalities, culture, societal perceptions, and systemic barriers. Despite the economic challenges Lamichhānegoes through, he comes from a family background where social awareness and the importance of education are high. Therefore, his family placed high value on education, demonstrating their social awareness and hope for him. Despite their busy schedule of joining hands to mouth challenges, his family members are committed, aware that education is crucial so they decide to send him to Kathmandu in the hope that things will be better and possibilities will come for him. Lamichhāne, being a male, creates an enabling space as he could go to any time to study for any type of opportunity. With those opportunities, time and space, he makes relations and associations with people, and gets access to information mainly about the disability policies and support those different organizations and the state provides.

Government policies introduced after the 1990s political revolution played a crucial role in enabling Lamichhāne's transition from the remote areas of Chitwan to a specialized school in Bhaktapur. His trajectory was not solely a product of personal resilience; it was deeply rooted in familial effort and made possible by broader institutional shifts. His education, in turn, facilitated social awareness, access to state institutions, and engagement with NGOs, ultimately equipping him with the knowledge and capacity to advocate for changes in policy and practice himself.

Similarly, Ghimire's belonging to the dominant caste and linguistic group privileges her to associate with different scholars and supporters in her early phase of writing. Through exposure to different people, Ghimire gets close to wider views and opinions. Ghimire explains her creation, capacity, and closeness at different locations, and in different time intervals and process which intersects with her different identities as she holds spaces, power to influence, moves from a semi-remote area to town; from town to capital, from interpersonal world to the world of media. Ghimire's access, ease, and influence with state apparatus is the one intersection, through which she endlessly writes her creation and this enables her to power in herself and for others gradually. Writing as an underlying power, through different intersectional conditions such as persons that enable her to make her known personality, and build conducive conditions to be a globally recognized personality.

During Ghimire's conversation, she clearly expresses the intersectional identities that shape her inequality. Ghimire mentions her lived experience with several identities like sex, age, class, disability community perceptions that intersected and overlapped to define her who she is in her early to later phase of her life. About all these identities, Ghimire shares, "There are several disparities – born out of gender, class, community, disability that I experienced and I could not have

expressed them if I have just seen or heard, I could only look for equality and assimilation in all these matters" (186). People's attitudes and behaviours to her during the childhood days differ from the ones when she reaches her matured days. Once recognised as a creative writer, Ghimire finds herself being treated in a friendly manner. She accepts the overlapping of multiple identities that assimilate in her life in different forms. As a conscious human being she is aware of unequal treatment and discrimination that exists in Nepali society. Ghimire asserts, "I myself received unequal behaviour on the grounds of cultural, economic, or gender differences, I had to bring the same voices of inequality and disorganization to the fore that had mingled into the sea of literature (186). As a speaker she interacts with individuals, personification of existing norms, systems and structures.

Ghimire's journey is dramatic. She experiences both privileged and disadvantaged positions. She keeps inventing her social positions in her life that persons come with surprise and awe. She had experienced her life with adversities: a simple girl living with cerebral palsy with two fixed identities of gender and disability. In the intersections of gender and disability, she develops her sense of identity and emancipates through powerful words and writings.

Ghimire uses her privileged space of access to language, people's proximity, resources of state apparatus and being aware, informed, educated, to increase access and enhance social assets. She faces several hindrances, challenges but she asserts her space and creative mind for freedom and emancipation. She increases her social mobility and connectivity and finally becomes an independent, vocal and conscious citizen. Before she got recognized as a creative writer, she was treated as the object who deserved a few words like pity, sympathy, and donation with a 'charity'. But due

to her multiple sections and identifiers, she carves out spaces as part of her efforts to define herself as an intellectual.

Ghimire's worldviews and her opinions make sense only after exposing the different sections she belongs to. First and foremost, she comes from a society that has practiced or gone through certain political and military trajectories. The Shah rulers and the society they designed to rule over cannot be separated from her destination. Second, Ghimire is constrained by pre-existing societal values and systems. She grew up in a Hindu patriarchal society in which fathers often restrict daughters' access to education and confine them to rigid, gender defined roles. Her father's engagement with the public sphere was shaped by the belief that girls are destined for marriage and eventual departure from their natal homes. Influenced by dominant patriarchal values, he viewed beauty, physical fitness, and the performance of domestic labour as essential qualities for girls, with marriage as their ultimate goal. Such assumptions structured his worldview, and his authority within the family was rarely questioned.Third, her corporeal body is important. Society constructs dichotomies values of able and disabled bodies, perfect and imperfect bodies and normal and abnormal. She is grossed out by being in a norm and the standard of being a 'perfect body' aspires among her family members. Fourth, she is a member of a low economic struggling family. Her father or parents cannot afford to take her to the hospitals where sophisticated services and treatment are available. She was born and raised in Dhanakuta, a small town. Someone born in a developed town is mobile and is exposed to the world outside through advanced forms of technology, manners of expression, and networking. Fifth, she is a neighbour of persons living with orthodox and superstitious values about disability. Someone living in a society that nurtures liberal values and lifestyles finds it comfortable to express and communicate his or

her visions. Ghimire's journey of being a writer remains complicated and painful as she lacks neighbours, who come to support her. Importantly but not lastly, she is a conscious being living in Nepal which has been going through ideologically divided times.

Undoubtedly, Ghimire's disability is comparatively more 'painful' than the one Lamichhāneand KC go through. But one cannot deny the fact that Ghimire belongs to a linguistic community that the mainstream media make its medium. Ghimire, her family members, supporters, and even the state put all her effort into making her a writer. Despite her several limitations, her writing became a powerful means for her to know her life. Her statement "today a simple girl whom society had showered insults and pushed backward is standing in front of you in the shape of a young writer" (265) encourages all normal and disabled worlds to understand the intersectional layers prevalent in society and beyond.

Unlike the struggle Lamichhāneand Ghimire go through to learn about Kathmandu, its location, people, and schools for many months and even years, KC, being from the capital city, did not have to experience those realities. After being rejected from the college, she had ample chances to go to other schools and learn about the visually impaired world. Geographical proximity gives her ease to visit those places and quest for possibilities and opportunities to explore knowledge of understanding and decide the right places. Unlike KC, for Lamichhāneand Ghimire, geographical remoteness and its access as one of the intersectional social identifiers makes a profound limitation for accessing information, exercising their rights, connecting with peoples and networks, and aspiring to live in Kathmandu Valley for seeking opportunities to live with dignity.

4.4 Access to Physical and Social Mobility

Lamichhānefrequently reflects on the disabling nature of Nepal's built environment. He observes, "Even in places like Kathmandu, there is a lack of safe streets and accessible buildings for the blind"; *Antardṛṣṭi*75). Public spaces in Nepal, from transportation systems to public offices, are inherently disabling for blind individuals, demonstrating how spatial design intersects with ableism to exclude certain bodies from full participation. Lamichhāne's critique reveals how disability is not an individual misfortune but a relational phenomenon arising from infrastructural and policy-level neglect.

With the mobility shifts in different locations and associations, Lamichhāne's perception of disability transforms with new opinions and understanding in later years when he visits foreign countries. Ann Phoenix and Pamela Pattynama make an important observation that social positionality is a relational experience. This is why an intersectional approach to disability can function as "a rich ontology that attempts to reduce one category and treats social positions as relational, and it makes visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it" (187). Lamichhānemoves from this section that has often been meant for "cursed" ones to the one that is offered for individuals who 'inspire'. The process of acquiring social mobility is supported or enhanced by the agencyLamichhānecomes across. His ability to trace down information at the right time, his affiliation with the network of experts and informants plays an important role in his success or social mobility. Reflecting on his journey Lamichhānefinds his discoveries in the following manner:

> I have concluded that no one is superior or inferior. If someone else is ahead or behind it is because persons don't dare to dream, persons don't think

> positively, or rationally, or persons don't believe in change, being positive in life depends not only on the individual but on the environment, he lives, how he/she is grown and what type of culture is given to him/her. (*Antardṛṣṭi*127)

Lamichhāneemphasizes on 'dream' that he is able to dare because of the environment that he grew up in, where disability is perceived as a stigma. He carries social categories like being the youngest son. He is also the second child born with a disability. He is a member of the society that has almost nothing to offer. On the other hand, he comes from a family whose members know how to locate the resources offered by the state for persons living with disabilities. Moreover, he comes from the linguistic community whose language is the official mode of communication. In summary, Lamichhāneemphasizes how access to mobility and social networks is crucial for persons with disabilities to claim their rights and participate fully in society. His narrative reveals that the barriers he faced were not only physical but also deeply social and systemic. Mobility for Lamichhāneis not just about physical movement; it symbolizes access to education, employment, social capital and being a youngest son who receives opportunities that were often denied due to both infrastructural inaccessibility and societal prejudice.

Similarly, coming from the traditional patriarchal society, he is a male whose mobility is accepted as culturally and socially warranted. Unlike the girls he is sent out to explore opportunities available any time. He accepts that by admitting, though *Antardṛṣṭi*is more academic in tone, he discusses the added burden that disabled women face within family structures and marriage markets (*Antardṛṣṭi*112) which he does not face. He describes how disability intersects with patriarchal structures to produce compounded marginalization for women with disabilities. He provides statistical evidence that disabled women in Nepal are less likely to access education or

employment compared to disabled men (*Antardṛṣṭi*111). In sum, he demonstrates that mobility both physical and social is the keystone in unlocking rights, dignity, and full citizenship for disabled persons in Nepal.

Thus, all texts confirm that disabled women in Nepal are subject to a layered and culturally sanctioned system of oppression. Therefore, T. Manual claims that the "complex intersections of identity both from a vertical and a horizontal perspective as an individual or within a group as a family member situate him his social location" as discussed by T. Manual (176). Directly, these different intersectional social identities, not limited to the physical body, position him either in a subordinate or privileged position with multiple aspects of metaphysics, opinions, faiths, and politics.

Lamichhānemakes a journey towards advancing his consciousness. He gets acquainted with technology. He has access to networking and builds confidence, hope, and positive vibes in him to see the dream with intersectional nuances that makes him move across the upper echelon of society. He observes that "I believed in my experience, dream, and aspiration. I kept on fighting against all kinds of discrimination. I lived with aspiration for an inclusive world for all and I focused on my dream and tried my best to live with positivity" (*Antardṛṣṭi*127). Such positive inspiration manifested from not only his personal determination but also from the support he had had from his family members and teachers. Since his family belonged to a middle class and comparatively resourceful and his family members understood the value of education, they could afford to follow the network and trace down the agency. Once Lamichhāneacquires such back up from family as well as concerned agency, his commitment to the further studies increases. His family members, friends and teachers together support him to create enabling spaces for learning as he can "bring them through often-hidden dynamics forward to transform them not only

limited through social power relation or gaze to the relation that was interrogated" (312) as highlighted by Devon Carbado et al.

During his journey, Lamichhānecomes to know that there are organizations run for the persons like him. Exposure to such organizations brings changes in his life. Lamichhānesays that he started to learn how to operate computers by the mid-1990s. With the help of Sushila Poudel, Lamichhānestarted to write emails and communicate with the world. Lamichhāneis able to find that an event of global order was going to take place in Germany. At times when their email was a new mode of communication in Kathmandu, with support from the Penguin Computer Institute, Lamichhānemanaged to write an email to the organizer. He finally got a reply. He writes that “despite having limited access and no knowledge of computer and disability-related events, the invitation of the event gave me courage and space which brought change in his life” (120). Such a context related to access with people, technology and visit built a confidence in him as he gets a chance to meet various scholars, experts, and donors at the event. Furthermore, the memoir illustrates how disability rights movements and people’s organizations, both at the local and global levels, played a transformative role in reshaping his journey. Through advocacy networks, persons with disabilities like Lamichhānefound solidarity, resources, and a political voice, challenging the charity-based and paternalistic approaches that dominated traditional Nepali society. His experience showcases how collective organizing and active participation in advocacy groups can disrupt cycles of marginalization, fostering a more inclusive and rights-based framework for disability justice in Nepal. Thus, *Antardṛṣṭi*demonstrates that true empowerment lies not merely in individual perseverance but in building and sustaining networks that challenge systemic ableism and promote collective transformation. *Antardṛṣṭi*illuminates

howLamichhāne's experiences of disability are structured through the interlocking forces of poverty, rural marginalization, educational exclusion, infrastructural barriers, and cultural stigmatization. Disability, within his narrative, is not a discrete identity but a shifting, relational position shaped by wider socio-political and economic conditions and mobility.

In the essence of self-identity formation, Ghimire moves from different sections of her life as a woman with disability learning to eat, and moves to see the world. As a woman with disability without formal education, she is limited within the four walls of her house. She is now a creative writer, who interrogates social issues. With all these social locations, she moves from the position of an unwanted little pile of flesh to a creative genius filled with knowledge and consciousness. This pile of flesh had a sexuality attached to her that was associated with a conservative patriarchal mindset and beliefs and did cause a burden to her and her parents. Not only with her gender, sexuality, but even her mother and entire family were suffering. She shares, "Despite my mother's intention not to give birth to a female child, two of us girl children had already been born and her mother has an innate desire to give birth to a male child" (8).

Ghimire's struggle is heroic where she recounts how she picks up a pen and the physical works combined with her skills and talents directly take her from a marginalized section of society to a less marginalized one. She moves from one section of society to another. By the time she starts earning through writing articles for the newspaper and selling books, she becomes a famous name. As she moves from one section of social position to another, i.e., the better one, she finds persons around approaching her with a changed attitude. Her mother used to shout at her, and sometimes also would punish her for throwing food on the floor, for not eating them

properly. But by the time the daughter becomes a writer, her family members pick a new attitude towards each other. Ghimire narrates, “I would be beaten even for the fault of spilling a little water, they wanted me not to cross the limit of behaviour drawn by them, but as a child as I was, how could I shrink myself within those limits” (26). The fact that parents belong to a lower class, and they too need to depend on limited resources cannot be denied. Ghimire’s parents had to manage their family expenses with limited income. Parents love their children but the fact that they find it very difficult to run the family in that particular social and economic setting is something real and determining. Ghimire reflects:

> My parents would always despise me for being a useless family member. I was born in such a society so how could I expect persons of the same society to behave differently. On the one hand, superstitious traditions have been deeply entrenched into the society and it is morbid with ignorance, lack of education and poverty so how could i expect different behaviour. No, I never got love and respect. The villagers addressed me *Thulee* only in front of my parents, they mostly called me *Sapeey*orsnake. (27)

As Ghimire rises as a writer and starts to draw the attention of intellectuals, she notices changes in people’s attitudes towards her. The parents change their attitude towards her and so do the neighbours and relatives. This context reveals that disability is not a static attribute but a dynamic social role, negotiated through access to education, platforms for voice, and recognition by symbolic authorities and is understood differently in different contexts as society's interpretation is critical. As scholar Garland-Thomson points out the need to integrate or relate people’s behaviour to the class, race or caste and ideological background they come from, “Integrating disability clarifies how this aggregate of systems operates together, yet distinctly, to

support an imaginary norm and structure the relations that grant power, privilege, and status to that norm. Indeed, the cultural function of the disabled figure is to act as a synecdoche for all forms that culture deems non-normative" ("Integrating Disability" 04). On top of her not being able to speak and move her own body and work daily chores on her own, Ghimire has to learn to bear the painful remarks persons would make on her. For her, the behaviour of people, their attitude towards a girl living with disability becomes equally difficult to bear. She finds that persons held views that she would be there as a burden to the family, and there is no hope and possibility to grow for her. She is deemed "non-normative". She is seen as the final obscure piece of life that does not have any future and no relevance to society because she is seen from a disability dominant identity that is associated with loss.

Simi Linton puts, "disability lives becomes a prism through which one can gain a broader understanding of society and human experience" (*Claiming Disability* 118), for that matter of Nepali society. Garland-Thomson further says that watching a person with disability making his or her identity in this competitive and rational world, one comes to realize several misconceptions he or she has lived with on disability: "It deepens our understanding of gender and sexuality, individualism and equality, minority group definitions, autonomy, wholeness, independence, dependence, health, physical appearance, aesthetics, the integrity of the body, community, and ideas of progress and perfection in every aspect of culture" (4-5). Ghimire becomes a case study of Nepali society in transition. She achieves transformation in her life. She motivates persons to go through a transformation about disability in their society. The same can be said about the journey of Lamichhāneand KC.

Lamichhānecomes from a family where his elder brother too lives through a similar visual impairment that Kamal lives with. Being the eldest son in the Nepali society, he carries the responsibility of looking after his family members despite his disability and accepts disability as his “curse”. His family members always trust the next son Hari who is “able” rather than the two sons who are both disabled (*Antardṛṣṭi*12). The younger Lamichhāne in the long run is a world-famous personality as he has access to education, information and networks. His disability identity receives priority from his family members. His family members afford to create a conducive atmosphere for his studies. They expect him to carve out a new identity through pursuing higher studies.

In contrast, his elder brother Chiranjivi gets married at an early age. The family makes him settle with his family. Chiranjivi becomes a family man and remains busy with managing house chores like farms, and herds cattle. His family members do not have any expectations from him and does not even have time to think of his disability. In Kamal’s case, he gets a different context, environment, and priority. He garners power through education and international exposure. He became a globally recognized scholar on disability issues. On the other hand, Chiranjivi is known only as a disabled son of Jutpani. *Antardṛṣṭi*supports these narrative findings by systematically documenting the correlation between disability, poverty, location and its impacts with who is privileged or unprivileged, its relation and power (*Antardṛṣṭi*88–92). Across all texts, it becomes clear that disability without resources is produced and intensified by material deprivation that connects with priority, voice and agency. Therefore, intersectional identification and explanation of “which differences make a difference” and “carry a significance” (1012) is important as

highlighted by Barbara Tomlinson. She supports the critical view that there exists a two-way relationship between identity and power.

Ghimire, KC and Lamichhāne who have faced layers of discrimination due to different intersectional identities and categories which all necessitate cross relationships that have either enabled or hindered their life process to advance their rights with their lived experiences either with challenges or have become agents of transformation. This phenomenon is particularly silent in the dense web of power relations, systems, and structures that construct contemporary Nepali society where different social categories, rights, and identities of persons with disabilities are shrouded under who they are. In *Antardṛṣṭi*, Lamichhāne frequently uses statistical data to demonstrate systemic inequities and systemic barriers persons with disabilities face in education and employment. However, he also, at times, sees disability as a homogenous group reinforcing the idea of a monolithic identity. He assumes a universal disabled subject that “all Nepali persons with disabilities s major challenges are education and lack of employment" (*Antardṛṣṭi*55). This generalization overlooks diverse populations facing different, compounding exclusions in different forms and contexts.

Ghimire carries multiple identities which impact her everyday phenomena. She moves across different sections of her multiple identities and shapes her public world and her perspectives in society. She openly discloses, “When I receive any prize, award, honour, or medal, persons would think that they had given me as I was the disabled person to write essays, poems, and others. In the eyes of some people, I was nothing else besides disability and helplessness, but I wasn’t what they would see me as disabled” (169). Unlike others, she does not conceptualize her identity as fixed or static on disability. She has multiple overlapping intersectional identities that are

dynamic and emerge in specific social, historical, and interactional configurations. She is a conscious human being and a person having the capacity to write. As a person, she aspires for emancipation. She has access to language, persons and networks. She lives through multiple identifiers. Rita Dhamoon observes that intersectionality concerns epistemologies and power, and its relationship from the perspectives and worldviews of persons who are typically marginalized or excluded through the production of knowledge (201). Ghimire's epistemology of writing as a driving force functions to shape her worldviews and creates powers to unfold injustices, inequality, oppression, isolation, and discrimination that have existed in Nepali society as a whole. Equally important, such power shifts her move from one social position to another: from the marginalized to the less marginalized one.

KC striving for her life as a visually impaired person, is a motivational speaker, dancer, and visionary from Nepal. She collects her courage and strength to fight for her journey as other visually impaired persons. Born in Bhaktapur, one of the districts from the Capital Valley, at the age of sixteen she lost her eyesight. She comes from a middle-class family where both her parents are job holders. Her brothers are educated and go abroad. After her visual complications, her family keeps on consulting witch doctors, shamans, and horoscope readers so that their darling girl would get her eyesight back. Though her family can afford to take her to hospitals, during the process, her mother sells her jewellery for treatment and the house and the land is on mortgage. Frustrated with her life, her parents' tireless effort, and the social stigma that surround the conversations in her life, the time comes when KC thought of committing suicide as she did not want to be the cause of suffering for her family.

KC being disregarded in many places, friends, and institutions, she looks to her inner self and admits, "I then followed what my heart told me "If you don't find a

way, create one!" (Sṛṣṭi KC, personal blog). She defines the agency of her heart and listens to understand the normal world. Brought up in Kathmandu Valley with a good school education, she understands herself in this context which enables her to reflect on who she is, whom she chooses to identify with, and what she chooses to do as matters of choice, not compulsion so she also chooses to listen to her heart. KC unfolds her layers of identities like a girl with a good education and family background. She is aware of living in the capital city and has access to information, and medicines. She has competence in language and comes from a background that education is must. She seeks multiple possibilities through these identities where her disability identity remains less functional. Her other dominant social variables overlap with disability identity, and mutually reinforce each other.

Like Ghimire and Lamichhāne, her desire to be free, to be independent, and to be recognized through the art of skills is similar to the statement that intersectionality focuses on epistemologies of power relationship between power and knowledge production. Despite her disability limitation and numerous hurdles, her education, capacity, skills, access to technology, and networks that surround her in the capital city where she comprehends power. She builds skills and confidence and gets a sense of self as well as life experiences and expectations in her. With the help of this tape recorder, which is easily bought by her father understanding her needs and the support of her mother, brother, and friends, KC passes her SLC examination. She expresses her joy through her dance which comes naturally in her feeling that she can do it because she has the capacity and background support.

Being the voice of the voiceless and understanding the lived experiences of visually impaired individuals, KC pursues her desire to establish an institution to enable individuals struggling with disabilities to express themselves. Finding KC with

such ambition, the government officer mocks her. To his dismay, KC stands tall in her ambition. With words and visions, she is unstoppable. No bureaucrat can stop her from getting her dream project done. The “Blind Rocks” is the name of an organization that she registers in the government office. She runs a studio. She teaches visually impaired aspiring artists to dance. She helps them develop confidence from within. As a torch bearer, she kindles a fire in the minds of individuals living with visual impairment: “The thing who calls dark is the spot where I see light” and “The greatest challenge in life is to recognize yourself” (1:31:00 - 1:32:02). She is now a nationally recognized social activist. She regards her blindness as a power and she uses her power in multiple perspectives to help her and the society she lives in. She believes, losing eyesight is not losing life, not losing vision, hope, aspiration, and happiness or one should not enter into the void as a damaged good. Society should be aware of the fact that if a person loses some things in their life, then they cope with alternatives to make the things better that are lost and there are certain things that normal persons cannot perform whereas persons with disabilities do it far better and K.C is one of them. She concludes, “You are the rock star of your life and you can rock the world” (1:34:39-1:34:41).

KC is successful in her project and becomes a celebrity. She decides to be a lawyer; a lawyer who can fight for the rights of individuals living with disabilities. She knows that the polity plays a significant role in shaping the private and the public behaviours of people. The polity has its policies, and until and unless policies are implemented in favour of individuals with disabilities, then persons with disabilities cannot enjoy their rights in an equal manner with others. So, KC as a graduate in law and officially recognized law practitioner, is vocal in intervening and assisting to make the state realize that disabled citizens are contributors to the nation. The movie

ends with the message that KC has won a scholarship to a university in Norway where is going to get her MA in visual arts. She is continuing her activism and aesthetics together. Activism: for the sake of social justice and aesthetics for the cause of enabling persons with disabilities to explore his or her inner passion, the inner search, and the artist in each of them.

Blind Rocks is about her process of being visually impaired but it is not only about disability. She shares her unique situation which bears multiple and intersecting identities and locations through which she tries to understand the disabled/abled world. She interacts with the world. She discovers the values that conservative patriarchal society favours. Her familiarity with structural and patriarchal oppression enables her to realize the intersection of gender and disability. She moves from a personal dependence to public leadership; navigating oppressive structures to actively dismantling them. In due course of time, KC gets recognized as a talent. As part of creating a new identity, she engages in public life. *Blind Rocks* invites us to see disability not as limitation, but as a powerful lens for reimagining inclusion, identity, and agency.

Aware of the risk of sexualized violence and domestic abuse, she discovers conservative order of Nepali society. Her unsuccessful affair with Manav brings a revelation that love alone is not going to solve the social problems. A woman may not understand another woman living with a disability. Intersections of class, gender, caste and sexuality create a complex wave-like structure. KC's journey in the movie implies that having a disability does not make an individual less human being. On the contrary, KC defines that as a significant member of society she is capable of interacting with society. Losing eyesight for her becomes another way of exploring the world. As a disabled individual, she actively feels and understands the world.

Moreover, KC's life itself is a combination of what scholar Floya Anthias suggests as a multi-level that works on four levels; the level of discrimination and experience; the actor's level dealing with subjective praxis; the institutional level within structures, and the level of representation i.es symbolic and discursive, intersectionality offers us a lens through which all these categories are viewed as mutually constituting processes (518). KC goes through these multiple forces' aspects: discrimination and agency to activism and aestheticism. The aestheticism is an innate passion in her, and activism is her personal choice made through enough ground-breaking realization in her personal life. With KC, the journey concludes that a disabled person needs an agency that can lead to justice and change. In this process, the agencies can make the state rewrite scripts in favour of international identities. In the meantime, one should not forget another important fact that peoplewith disabilities too can express, meditate, and create art. The state of going blind can lead one to songs and dances which can rock the hitherto conservative society to celebrate ability, agency, and shared humanity.

Analysing the struggle that these writers, scholars, and artists with a disability perform in their social setting and beyond, their actions and aspirations match with the "fundamental premises of critical disability theory" that scholars agree upon. Garland-Thomson states that such fundamentals of feminist disability theory include: "1) that representation structures reality, 2) that the margins define the centre, 3) that gender (or disability) is a way of signifying relationships of power, 4) that human identity is multiple and unstable, 5) that all analysis and evaluation have political implications" ("Integrating Disability" 06). Ghimire, KC and Lamichhānecome from a society where individuals living with disability are marginally represented. Without access to education and other social and economic opportunities, they have a hard time

convincing the public about their potential. Importantly, their rise challenges the centre, the dominant worldviews that have never realized that person with disabilities could emerge as writers, intellectuals, and artists. Moreover, their journey across social categories in Nepal earns them recognition that makes them realize that identity is not a fixed thing. It is a social construct, given access to education and other forms of opportunities, one can keep on extending it further.

4.5 Disability and Evolving Identity

Disability identity is not fixed, but fluid. It evolves across contexts and the life course and the identity shifts occur in response to changing environments, social interactions, and stages of life. When KC loses her eye sight, having a quest for education, KC goes to college for her admission but none of the colleges are ready to admit her. The college lacks an accessible mode of teaching for visually impaired students like her and finally, she is told that she should join the Thimi Blind School. She discovers a mode of teaching and learning where several visually impaired students like her, enjoy learning through different modes that suit their necessities. Students with disabilities learn socialization and coping with disabilities through music, song, and dance and she watches students learning through braille script. Such an enabling environment empowers a sense of "social justice; a space for self-reflection and transforming the way resources and relationships is produced and distributed so that all can live dignified lives in a way which intersectional aspects focus on" as defined by Potts, K., and Brown, L. in defining the attributes of intersectionality (264). So, KC understands her impairment, its limitation but also gets aware of social systems that are designed to equalize outcomes between more and less advantaged groups.

InLamichhāne's experiences we find the complexity of human experience and overlapping factors that facilitate his understanding of his disabled life with hatred and discrimination, his family's perception of the charity model of disability on the one hand and his family consciousness and commitment to exposing him to the public world on the other. Unlike his elder brother, living with visual impairment, he acquires mobility and social recognition that makes him "simultaneously belong to both privileged and oppressed groups, and allows for the examination of both" (Cole 171). Viewed from Cole's observation, the visually impaired Lamichhānebrothers, Chiranjivi and Kamal live more or less the same social conditionality and go through similar oppression and discrimination in Jutpani, but the younger Lamichhānedevelop a new understanding of his identity after he is provided such conducive environment by family. His elder brother Chiranjivi on the other hand does not get those surroundings and disability related differences and realities were even new to him and his family members. The atmosphere to look for alternatives, mobility, and resistance did not exist; rather acceptance is dominant for his family members. Pointing out such diverse nature of identity formation, the disability studies scholars Ann Phoenix and Pamela Pattynama argue that social positionings need to be taken as "relational" as well as "multiple positioning" and such shifting state "constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it" (187).

Meanwhile, Ghimire's struggle is the story of courage that no matter whatever condition she might fall into physically and mentally, she can make her own life. Her early stage of life is filled with the stigma that persons with disabilities are damaged, inferior, and in need of rehabilitation or a cure or limited within four walls of her house. The whole picture of human beings as a dignified life with minimal education, food, and good health is erased as a subhuman with disability. She reflects, "As for

me, I laughed while my mind was in tears and every moment of life tossed with pain and suffering" (Ghimire 01). Her disability identity becomes dominant and understanding as Dimitris Michailak argues that "individuals having incapacities or failings, a defect, or impairment have obstacles to participation on equal terms and seems to lack certain capacities may not be able to attain autonomy" (210) becomes prominent in the case of Jhamak. Reflecting on the early stage of her life, Ghimire says, "I was regarded as a piercing thorn in the flesh of all around me, those eyes were not filled with compassion and hearts never melted out of love. But I had no alternative except to suffer without a murmur of protest" (02).

As identity formation is not fixed, pre-ordained, singular, or homogeneous, and disabled persons are not homogenous entities, the reflection of self becomes prominent. The universal construct of the self is the product of the fact that every human being is aware of his individuality. It is a premise that human beings are consciously aware of their own lives and it is through reflexivity that we become aware of a consciously constructed self. Self is seen as a universal human property, something that we all possess and a characteristic that we must all develop. Ghimire, with this self-reflection and identity, is constantly evolving, learns to eat, knows persons around her, and catches a pen in the fingers of her right leg to write. She shares her experiences in her words, "I started eating with a single foot, but since I could lift only a few grains of rice at a time, they wouldn't make mouthful, thus dis-satisfying me" (9). She further shares, "I started learning what I could with my efforts and at my own pace, for me the open and wide earth became an exercise book" (28). She shares in a void with no persons and isolation, and within herself copes with and overcomes limitations, practical and emotional, that are caused by her impairments.

In a similar line of observation Margaret Murugami makes about self-concept that "knowing oneself, accepting oneself with one's limitations, not being ashamed of the limitations but simply seeing them as part of the reality one is in, and perhaps as a boundary one is challenged to expand" (2), Ghimire dares to make an unknown adventure with these realities. In no time, she manages to write the alphabet, a surprise to her parents, and in a few years, she becomes a writer. Most of the critics have celebrated her writing. Little have they realized that the alphabet she wrote, the writing she developed a command over, is the language of mainstream media and communication. With learning to write in Nepali she does not only develop literacy she also becomes a part of the wider network. She gets recognized in the public sphere of larger length and breadth. Ghimire herself regards her linguistic or writing ability as pathbreaking: "I became aware of the different hues of life, understood life from different varieties of angles and also learned to experience the beauty of life myself (05). She realizes "her life is a gift, not a burden" (xv). Whatever metaphor one may use to beautify her journey, she definitely comes from a linguistic community that is the mainstream. No doubt, as an individual living with disability Ghimire struggles against issues unique to her society. The nature of "disease" she lives with, the sexuality she embodies and the geographic location she comes from among other facts enable her to acquire knowledge and gain experience. She confronts obstacles and engages in activities that develop problem-solving approaches in the social condition of the existing hitherto society because of certain favourable tangible conditions.

Ghimire makes a precise point that her parents are no exception since they are the products of a male-dominated, economically deprived family. With conservative mindsets and limited economic capabilities, what they could do was dream of a better

life. With a daughter like Jhamak, they will not be in a position to live peacefully. Later on, Ghimire's creativity brings her closer to the circle of writers and artists, intellectuals and activists, political cadres, and influential persons of the locality and beyond. The power of writing, i.e., expressing her opinions and emotions through words opens up a new world for her.

Disability for Ghimire in her early stages is a lack, restriction and limitation. She copes with such difficulties. She follows learning and gives continuity to inquisitiveness and develops a rebellious mind set. She remains determined and thoughtful. She reflects, "I felt desperate for my father's words on me but later on I thought if I know, he is useless so grew slightly rebellious, why should they learn everything and why not I" (36). These words resonate with the voices of marginalized groups or individuals who are left out in the single story. Ghimire, as spokesperson of those groups, intersecting with different identities, positions, and locations, evokes a full story; a story to be experienced, heard, realized, and acted upon. She asks, "Where are the voices in our favour? Who will raise our voices for the emancipation of those whose souls are victimized and suppressed by society and the world at large? When shall we begin living like human beings? (2012, 38). She accepts life as an experiment in which she experiments with writing with her feet, thinking with her conscience, inquiring with her radical and transformative ideas, and questioning the existing values and systems. She satirically questions the social dynamics, power relations, social inequalities, and humanity that exist in Nepali society.

She has a hunch that these persons who come to see and show sympathy want her to die so that she could have another good life (12). Though a victim of cerebral palsy, she has interpretative power to read the gaze of people. Unaware of her intelligence, the visitors themselves, the victims of conservative Nepali society fail to

comprehend the situation. On the contrary, Ghimire actively observes people's behaviour, for that matter, the society she belongs to. She does not need to visit the society to know its characteristics. The Nepali society arrives at her place to be deciphered. She further adds, “persons often use derogatory words to persons with disabilities as if they are not humans. As it is noted, the first term to identify me was late*; a* dumb one: then came to term female. By then, I had not developed into a complete woman who was naturally present in me” (95). As a woman in her mature age, she did not need to walk through her society and notice people’s responses. Members of her society arrived at her door with their words and world views on sexuality, ability and disability and so on.

Along with her disability, she complains next most is herself being born as a daughter. In the beginning of the autobiography, she feels that her parents are worried about her disability as well as her sexuality. She writes that she could read her parents’ minds as it were. She recounts that her mother also has to suffer from a similar fate because despite her intention not to give birth to a female child, “Two of us girl children had already been born. She further writes that her mother had an innate desire to give birth to a male child, a healthy boy who would support his parents in their old age” (8). Patriarchal social values and societal structure are associated with the educational and economic status of the family. Being unsatisfied with the existing culture and patriarchy, she questions “Do we not have our desires and ambitions? Don’t we have any freedom to do something for ourselves? Why do our parents impose their rule on everything” (Ghimire 128-129). These questions directed to her parents may seem very personal at one level but at a deeper level they point out a fact that life throbs, and the vital forces one has to fight with or

communicate with remain similar to all. Having impairment does not mean having a lesser number of “desires” in life, these questions of Ghimire support the view.

In KC’s case, ironically, the ‘abled’persons start humiliating her and make her isolated. She is betrayed for no fault of her own in her college and public places. Peoplehave one or the other section to belong to and they behave accordingly. KC comes to realize that physically now she belongs to the ‘disability’ section though she has a strong desire to belong to the ‘abled’ section. But soon she realizes that ‘disability’ is going to be her new home and world, and she sets out to map a new life. Moulded with different social identifiers, her life goes through different intersectional modes and understanding about Nepali society.

People, in general, tend to express individuals living with disabilities into two: ‘charity-based’ and ‘investment-based’. The first approach regards the subjects with disabilities from religious and conservative approaches. According to the ‘charity-approach’, only divine intervention can bring changes in the destinythat an individual with a disability has fallen into. Lamichhānebrothers, Ghimire and KC go through a similar kind of experience. Their parents carry out various kinds of pooja and rituals and shamans and astrologers come as a rescue force. Soon they come to know that no cure is possible for them.

4.6 Access to Resources

Understanding disability in social, cultural, and historical contexts and associating it with access to resources who can access resources and who cannot be critical. Not all persons with disabilities today have access to resources. In the lives of Ghimire, KC andLamichhāne, the access to technology, networking with persons and organizations, and resources play a major role in their lives which enhances their capacity and strength to scale up. In KC’s case, understanding her needs and being

familiar with devices, her father brings a tape recorder for her. This simple form of technology opens up new avenues of learning like Ghimire with her pen. At times when KC feels left out, isolated and frustrated, or bored, the simple device keeps her morale high. She records all her teacher's lectures and listens whenever she wants. In such a setting, scholar Barney Warf suggests that intersectionality emphasizes the importance of time and space in any context/analysis. He further adds that how we experience and understand time and space depends on when and where we live and interact with (7). KC's parents consciously recognize and realize that they come from a culture where education is obligatory so understanding the time and space that was invested in her eye diagnosis and learning, they support her with required things that make her life easy and effective. Similarly, Ghimire's parents lately understand that when she is capable of writing with a bamboo stick, they consciously realize to give her a pen to write and create an environment for setting up her informal education at home.

KC expands her access with other agencies and claims various instances where she can learn. She provides alternative methods for her study and shows how she can receive education. This enables her college teachers, friends, and others to believe in her and she gets more power and confidence to turn her words into actions in numerous ways. The recorder fulfils her childhood passion for dancing by listening to music and practicing dance at a new speed. This device serves as a boon in her life to advance her academic career as well as her impulse and passion. It enhances her aural power to a greater level, creates a space for herself and sings for her subjectivity. This space-making and understanding of 'other categories of human difference' is significant, where KC understands it and her tremendous desire to

explore the world with her wish and get recognized in a way, she wants becomes fulfilled.

The Music Nepal Centre, located in Kathmandu offers her an opportunity to boost up her passion. With the economic status of her family, she can offer to dress herself smartly. Used to her white cane and the access she has, she creates and bolsters images by processing, comparing, constructing, and deconstructing images of normalcy and the abnormal and transforms her feelings of inferiority into physical, emotional, sensorial, and intellectual state understanding ‘no one is perfect in this world’. She tries to get familiarized with her white cane properly and her friends feel stunned. With the changed attitude of herself and her friends towards her, she feels she has discovered a journey of confidence and power in her. She garners her confidence and creativity to track the world, and her mobility gets enhanced as an independent individual. With such extended mobility, she continues her education in usual colleges where other students study and top the intermediate exam. She gets attention and enabling surroundings during her study by her teachers, friends, and family members which enables her to understand the time, space, and importance of education. She wins the medal and she is recognized for her talent. The media plays a major role in publicizing her talents and holds a certain status and capacity in the society she lives in. As a responsible entity, the government listens to her and she gets economic support to get medical treatment in a renowned hospital in India.

At the Shankar Netralaya, Chennai, Tamil Nādu State of India, she comes to accept the fact that she is not going to get her vision back. Science and advanced technology are not able to bring her vision back. Being helpless, her family members go through shock but she realizes that she is now free from false hope. Being determined to explore the world with new perspectives, she decides not to complain

about life but to celebrate her human differences, live life with reality, and look for multiple possibilities. The bridge she has passed through has disappeared. She is at another bay of life. She thinks that she has discovered the mantras of life that in whatever state of life she is in, she is fit and good enough to explore the world and life ahead: “The road to vision in my life has come to collapse forever” (1:01:43-1:01: 44). Enlightened as it were, she states that she needs to search for the light that she needs now. No science or miracle can help her. She regards the white cane as one of the best trustable friends in her life. With this realization she does not feel inferior, nor does she accept it as defining markers of ability or disability. She accepts it as another mode of living no less creative than living with the one she had earlier: “My one sensory organ and medium of experience is gone. But I have four more such mediums of experience. I must go on” (1:03:48-1:03: 49). She accepts her life waiting for more possibilities.

Having access to both English and Nepali languages, resources, networks, and associations with persons she starts her another journey. She understands literature and arts can develop critical disability consciousness in many forms. She reflects, “I am going to make them more active. I am going to live now. I'm going to live with joy. I am not going to complain about anything” (1:04:1-04:00:15). Conscious of her own potentiality, she does not regard losing one sensory power as losing normality or ability. She regards it as taking another road or mode of perception.

Even during her many years of visual limitations, KC, time and again, keeps on thinking that her vision is going to come back soon. She goes through the medical approach that her longing that medicines will bring her eyesight back or be cured remains as a denial of acceptance of her disability. But once she realizes that her abled friends have their world. They do not have time and patience to listen and talk to her,

then she comes to realize as a social model that only individuals with visual impairment and other forms of disability can understand her experiences, pain, and challenges she encounters in society rather than being isolated. She comes to realize the multiple locations of her life that she needs to begin and there she starts a road towards creativity. To make it effective, she accepts her reality and takes a white cane as an alternative medium of mapping the space.

KC's experience of becoming visually impaired is different from Lamichhāneand Ghimire. She starts losing her eyesight in her mid-teens. For some years, she has held a belief that her eyesight is sure to come back. Like other normal people, she believes she is normal and gets scared to call herself ‘disabled’. She does not want to belong to that section of society called ‘disabled’, some do not want to be termed as ‘visually impaired’ girl. The aspiration of having a normal and perfect body resonates with her as perceives that disability is different, other, lacking, and needs treatment. On the contrary, she wants to remain with the section called ‘abled’ people. For each person, the way that they do or do not self-identify as disabled is itself a complex and very individual process and may shift for each person over time, depending on their circumstances.

In the later part of her journey in the movie, KC combines her studies with dance. Music has become a passion and when she keeps on losing concentration while reading, dancing and music bring a new mood to her. By debunking the established notion of dance for able-bodied, a woman with visual impairment, becomes a nationally and internationally renowned artist. She runs dance and music school or classes for individuals with disabilities. “I lost my sight but I got the vision of my life” (2:28-2:30) functions as a refrain line in the movie.

KC loves to dress up smartly and appear in public events with a confident personality. She is aware of the image that she wants to project to the public. To the remark of Anil Shah, one of the characters in the movie, “You look beautiful today, perfect makeup, eyelashes and dress up”. She replies “I like to be beautiful. Though I cannot see myself, I love persons who regard me as beautiful” (00:09:20-00:09:26). The bitter fact is that she cannot look at people. But she knows that she is always watched and gazed upon. That is why she loves to be “presentable”. The desire to get recognized the way she wants to be recognized heralds a sense of personality in her. This brings confidence to her and inspires many people.

Like KC, Ghimire develops her understanding and energy to use the few things that she could use which are not limited to her impairment. She uses those attributes when she describes her lived experiences of struggles as a marginalized section, exploring the complexity that she has with her family members, with herself and her thinking, and with her gender and agency. She unveils, unfolds, and understands social structure and dynamics, uses her pen as a weapon against those systems, and creates spaces for her imagination, her identity formation, and social justice and changes (Ghimire 132). She adds, “There were only a few things that I could I could make use of, the rest were useless, I could somehow manage to build a bridge that could help me establish a link with the outside world, I can never forget those precious moments where I started filling the pages of my life with golden hues” (49). Not limited to her physical corporeality, she pursues her avenues of understanding the religion, culture, custom, manner, and tradition which are influenced by philosophical values and is determined to “live a life that lends voice to voiceless people. She adds, “I must survive for the benefit of those marginalized persons of the society. This very enthusiasm has kept me going along life's journey”

(69). Launched against the conventional beliefs and superstition, her young mind protested and restlessness inside her, questioned and started a journey along a wider world.

On top of that, she belongs to an economically struggling family. Her parents have no other choice than to accept her as a greater burden in their life. She says “The burden on my parents had increased accordingly because the amount of cooked rice that would meet the requirements of two or three persons earliest would be gulped by myself alone. The cloth that was sufficient for all in the earlier days would be used up merely in getting my dress made” (175). Her economic challenges later on get rewarded with the networking she builds among the scholars and people. But her rise as a writer does not only bring social recognition, her works bring some remuneration and the cabinet passes the bill to offer a monthly allowance to her. Her family lives with another reality about disability, and so do the members of the society Ghimire belongs to.

Ghimire’s case is significant simply for the reason persons change their approach to disability as they see Jhamak rising to become a writer. Medically Ghimire’s “deformities” remain uncured, but socially her position does go through transformation: “Few persons may believe now if I say that I have somehow survived a weight of heavy burden” (1), she begins her book. By the time Jhamak gets recognized the way she expected persons around to recognize her, she is already a writer, whose articles and poems did appear in national dailies and social media got packed with her images. In the beginning, she had no medium to express herself. She has limited persons or family members to interact with. She says, “Had I been born with a son's genitals, I would perhaps have rightfully received priority, who has received a share in everything” (110). She has no voice to make and nobody hears

her. She was not taken as a worth looking and listening person. A mere look at her would send tremors on the body of lookers: “I was merely a living organism” and “Nowhere was there any outlet for my pain” (3). Gender as a major social category sets the course of communication visitors make with her. Her being a girl was taken as a greater problem for the family, and the society expected her to realize it and prepare to cease.

The society these writers and artists belong to act out social relationships inappropriately topersons with disabilities. KC too experiences neither the neighbours understand them, nor do their teachers. Peoples she comes in touch with daily seem to be there to humiliate girls like her. KC is tired that she keeps on taking her to the same doctor. The doctor keeps on reiterating the same thing that she should eat more vegetables; this advice bores her. During a stage show at school, she falls. The media reports it, declaring her ‘blind’. KC's friend, the childhood friend, stops waiting for her. She thinks that walking with her more would also bring additional problems in her life. Her friends in college prefer to play and stay with regular boys and girls. KC feels outcast. The staff and faculties of the college also do not understand her problems. They are trained on how to behave with abled students only. They lack the knowledge and attitude to deal with students like KC.

KC also comes to know that one does not become good friends simply for sharing visual impairments. Her boyfriend in the movie, Manav confesses that he cannot marry because his mother is too adamant that he should marry a normal girl. Manav is afraid that her mother might commit suicide if he does not marry the girl she approves. Manav leaves KC forever. Stronger KC does not take it as an issue. She takes it as a call for freedom, more freedom in her life. She now realizes that she should act out her vision: “My abilities are stronger than my disabilities” (1:24:59-

125:02). Such an attitude towards one's own potentiality is definitely something not known for persons living with normalcy. KC accepts her condition as valid as any normal individual would claim to be. With the new journey, she does not lose confidence, rather emerges as an active being able to carve out passage of life ahead.Murugami defines the self thatpersons with disability as "enabling". Despite having physical impairment, a woman can still "reflect on who she is, whom she chooses to identify with, and what she chooses to do as matters of choice, not compulsion" (2). In a similar manner, KC defines her own self and reflects on her potentiality. She sets out goals for her. She chooses the thing that matters most in her life. She accepts the fact that her boyfriend Manav leaves her not because of her disability but because of the notions of disability his mother, for that matter, the society he comes from follows. KC chooses her own identity to open her organization and ignores and even rejects identities fostered on them as a result of ascribed characteristics earlier. All these are created through the narratives about the self-provided by the society she lives in.

The support and acceptance from her family members status and her struggle and understanding of life to academic success, and opening of organizations situates her multiple and intersecting identities in a privileged position asserting "When I lost my eye, I got the vision of my life" (1:35 minutes) which is a powerful message that the movie conveys. The strong message that the protagonist character adds at the end of the movie by claiming that "how you define life is because of you and you are the rockstar of your life" (1:34 minutes) has been one influential and positive disability narrative that the character has come across through her storytelling or lived experiences.

4.7 Rise of Intersectionality Scholar

Written or created in the years between 2000 to 2020, these books and cinema narrate the intersectional journeyLamichhāne, Ghimire, and KC as scholars, creative writers and artists respectively go through. Three of them live through and under the opinions of Nepali society of the countryside about disability. Lamichhāne in the village of Chitwan, Ghimire in another village of Dhankuta, and KC in Bhaktapur, in the Capital Valley, encounter a society that has survived on ages old and suffocating kinds of prejudices and opinions about persons with disabilities.

Born and raised in a Hindu family and having access to state-led language, Lamichhāne, Ghimire, and KC more or less come from the same economic, religious, and linguistic background. Anthropologist, Om Gurung, states that “Hinduism remains at the centre of state politics, legitimizing the various forms of discourses to authorize its executors” (3). They collectively encounter more or less the same kind of discrimination like stigma, isolation, discrimination, verbal abuse, negative perception, and behaviour in society, publicized by the mainstream media and receive support from state mechanisms. Both Lamichhāneand KC come from a family background that is aware of education, has links and associations with people, and has access to a culture of communication. Despite their impairment, all of them belong to the dominant caste groups that have access to the state system and mechanism and seek those avenues to advance their dreams and aspirations in all phases of their life. Ghimire receives those opportunities in the later part of her life which remain significant to fulfil her dreams.

However, Ghimire being a girl and victim of cerebral palsy goes through a certain state of helplessness and awareness that is unique and different from the one Lamichhānegoes through. Unlike Ghimire, Lamichhāne being a male, does not go

through gaze, bodily perfection, harassment, and abuse in his life. Similarly, Ghimire stays at home in Dhankuta, a small town in the eastern part of Nepal, because of her physical conditionality, she does not encounter racial differences the way Lamichhāne goes through. KC's journey from abled to disabled individual is different from the one Lamichhāneand Ghimire go through. And KC does not face geographical remoteness to access information, education, and association with people. But in all of them, the common theme they bring is transformation in theirlife through the medium of education, language, access and association. Lamichhāne struggles, scores well in his studies, wins scholarships for higher studies at home and abroad, brings changes in his life, and develops opinions about himself and persons with disabilities through higher academic studies.

Lamichhānegrows up at times when Nepal's political transition takes place. As a young school student who wants to explore the world that he is destined to live in, he has no means of support other than education. Transformation in his life starts taking place right after he comes in contact with the state apparatus. The news that there is a government school available for visually impaired students brings a beacon of hope in his life. Lamichhānesums up his journey as a student in a school at Bhaktapur in the following manner: "The second inning of my life was about beginning. In the first twelve years, I spent in the cradle, weeping, playing, and crying. But the journey that I was about to make was for my own better, for my gold future" (36). This journey brings mobility and self-confidence to his life. A kid making a circle around a limited distance in his neighbourhood at Jutpani, Chitwan becomes a brilliant student in a government school at Bhaktapur.

Similarly, Lamichhāneas a scholar has been known globally and has performed an important role in developing policies to support disability movements

across the globe emphasizing the point that persons with disabilities coming from the margin need to be defined as human resources. Individuals whose family culture, and system believe in the importance of education are aware and are committed to creating enabling spaces, affirmative actions to support, positive to handle, dream, can have network, association, and seek opportunities. In his autobiography, one can see the efforts his family members make to create opportunities for education for him. Since his family members have certain associations with influential peoples and organizations, since they belong to a particular linguistic and cultural community, Lamichhāne is in a position to grab the opportunity.

This could be the reason why Lamichhānein his autobiography accepts the intersectional facets, “being affirmative and positive depends not only on an individual's choice or intention but based on the environment he/she lives in. How an individual in childhood is shaped, groomed, and taught based on culture and system. Like other intersectional scholars, Lamichhānegives importance that “we are not assuming the fixed body of knowledge” (*Antardṛṣṭi*128) but we are understanding the cultural settings, context, and social location of everyday lives, by all these intersecting contexts weaving a web with complexities but negotiating with lived experiences, enacting both roles and the nature of oppression and optimism. Lamichhāne too focuses on communication, language, and its importance, he asserts “for visually impaired persons communication is crucial to share and to listen to others and understand, if I could not understand signs and other peoples speaking, I realized how difficult it would be when I stayed in Japan” (128). Lamichhāneprioritizes visually impaired categories mutually associated with listening, hearing, understanding, and responding that overlap and interact with one

another but are not isolated from each other to understand the worldviews of Japan and its society with diverse cultures and systems.

Importantly, Lamichhānein different circumstances has regarded himself as one of thethinkers on intersectionality. Hisexperiences impairment as well as language challenges, and relates his academic world of learning with complex multiple disabilities and identities. He feels that he faces challenges related to his disability but equally with other processes like socialization, association, lingual, cultural, and others. Furthermore, the confidence thathe gets after his ten months of training in Japan sets ground for him to be confident and mature to pursue his future in Japan. From an intersectional lens, he applies his knowledge as an effort to build his confidence and aims to create a society in which his voices about higher education being accessible and inclusive for all in public policies are responsive and address his voices so he becomes attentive to it. In the autobiography, he expresses strongly that "higher education in Japan is also accessible like physical infrastructures as he experienced during his ten months of training and became committed to further exploration for his study" (137). One finds intersectional features not limited to simply adding categories to one another, rather it strives to understand the unique experiences and perspectives at the intersection of two or more social or cultural categories and positions. In receiving the disability services, "in countries like Sweden, and Norway, the services are provided not only based on the "severity of impairment" or based on the card but also on having conversations with persons with disabilities about their needs and priorities based on the social model of disability looking at society's barriers which are more progressive" (152). So, the individual's multiple identities and needs are addressed based on the unique experiences they face in receiving services in developed countries. In addition,Lamichhānediscusses

Matsuda's question, which means that one needs to avoid the narrow focus on one category, mentioning multiple differences without taking them into account. Instead, one needs to start with cross-questioning the categories that come into the fore to read such official, recorded, and unrecorded 'gazes' the individuals belonging to the dominant class have, and expect the members of the marginalized community to associate with such "gazes". Lamichhānedid not want to pursue his higher education on the money provided by the Nepalis living in Japan.

In this context, he also discusses power dynamics and influences of power and agrees that power relations and social inequality have been central to intersectional knowledge and understanding. For him persons who serve by providing scholarships and countries who receive support, so receiving scholarships and debt from other countries based on a charitable approach was not acceptable to him.Lamichhāne, being conscious of the intersectional layers, looks at the nexus of power relation of 'who receives the fund' and 'who provides the fund' how it has been utilized, and how the narratives are legitimized formally.

Lamichhāne understands the political fact that Nepal as a modern state has progressed in providing education for a boy like him and connecting him to a bigger world. He feels the need of state and its mechanism in different forms to explore and represent himself/herself, and comes to realize the fact. He realizes that the need of state apparatus, where individuals like him can prepare for a journey where they can inspire the world and themselves.In *Antardṛṣṭi*, Lamichhāne's scholarly advocacy for educational and policy reforms exemplifies systemic resistance through knowledge production. Thus, while these narratives document oppression, they equally insist on envisioning "crip futures" (Kafer, 2013) where disabled lives are not defined by victimhood but by agency and dignity. In this setting, Lamichhāne's journey from

village boy to internationally recognized scholar exemplifies systemic change through knowledge. Despite systemic oppressions, all text articulates powerful acts of personal and collective resistance.

4.8 Conclusion

The aspirations expressed in these autobiographical narratives are closely connected to the emergence of rights-based movements in Nepal, particularly after the democratic changes of 1990. As Kalpana Jha argues, “the post-1990 public sphere continues to be shaped by patriarchal structures and remains an exclusionary space for women with intersectional identities” (1). She contends that the pursuit of racial, ethnic, and gender equality within Nepal's public sphere is an ongoing and challenging process. The autobiographical works of Ghimire, KC, and Lamichhāneresonate with this vision by documenting their struggles for dignity, recognition, and equal participation. Rather than accepting disability as a marker of limitation, these writers challenge dominant social perceptions and assert themselves as critical social actors. Through their narratives, they demand recognition not merely as persons with disabled bodies but as individuals with agency, voice, and intellectual contribution. Their writings advocate for an inclusive and representative state that acknowledges the rights, identities, and experiences of marginalized communities.

The restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1990 significantly contributed to the advancement of disability pedagogy and rights-based activism. In the educational sphere, schools, learning materials, and support systems for students with disabilities gradually expanded, while the government demonstrated a greater willingness to collaborate with international organizations working on disability rights and inclusion. Within the liberal political environment of post-1990 Nepal, educated and politically conscious persons with disabilities increasingly organized themselves and collectively

advocated for their fundamental rights. Through dialogue and engagement with state institutions, they demanded legal reforms, equal access to education, employment opportunities, social services, and broader human rights protections. These efforts also challenged prevailing stigma and stereotypes surrounding disability. As a result of sustained advocacy, the government appointed twenty-one educated visually impaired teachers across the country. Reflecting on the significance of this development, Kamal Lamichhane recalls, "Sabita Maharjan was one of the teachers who came to teach me in my class" (*Antardṛṣṭi* 69). ForLamichhāne, this was a transformative moment that demonstrated the possibilities created by inclusive policies and social change. Political transformations, therefore, influence not only governmental structures but also educational institutions and the psychological empowerment of marginalized communities. The state and its mechanisms are deeply embedded in citizens' everyday lives, shaping opportunities for inclusion and recognition. While individuals such as KC and Lamichhānegained access to these opportunities through formal education, Ghimire achieved recognition largely through her own perseverance and efforts. Despite the diverse challenges and intersecting forms of marginalization they experienced, all three writers ultimately attained recognition from the state in different ways, illustrating the complex yet transformative relationship between democratic change, disability rights, and social inclusion.

Being women and facing innumerable difficulties and hardships in her life, both Ghimire and KC fight against social normative expectations about gender and disability roles that exist dominantly in Nepali society. By rejecting the existing definition of 'stigma', 'disabled body' as 'lack', and 'noncontributors', they have put new meaning to it and have defined their own spaces and their own identities. Their

strong expression, thoughts, and voices that they speak on discrimination, against the exploitation and injustices prevailing in the society is their revolution within their private and public sphere.

All three autobiographies articulate their pain, injustices, stress, stigma, hunger, revolt, and orthodoxy that exist in Nepali society and connect this expression with the polity. For this, the essence of self in identity formation plays an instrumental role in their lives. Not limited to their disability identity, their multiple subordinate identifiers and categories play a foundation or primary role in bringing the shift in their minds; a paradigm shift of looking their lives differently through the transformations. After realizing the transformation in each individual's life, they shape and frame their arguments in the public sphere through which all of them feel confidence, closeness, and start with casual conversation. These formal and informal conversations have inspired and shaped them to seek space, freedom, liberation, and dignity in their life.

At the end of these autobiographies, Ghimire, KC, andLamichhāne, through their intersectional epistemological essence, assert their identity with dignity and contribute to the society they live in like other people. They have set an example that persons with disabilities are contributors to the family and society they live with the numerous talents and abilities they hold. Families and states need to understand these qualities not limited to their corporeality but with diverse identities, social categories, and capacities they hold in the existing social structures.

All of them, time and again assert a point that Nepali society needs to promote policies to bring changes mindset about the normal body or ideal state of body. They should come out of attitudinal mindset and hegemony that peoples are disabilitiesare less human or inferior to other. They formulate narratives that counter the established

discourse about able or normal bodied in Nepali social and cultural contexts.These writers and artists, directly and indirectly, bring shift in the discourses prevalent about disability. Together, they assert the view that disability is deeply embedded in the social- political history of Nepal as a modern nation state has marched through so far. They collectively seem to accept and realize that democracy and liberal social human values are enabling forces for persons with disabilities. The conservative societykept away from the exigency of creating new discourse on disability. Nepali society, when run by the autocades and dictators defined disability as a kind of pathos. Gradually, some attempts were made to enable individuals with such corporeality to be vocal about their rights.

With the rise of democracy and civil rights movements in Nepal, organizations of persons with disabilities gradually united. As active members of society in its day-to-day format,persons with disabilities defined their rights as well as asserted themselves as potential human resources. As potential human resources, they too can earn, pay tax to the government and perform jobs in offices and home. As the creators of their autobiographies, their lifeintersects, converge, and diverge with many multiple aspects in different time and context. These writers interact with the polity and this interaction brings recognition in their society. Their desire to be recognized in the way they expected persons to recognize them brings new confidence in them. This is how persons around and beyond them change their minds and attitudes towards these talents understanding their capacity, confidence and cosmovision of life.

CHAPTER V: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Storytelling as a Medium of Intersectionalityin Abhi Subedi's *Dreams of Mayadevi*and Manisha Gauchan's *White Cane*

5.1 Background

Storytelling emerges as a powerful medium to share the layered realities of disability, identity and resistance within Nepali society in *Dreams of Mayadevi* by Abhi Subedi and *White Cane* by Manisha Gauchan. Characters in these narratives experience disability not as singular but as intersecting with issues of marginalization caused by war, unequal distribution of wealth and the discriminatory language policies, and identity. Subedi projects Sallerī Sāhinlā's disability as the result of policies the regime followed in the past. He makes this character share his story with the boys who are not aware of the consequences the war might bring in their life. Gauchan's protagonist Bhāśvat too hears several stories that his fellows share about their disability related experiences but he firmly believes that one can acquire identity through having access to education, media and social mobility. Together, characters in both literary works expose the intersectionality between and among disability and social variables such as education, region, language and others.

Subedi and Gauchan's narratives are the message Nepali society is embracing changes on the issues related to disability. They embody values that are just as significant as those upheld by real individuals, Jhamak Ghimire, Kamal Lamichhane and Shristi KC with disabilities. Like their real-life counterparts, these characters take risks and assert themselves within a society that often marginalizes them. Freedom, dignity, and peace in their lives become principles issues. Like Ghimire, Lamichhane and KC, the literary characters SallerīSāhinlā and Bhāśvat challenge stereotypes and deepen our understanding of disability experience.

Sāhinlā and Maya Devi in Subedi's play live with closer understanding of each other as they happen to be the marginalized, i.e. share intersectionalities. The first one is a disabled person and the second one a widow who has lived through extreme pain in life. They understand each other as they live through fears, exclusions and pain. SallerīSāhinlā is an ex-Gurkha soldier. He survives without pension or recognition. He carries fragmented memories and is familiar with stories the government soldiers and guerrilla fighters also live with. He shares the message that war does not end suffering but creates more disabled ones. War victims are forgotten in the long run, they are left to live a marginalised life. Only the elites best of the war, they expand their networks. Common folks suffer all kinds of trauma, disability being just one.

Gauchan wrote *White Cane* in 2013. She herself is involved in the domain of disability movement. In the novel, she fictionalises disability as an intersectional social issue. She narrates not only Bhasvat's disability experiences but defines it as interconnected with pertinent issues such as education, social mobility and access to resources. She presents everyday struggles of visually impaired Bhasvat, who comprehends the social and political changes the nation has undergone. His journey, the story of his life, comes to crisscross several other persons' stories. Out of this crisscross, one finds that disability intersects with class, rural/urban divide, and political activism.

5.2 Resistance against traditional portrayal

Both texts resist the trend of portraying disability as a tragic experience that an individual is bound to go through. They fictionalise disability as part of broader social experience. Bhasvat in the novel experiences blindness as having inaccessibility to physical environments, but this state of experience is sufficient enough to learn and analyse social phenomena. SallerīSāhinlā in the play by Subedi reads his disability

along with the exploitative policies of rulers. Unjust distribution of social mobility betrays “disabled” individuals more than anything else, is the message Salleri Sahinla shares. His experiences align with Nirmala Erevelles’ argument that “poverty disables bodies through systemic exclusions” (26). Readers make the sense that disability intersects with social, political, economic, and existing systemic structures. In both literary texts, characters reject pity and passive victimhood. Instead, they project themselves as politically conscious individuals. Bhāśvat’s priorities in life are access to network, friends, understanding urban settings, background, class, position, and political awareness to challenge ableism and assert his place within society. Similarly, SallerīSāhinlā accepts his disability and tells openly that he is an amputated person; a result of war and he uses storytelling as a tool to reflect critically on the failures of the state and the contradictions of military service.

Patricia Hill Collins uses the term “intersecting oppressions” that individuals living with disabilities in an unjust society have to go through. SallerīSāhinlā and Bhashwat live through similar social situations. They survive the conflict torn society, they understand the ages old feudal social structures, and moreover they are aware their emancipation takes place only after similar marginalized communities feel their rights being addressed.

Similarly, socially marginalised groups feel intersected with each other depending on their ideological and personal priorities. Sāhinlā and Bhāśvat evoke similar as well as different modes of intersectional features that persons with disabilities can feel for each other. Along with education, social class, network, and medium of sharing language play an important role in an individual's life but more is determined by the way they give priority in life. It concentrates on the mode of communication that the literary characters employ in order to explore or exhibit the

intersectionality of the society they belong to. By highlighting the values Sāhinlā embodies, this chapter shows that he emanates from the womb of history of his nation and uses the story of his life in order to spread intersectionality pertinent to Nepali society among the youth facing crisis in their lives.

His stories are not linear; they are scattered, emotional, and tinged with bitterness, reflecting a world were promises of glory collapse into social abandonment. Doyin Atewologun points out that the sense of sharing intersectionality with fellow beings is already an "analytical sophistication" and such act "offers theoretical explanations" of the situation: "Intersectionality is relevant because it helps individuals to make sense of, and work with, the complex experiences that occur at the juncture of these social categories and systems, and the implications therein" (3).

As a former Gorkha recruited in the army force of some unknown nation, Sāhinlā was involved in a terrible war in a place he did not know anything about. Historically speaking Sāhinlā as an Indigenous Nepali and the destinationthat he has been through is very meaningful. Chandra Shumsher Rana (1901-1929), one of the most autocratic Prime Ministers, did send one hundred thousand soldiers to fight for the British Empire during the First World War and the songs of victories and achievements were sung but there was a paucity of data about how many of them died and how many have come home losing their hands and legs. The same thing was repeated in the Second World War under another Rana ruler, Juddha Shumsher (1932-1945). War is not solely about patriotism and victory, it is also about defeat, loss, trauma and persistent struggle for peace and dignity. And, intersectional standpoint asserts listening to those loss, defeat, traumatized stories of war and centring these voices. War needs to be understood through the intersections of loss and from the

margin those who became disabled, displaced and isolated due to conflict. In *Dreams of Mayadevi*, Sāhinlā's role gains deeper significance when read in the context of the 1996–2005 Maoist conflict, during which many victims both combatants and civilians continue to grief and live with disabled identities. They continue for the compensation, recognition, and dignity long promised by the state. Through Sāhinlā, the play gives voice to the neglected and dispossessed foregrounding the multiple, intersecting identities suppressed by the state's mechanisms. His dominant portrayal as a 'victim' in both the play and its critical reflection tends to overshadow other identities and dimensions like soldier, civilian, survivor, rural poverty, disabled affected by war, and national betrayal and all marginalized subjects exposing to the complexities of post-conflict subjectivity.

His character becomes a powerful critique of state neglect and militarized masculinity, exposing how both government forces and insurgent groups instrumentalized bodies like his for political gain, only to discard them afterward. Sāhinlā's narrative tallies with the one Maya Devi carries. First, they share the same cultural milieu. Both of them embody trauma caused by the war. Their suffering is directly connected to the policy the regimes had followed in the past. Both of them are aware that they come from marginalized communities, that is why they need to protect themselves, and solve the issue right there.

Critical disability theorist Nirmala Erevelles points out that "poverty and systemic exclusions disable bodies by denying them access to education, healthcare, services, and political visibility" (26). This sounds true when one considers the experience Sāhinlā's has been through. Sāhinlā had to join the war, not because of his choice but because of the geopolitics. He lost his hand for no reason. His son was killed in the war. His suffering is not merely the result of being old, alone, or poor,

but of occupying a body shaped by overlapping structures of historical violence, systemic exclusion, class-based disparity, and militarized marginalization (18–19). *Dreams of Mayadevi*, therefore, disrupts both nationalist and ableist ideals by using Sāhinlā's testimony to expose how the Nepali nation-building project has long depended on the expendability of certain bodies particularly those marked by war, rurality, disability, and dispossession.

5.3 Story Telling a Process of Healing

Storytelling, within the framework of intersectional theory, is not merely a means of recounting events, it is a process of healing through different layers. They become political and epistemological acts that reveal how identities and oppressions are co-constructed across axes of race, class, gender, ability, geography, and history. Intersectional theorists like Patricia Hill Collins have long emphasized the importance of stories and narrative as a form of "subjugated knowledge produced by those excluded from dominant discourse" (251) and its importance in understanding and healing. In both the literary texts storytelling becomes a mode of healing, resistance against both silencing and simplification. The fragmented, dreamlike structure of *Maydadevika Sapana* begins with SallerīSāhinlā, a man in his old age, with an amputated hand. A few women pass by him. A conversation between and among them exposes Sāhinlā's disturbed state of mind. The memory of his lost son is the cause of his restlessness. As a mourning father and a retired war veteran, he faces both the warring parties. His presence in front of the heavily armed Royal Army, on the one hand, and the 'People's Army', on the other, does challenge the rationality of war. Moreover, his sense of diverse identities and the experiences he holds is meaningful to the context as he tells stories, reflection, his opinions about himself towards society

and heals within himself. Sometimes, Sāhinlā's story telling functions as counter-memory, challenging hegemonic narratives of nationalism and militarized heroism.

Similarly, *White Cane* fictionalises the journey that individuals belonging to the marginalized communities take. Since they are made to feel inferior, and not accepted as normal beings, they are bound to live with fractured feelings and emotions. Their lived experiences become part and parcel of the social conflicts and gaps. Protagonists in both both texts enact what Kimberle Crenshaw describes as an 'intersectional intervention' not only in terms of who gets to speak, but in how stories are told, remembered, and politicized from the vantage point of those positioned at the crossroads of multiple oppressions and those who are not. It also includes the moments how these stories are taken by groups with multiple oppressions in their lives. From Sāhinlā's point of view, he resists the homogenizing narratives of nationalism and humanitarianism. He acknowledges how war's aftermath is lived through interlocking structures of oppressions in his life. Storytelling, within the framework of intersectional theory, is not merely a mode of recounting experiences but also understanding narrative, a means of articulating the lived realities of individuals who occupy multiple marginalized positions and how they further react to it. With Sāhinlā's testimony, the play enacts intersectional storytelling in what Crenshaw terms 'intersectional interventions' as Sāhinlā expresses his feelings, agony, pain and awareness but the state actors including others do not listen to him and he just heals in his own way later on chanting the mantras in his own languages. So, it is how they are reshaped, who is seen, who is heard, and how their stories are structured, remembered, politicized and constructed.

The narrative structures themselves of Subedi's fragmented dreamscape and Gauchan's grounded realism reflect the multiplicity and fragmentation that mark

intersectional experiences, stories and healing processes that the characters express in different forms where disability is not only a personal identity but a political condition. In *White Cane*, Bhāśvat, on the other hand, reflects the post-conflict spirit of resistance and activism. Written in the aftermath of the 2005 People's Movement, it captures the growing awareness and advocacy around disability rights in Nepal. Bhāśvat represents a younger generation who challenge the idea of being dependent or inferior and whose story is not limited to isolation of suffering, or challenges with impairment but of healing, empowerment through self-representation and activism. It utilizes testimonial realism to portray the everyday negotiations of a blind man in a post-revolutionary Nepal.

Through the storytelling mode, *Dreams of Mayadevi* and *White Cane* challenge dominant scripts through healing that propose new ways of imagining justice, recognition, and belonging for persons with disabilities in Nepal. Thus, storytelling within intersectional theory is about telling, healing, representing self and being self-transformative. As Foucault suggests, "Our task is to speak the truth about ourselves" (*The End of Normal* 113). And, speaking truths about ourselves is to accept the fact that norms and values are human constructs. Life views on disability too are the products of the social mind set. Listening to Sāhinlā takes on the history of the nation, the policies the rulers passed and practiced, the social gap between and among communities and so on. Since he is the victim of the war that he fought for the nation that he does not know much about, he becomes the history of suffering of hundreds of thousands of Nepali youths fighting such war. His stories reveal the cracks in the system that Nepali society has functioned by.

Amy C. Wilkins, the disability scholar argues that "persons tell each other (and themselves) in a range of different contexts, including social movements,

organizations, policy-making, and dissertation interviews, where socio-cultural meanings are accessed, reproduced, and challenged" (183). Similar observations can also be made on Sāhinlā's storytelling act. Since he shares his stories with the youths fighting each other without knowing the intention of their leaders and officers, this very sharing becomes meaningful both politically as well as humanistically. He tells the Young Guerilla and the Soldiers that youths in the nation have been betrayed historically. And, the post-war disillusionment is sure to become much heavier than the war itself. He points out the important fact that the number of amputated youths increases in the post-war contexts.

These further reveals that inculcating an intersectionality-oriented perspective on being a member of the society is a very difficult task. Sāhinlā realizes that he is from an Indigenous community and was sent to fight a war that did not have to do anything with his community makes him a critical being. With him, one can sense that both the ideologically indoctrinated Maoist cadres and the militarily trained Armed forces live with a hypothetical sense of class and nationality. The fact that they cannot understand the message Sāhinlā is trying to communicate with them makes one realize the fact that arousing intersectional bonds or critical perspectives is not as easy as it is often thought to be.

Once they got recruited into the British force, here too they were not given equal status as their British comrades were subject to. The intersectional aspect that the Indigenous youths carried with them set their destination that was beyond their power to tackle. Neither were the indigenous youths taken as significant forces in the making of the nation at home. Mulbir Rai asserts, "For the British, Ranas proved to be a 'boon' in terms of manpower for the imperial war efforts. In return, Ranas received praise, honour, and decorations from the British, and above all, the Ranas obtained a

guarantee of Nepalese sovereignty from Britain" (33). The autocratic regime gained the favour of the British Empire at the cost of pushing emancipation at the corner. Hundreds of thousands of Nepali youths set out to try their luck in foreign lands. The double layers of intersectional identities and oppression came to exist even in the workplace. Within these laden of history, power relations, proximity, and contributing to war, Indigenous youth's endowment has not been addressed yet. It is through Sāhinlā the intersectional stories are told, shared and narratives of the voiceless are voiced.

Similarly, Bhāśvat's story telling in *White Cane is* no single layered, his story telling surrounds himself and with others like family members, peers, and community figures - whose positions highlight additional layers of marginalization. He parallelly weaves multiple narratives, alternating between personal reflections, dialogues, and moments of collective memory. With his story telling, he loves outgoing and feels comfortable in making relationships with girls and shares his stories. The more friends he makes the more stories he comes to hear and know. With Sima, Bhāśvat comes to know the story of youths joining the 'Peoples' Army'. Bhāśvat gets closer to the victims, with the girls of marginalized communities. Himself a boy born in the Chhetri family, he was "left in a ditch by my mother" (33), and he grew up in a community. He does not know who his parents are. One of the villagers, a senior lady, said, "Poor him, his mother is a daughter of Chhetri's parents" (96). At the age of nine, he was adopted by a woman named Marjari from England. He was brought up in a childcare centre. Economically supported by the English woman, and on top of that he is living with visual impairment, he knows and feels the pain of being excluded and shares his story.

There is a desire in Bhāśvat to be free and prove himself an enlightened individual, who is recognized by his intellectual capabilities, not by physical attributes. Trina Grillot puts the idea forward that being disabled does not mean that all individuals living with disabilities feel the same and expect the same: “To say that the oppressions are related does not mean that they are the same. It is dangerous at the least to expect that experience. To expect so is disrespectful in that it wipes out the true, lived experience of that group in exchange for one's own, self-serving fantasy” (27). Bimoli, on the other hand, is driven by fantasy. Since Bhāśvat and she come from a similar childhood experience, she takes for granted that they are sure to make a perfect couple. But her story does not bring Bhāśvat to her fold. Bhāśvat prefers personal freedom over the hegemony of conformism. Bimoli’s sense of intersectionality is more fantasy-oriented than ideologically guided.

Contrary to Bimoli, Sima’s story is rooted in the history making processes of the nation. A former guerrilla and a victim of brutality from the Army as well as from internal political rifts in the party, Sima represents the youths who had to bear all kinds of raw pain, from being raped, tortured, and humiliated with false charges and so on. Her father died in the crossfire between the Maoist’s ‘People’s Army’ and the Royal Nepal Army. Bhāśvat feels closer to Sima as both have experienced the edges of life. Comparing multiple relationships that Bhāśvat feels with Sima with the one has for Bimoli, one comes to realize the message that the novelist seems to be sharing with her readers. Intersectional understanding is ideological not a mere realization of sharing similar corporeality. Similarly, Bhāśvat feels closer to Juno who runs a social organization ‘Chhahari Nepali’ that works to support women caught in trouble. As a social activist, she feels free with Bhāśvat and shares her stories.

Highlighting such spirit of storytelling between and among individuals belonging to the communities of social margin, the intersectionality scholar Thomson argues, “Disability coming-out stories, for example, borrow from gay and lesbian identity narratives to expose what previously was hidden, privatized, and medicalized to enter into a political community” (“Integrating Disability” 21-22). The relationship between Juno and Sima is a story about such a relationship. Sima, a rape victim and someone employed in the sex trade and coming from an economically marginalized family, naturally does not have anything to offer to patriarchy. Juno’s approach to Sima brings a certain peace and meaning to her life and shares their stories. The way they listen and understand each other’s stories reveals a fact that intersectional approach is more listening to personal narratives of loss, grief, unheard stories, oral histories, memoirs, films, and community practices that often capture the nuanced interplay of identities rather than statistics or theory.

Both texts, though stylistically different, insist on an intersectional understanding of disability demonstrating that the struggles and aspirations of persons with disabilities cannot be separated from larger social structures. By centering marginalized voices through intimate, embodied storytelling, both texts disrupt dominant Nepali literary traditions that have historically marginalized disabled, rural, and impoverished subjects. Storytelling thus becomes a narrative device to shape the political act of claiming space, identity, and justice, embodying what Crenshaw envisioned through her theory of intersectionality: the power of narratives to reveal structural violence otherwise invisible to the dominant gaze. By centering persons with disabilities not as symbols of pity or heroism, but as full, complex beings, Subedi and Gauchan expand Nepali literature through story telling elements. These elements act as resistance and reclamation, offering new forms of belonging beyond dominant

nationalist and ableist imaginaries shaping the narratives by amplifying more inclusive and diverse voices.

5.4 Amplifying alternative understanding

Storytelling embeds different voices, perspectives, and experiences that are often marginalized, overlooked, or silenced by dominant narratives. By doing so, it uncovers alternative ways of knowing and understanding social realities. It is not just about adding or listening to marginalized voices but is about fundamentally reshaping how we understand truth, knowledge, and power through alternative understanding. Alternative understanding is a political and epistemological tool that challenges dominant paradigms and recovers and amplifies suppressed voices through various means. Intersectionality, as articulated by scholars like Kimberle Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, recognizes that systems of power that do not act independently but intersect to shape complex, layered identities with story-telling. Sāhinlā's stories in the play discuss mainly two things: he was taken to fight a war that he did not know its origin. He did not know who the persons whom he was asked to kill, and what was the reason that he was killing them for. The second thing he says is that he was sent home without any compensation. Once he lost his arm, he was sent home like damaged goods. No sympathy and honour were given to him and he shares this story. His presence makes the audience realize that war does no good to the people, to the soldiers, and so on. He also adds alternative understanding that it is not only the war that has been going on in Nepal but also all the wars have certain absurdities, and the absurdity is that the soldiers have to fight without knowing the reason. Sāhinlā as a form of alternative epistemology. He conveys both the warring parties to be interpretative but in vain. Patricia Hills Collins emphasizes how Black women's storytelling, oral traditions, and lived experiences form an alternative epistemology

that challenges Eurocentric, male, able dominated knowledge systems (251). Collins argues that these stories are not supplementary, but central to rethinking and reimagining what knowledge is and whose perspectives shape it from an alternative mode.

In doing so, *Dreams of Mayadevi* refuses nationalist amnesia and articulates a counter-history - one where memory becomes a form of resistance and recognition is demanded from alternative locations. Leslie McCall states, “The intersection of identities takes place through the articulation of a single dimension of each category. That is, the “multiple” in these intersectional analyses refers not to dimensions within categories but to dimensions across categories” (1781). Sāhinlā indirectly says that there are a lot like him in Nepali society, another lot of them serving the Army and yet another force serving the Maoist Party. He highlights all these across categories collectively telling the youths fighting for their state, masters, leaders, job givers, and so on who do face a similar destiny. So, it is equally important to know the sections that one is representing and how they respond to these sections.

Sāhinlā puts his opinion that the officers and the commanders send their subjects, the young youths, into the war without giving information, with no consent, and with only one message being “enemy and other” and in this process, common persons get killed for no reason. He provides his alternative views that persons during war might not be comfortable but they have no choice, by exposing such an arbitrary nature of war, with the help of Sāhinlā, the playwright seems to be exposing the propaganda and manipulation of the situation that the leaders and state heads impose on the warring youths. Sāhinlā shares the bitter message of ignorance with village women: “Listen, girls! The forest I died in was unknown to me. I did not know anything about it” (Act I, 06).

They push him to a war. As a veteran, he gains experiences, stories, vision of life, and shapes stories. In this regard, Amy C. Wilkins argues that stories we tell shape our alternative understanding and shape both how we appear to others and how we think about who we are, create collective identities, mobilize political movements, and can be a resource used to enact political change. Stories provide cultural resources in everyday life to navigate and give meaning to intersectional identities that are both chosen and imposed in different contexts (176).

In this context, Sāhinlā, having endured the long-term consequences of war, does not view his life through the lens of loss, impairment, or deficiency. He does not grieve the loss of his hand, nor does he frame his disability as a source of shame or personal tragedy. Rather than emphasizing bodily difference from alternative understanding, Sāhinlā reflects on the multiple layers of his identity-as an uneducated village boy, a soldier, a war veteran, a disabled returnee, and a father who has lost his son to conflict. His character thus amplifies alternative understanding of dominant narratives of heroism and victimhood by embodying a quiet, dignified critique of state neglect and militarized nationalism.

Similarly, the conversation between Sulabha and Bhāśvat is uncommon and creative with an open mind to understand each other. Sulabha's intervening nature causes a rich and powerful male to get angry and share their feelings. She loses her life. Bhāśvat, from the very beginning resonates with her with the fighting spirit of Sulabha. He feels affinity and close listening and connecting with her. Though they do not share a similar gender; they share ideological views, feelings and opinions on human emancipation from alternative mode. The same thing can be said for visually impaired individuals who do not necessarily mean that they are not without any

prejudices, illusions, and preconditional thoughts. Since nobody in the world is safe from committing errors, persons with disabilities cannot be exceptional.

Barbara Ann Cole, an intersectional scholar, highlights the relevance of intersectionality perspectives within feminist studies, believes that "intersectionality as a feminist theory can offer important support for methodological approaches as narratives, which permit the asking of "new" questions and the different connections and alternative understandings" (566). She further emphasizes that "Its ambiguity would seem to work well with personal experiences approaches within which contradiction and complexity abound, and where the opportunity to ask "one other question" and to explore different and individual connections would seem appropriate" (566). Unlike others, Sulabha's fighting spirit brings her closer to Bhāśvat, and Bhāśvat 's detached mode of looking at the issue further draws Sulabha closer to an alternative mode. They feel each other not as life partners but as co-thinkers, the makers of discourse and society from alternative understanding and they amplify it. With such an ideological common spirit, they understand disability and life in a different way not limited to themselves as one individual.

Juno, another friend of Bhāśvat, "reveals that she does not have genuine emotion or desire for boys. She declares that she is a lesbian. She can be the best friend but not the girlfriend to Bhāśvat" (123). Almost at the end of the novel, she opens a secret that she is in love with Sima, the rape victim and sex worker, the friend of Bhāśvat. Such intersectional affinity and connection between the characters open up their opinions from alternative thought that individuals from the margin mostly manifest their feelings, or express or limit. Only few open up with critical sensibilities through their ideological opinions and amplify them. As Barbara Ann Cole describes

they ask new questions, differ or build common, shared or alternative understanding in their life.

5.5 Diversity and Self

Sāhinlā, disabled and ex-Gurkha soldier, embodies the confluence of disability, poverty, aging, and national betrayal. His physical impairment; a missing hand is not presented as a personal tragedy, but as a consequence of state-sanctioned violence and exploitation. His identity as a veteran with disability is layered with his status as a rural, aging, unrecognized citizen; someone who fought for a country that has discarded him. His disability becomes a site through which we understand the diverse historical marginalization of bodies that have been used and abandoned by nationalist projects. Similarly, Bhāśvat, a young man navigating both his blindness and the socio-political restructuring of post-2005 Nepal, represents a diverse kind of subject: one who uses education, community engagement, and activism to resist ableist marginalization.

Bhāśvat's is not any isolated identity rather it is diverse. He has a job, acquires mobility and becomes equipped with the latest technologies meant for a person like him and is confident in his expression. He keeps on traveling where he meets Diya, a married woman, a mother, and a divorcee who is free and independent and does not want to live with the identity of the traditional order. With Bhāśvat, she shares her personal story and secrets and both are open to issues on life, sex and relationships. This brings them closer. In no time do the readers notice that they become friends very fast. Their attraction to each other happens naturally and fast. Both seem to accept self and other's diverse realities and identities without any conditions and expectations. Thomson argues that "As a category of analysis, disability provides fresh ways of thinking about the diverse complexity of embodied identities. Feminist

disability studies define disability as a vector of socially constructed identity and a form of embodiment that interacts with both the material and the social environments" ("Feminist Disability Studies" 1559). Bhāśvat and his life partner become a "critical" couple and as a relationship, they do not create any hierarchical order in the self and diverse identities they hold.

Sāhinlā projects himself as a story and he wants to be realised by the Maoist Army and the Royal Army. He wants to share the message that every youth fighting for his or boss and officer shares the same beak future. Both the warring parties are expected to see their future and realize the power structure by looking at Sāhinlā. A man with an amputated hand, a disturbed mind, and eyes that have gone dry, Sāhinlā stands as the metaphor for the future face of the war the boys are fighting. It is then he makes one of the most powerful dialogues in the play:

"Your fate will be no different than mine" (Act III, 45).

Sāhinlā's sense of self is constantly evolving and reconfiguring himself through multiple identities; time, space, and relationality are all important in identity formation and achievement of the self-concept, the power lies in his vision. He invites them to see life and the conflict from his perspective. Indirectly, he seems to be exposing the nature of power that causes youths to kill each other in a similar line of thought Michael Foucault makes an observation in the passage below, "From the master of discipline to him who is subjected to it the relation is one of signalization: it is a question not of understanding the injunction but of perceiving the signal and reacting to it immediately, according to a more or less artificial, prearranged code" (*Discipline and Punish* 166). Sāhinlā is making both parties aware of the nature of military and political structure. He is making them aware of how power percolates and how military structure becomes synonymous with power itself. Sāhinlā wants to

develop an intersection between him and the soldiers at war. He is making them cautious that soon they can be living a life that is going to be more or less similar to his in essence. By asking them to listen to him, by sharing the message of peace, he is also expecting them to listen to each other and understand the trap that they might get into.

Through Sāhinlā, the play captures well the overlapping of diverse sections in a society going through war. Moreover, he makes them aware of life in its day-to-day format, something they cannot avoid and bypass. He asks them to realize the importance of the here and now, instead of getting brainwashed and getting carried away with propaganda, he asks them to open their mind and feel the class they belong to both opposing forces live in. Sāhinlā reflects: “Forget about me. My story happened in a foreign land. Think of the time when both of you: hunters and hunted will be living together” (Act III 46). Sāhinlā is asking them to think about the interconnection between and among the members of the warring parties. He asks them to think about life in its bare form. War no matter where it is fought in no matter when it is fought creates a difficult and critical situation for people. This is what he repeatedly reminds them of. He pleads with the fighting youths to realize that war does no good for them. People in the post-war period found it very difficult to live together. They need to share the same space and time. No messiah comes to rescue them. There will be another humbug of competition for power and exploitation starts taking place. As a veteran as well as someone who has lost an arm and his only dear son, his observation of war emanates from the embodiment that he has been through. Humanity in everyday format is the most important thing. Coming together and helping each other’s need of modest order, something required to let the bare form of life maintain its prestige and beauty is what is needed most, he suggests.

White Cane begins with a question that people often ask Bhāśvat, a visually impaired educated boy with a bruised family history: “Do you dream too?” (1). This is a gap between individuals like Bhāśvat who are living with visual impairment and the ones who do not have to. With its storyline, the novel seems to be telling its readers that an individual like Bhāśvat uses his mind, for that matter, creativity, critical capabilities, and mode of perception in a different manner than the ones with visual power. Going sightless is not a choice, but once it becomes life, such individuals set out to learn a whole gamut of creative modes of expression and perceptions about self and the diverse realities around them. Individuals like Bhāśvat seem to be saying that there is no problem with him or persons who cannot see, he is fine in his mind and does possess the power to express himself very well. He challenges ableism, saying individuals with eyes and proper sight need to educate and train themselves to communicate with a person like Bhāśvat. By insisting that he is "fine in his mind" and fully capable of self-expression and evolving self, Bhāśvat exposes how ableism is rooted not in biology but in the social aspects and constructed values. His voice reflects the growing assertion in critical disability studies that difference does not equate to deficiency, it equates with diverse full participation that requires not assimilation but acceptance of diverse identities, realities, systemic change in how all these diversities are defined and valued. Sāhinlā and Bhāśvat foregrounds the disabled diversity as lived, embodied, and socially constructed. Disability in these texts is not a singular identity, but a constantly evolving intersection of biography, politics, culture, and resistance.

5.6 Access and Ethnicity

Sāhinlā’s suffering as well as power emanates from his indigenous cultural background. First, he is deeply connected to nature. He perceives air, forest and

mountain as the dwelling space of his ancestors. Second, he finds himself cut off from the centralised state. Third, he is aware that people in power speak different languages and hold different ideologies than the ones his community and fellow members live with. And, lastly, he chants mantras and hymns of his native order.

Sāhinlā is restless as the war is going on. He had lost his arm during a war like this before. The history of the country where he lost the part of his body, he does not know much. What he knows is that the war is the moment when individuals like him become the victims, and the people in the top echelon become more resourceful. He had endured the horrors of combat and expected it not to come to his village. But the war to his shock has arrived at his doorstep. This brings him out to the space in front of the warring parties. He warns both the Army and the Maoist guerrillas. When nobody pays attention to him, he turns to the divinity and calls for protection and mercy. Both the People's Army and the Royal Army interrogate him with equal suspicion and hostility. Each side suspects him of spying for the other:

> Old man, you better shut up. Whom do you work for? All this information you carry, what for? To whom do you pass all this information? Who do you work for? Report us straight. Otherwise, prepare for punishment. (Act II, 35).

This intense interrogation further reveals that intersectionality is a realization, a political consciousness. In the dramatic scene, Sāhinlā tries to point out the existing intersectionality between and among the youths including himself. Though they belong to two different camps, deep down there is interconnection between and among them, they belong to the marginalised community, they are being exploited, they are going to be the looser, the elites are never going to free them from the propaganda - these are the message that Sāhinlā wants to share with them. But glued

to their ideologies and faiths, the soldiers as well as guerrillas keep on regarding each other as their enemies.

This refusal to engage with his appeal reveals a deeper fragmentation among the powerless during a time of political polarization. Sāhinlā's attempt to communicate the multiple layers of his identity indigenous, disabled, bereaved, and formerly patriotic is rejected, illustrating how difficult it is for individuals and collectives to grasp or accept the complexities of intersectionality during conflict. As an experienced sufferer, Sāhinlā understands how power operates hegemonically, reducing individuals to fixed roles and denying them their full humanity and diversity. Both the Maoist cadres and Royal Army soldiers fail to see themselves as subjects shaped by power structures; instead, they act as agents of power, enforcing their commands wi

This difficulty in acknowledging and acting upon the intersectional nuances of individual lives is a central concern of Charmika Samardiwakera Wijesundara, who writes: "The ethical commitment therein is to deliberately construct and navigate the self in a manner that is true to the commitment to destabilize oppressive hierarchies and articulate them as the time, place and context demand, departing from the premise: What person am I?" (204–205). Sāhinlā is trying to emancipate the youths, he expects them to wake up with realization. But he is not responded at the same level of understanding.

The war is playing havoc out there in the forest and the village. Mayadevi tries her best to stop it. She returns home and dreams that she is the same Mayadevi: the mother of Prince Siddhartha. In the dream she gives birth to a child, the same Siddhartha. Soon the dream ends, Sāhinlā appears on stage. Subedi as a playwright brings this past and the present in a very dreamlike fusion. Sāhinlā with ritualistic

gestures and movements takes out flowers and raw rice grains and recites a mantra from the Mundhum, a sacred text of the Kirat people, the indigenous inhabitants of eastern Nepal. For Sāhinlā, being is not defined by violence or political power, but by a deep-rooted indigenous wisdom.

Sāhinlā reflects: “I wonder if you have become a wild spirit now. Do you still wonder in the mellow light exuded around the dusk here? Do you still wonder among the brooks and rivulets whispering in the wind here?” (Act V). He evokes the spirit that is believed to travel from the liminal trail that is neither trodden upon by gods nor humans. It is the third world, the world of spirit, where they reside forgiving each other and waiting for another round of fresh life. With all his different layers of sections of understanding of the world view about real life, the man-made map of human life collapses into a single piece. The social context we live in is shaped by the intersections of systems of power and oppression. It is here no one dares to kill another because he holds a different view. Importantly, he talks to them as if they were out there, listening to him. This is the worldview of *Mundhum.*

Through the lens of indigeneity, Sāhinlā embodies a metaphysical worldview in which plants and mountains, birds and humans, spirits and souls are interconnected through a sacred bond. His actions and words reflect a deep cosmovision rooted in Mundhum, the sacred text of the Kirat peoples through which he articulates the interconnectedness of all life and the spiritual logic of being. Through his intersectional identity: as an indigenous elder, a disabled veteran, and a grieving father, Sāhinlā gains direct insight into this holistic vision, which transcends binaries such as enemy and ally, right and wrong.

Playwright Subedi uses Sāhinlā as a conduit for a higher moral and spiritual truth, suggesting that despite the diversity of identities, traumas, and perspectives,

what ultimately matter is the ability to reframe narratives by recognizing power, shifting it, and embracing truth, love, and forgiveness. In contrast to others in the play, Sāhinlā does not cast blame on soldiers or guerrillas for the violence. He draws philosophy from Mundhum metaphysics. This vision on life and world differ from the ones the warring parties have been carrying and the political and propagandist message they are disseminating. The first offers peace and forgiveness as the solution whereas the other sees revenge and termination as the ultimate goal.

Subedi, through Sāhinlā's dramatic acts, exposes the way officers and leaders manipulate the lives of their juniors and cadres. While doing so, he shares the message that intersectionality between and among youths across parties, classes and gender exist. He acknowledges such intersecting identities and experiences. For this, he develops Sāhinlā not as a fundamentalist or communalist but as a metaphysical figure. To this protagonist, Subedi provides world views which transcend party propaganda and military jingoism. As an amputee and a victim of war and structural violence, this protagonist exposes the message that an individual cadre or soldier does not choose conflict; the power mongers behind the scene create such a tense situation that youths do not realise their intersectionality. The state and insurgent machinery both manipulate the youths in the play.

Sāhinlā evokes the spirit of the ancestors of the fellow members, who are believed to be living in the forest, sky and rivers. With this evocation, the play infuses indigenous epistemology to counter the dominant narratives of people. On the one hand, there is a military and politicla force which divides people into structures and groups. On the other, there is an individual who does not see the gap between one and the other, the living and the dead, the past and the future. His understanding of people in power is based on his lived experience. He was exploited, as he was forced to join

the war, and once in the war, he was not exploited financially. He does not ask for personal justice. He narrates his pain as he understands that power has always or does always exploit youths. them as fellow participants in his life-world. Sāhinlā subverts the dominant ideologies or narratives of power through his story, indigenous wisdom and intersectionality. His presence in the play is a powerful reminder of how indigenous identities offer alternative visions of history. With him, the playwright says: he is “forgotten by the armies he once served and abandoned by the state that had no place for the wounded and broken” (“Dreams of Mayadevi” 78). This statement encapsulates the multiple exclusions that define Sāhinlā’s life not merely as a personal tragedy, but as a structural reality. Subedi uses him to underscore the entangled oppressions of ethnicity, economic precarity, and militarized violence. Sāhinlā’s stories affirm the viewpoint Patricia Hill Collins with the following statement that individual disabled is a subjectof “simultaneous operation of multiple systems of oppression, particularly those involving race, class, and ethnicity” (227). Sāhinlā’s predicament is the result of historical hierarchies and systemic violence. His being a Kirant by indigenous background is more than a cultural signifier.

In contrast to Sāhinlā, Bhāśvat's social positioning in *White Cane* expands to a greater social sphere. First, he comes from Khas Arya community, thus expressing through language is not a problem for him. Since he is exposed to the issues, he meets individuals from diverse backgrounds. He discovers intersectionality through forming friendship, and sharing each other’s stories. A particularly telling moment in Bhāśvat ’s narrative is his encounter with Bimoli, a childhood friend who, like him, is disabled. When Bimoli proposes intimacy and possibly a romantic relationship, Bhāśvat rejects it outright. Despite their shared experiences, Bhāśvat rejects them. His stance reflects a deeper understanding of intersectionality, i.e. it is not a mere

romantic phenomenon, but a deeply ideological experience. Bhāśvat' critiques Bimoli not on personal ground but on her essentialist understanding of disability. This aligns with Tina Elisabeth De Schauwer, Goethals, and Greet van Hove's view that "an anti-essentialist approach is useful in terms of providing contextual and detailed accounts that illustrate complex social relationships, dynamics, and multiple realities" (88). Bhāśvat comprehends the issue in a more enlightening manner than his friends.

Bimoli is a victim at multiple levels. She is a victim of having a charred upper part of body. Second, she is a victim because she lives with the false assumptions that shared disability naturally fosters romantic bonds. This mode of understanding is stereotypical. On the other hand, Bhāśvat articulates a critical consciousness that recognizes intersectionality as fluid, context-specific, and liberatory rather than obligatory. Bhāśvat critiques such essentialist understanding of bound between and among disabled individuals. Instead of living with such one-dimensional, stereotypical understanding of the issue, Bhāśvat supports intersectionality views on disability.

Bhāśvat sees his visual impairment not as an obstacle in understanding the history of his nation, politics and governance, the subjects of concern for all. He is aware that there are a lot of Nepalis awaiting emancipation, his personal emancipation does not make any sense without bringing or transforming the existing structural inequalities. Bhāśvat does not regard personal adversity as a determining thing. He sees the problem originating in governance. He comprehends disability in Nepali society as subjects of the discourses promoted by the urban, upper-class males.

Bhāśvat's life story becomes meaningful as he keeps on meeting individuals with his or her own history. Bhāśvat finds himself closer with the individuals who take adventures for freedom and identity, for political liberation. He does not buy the

ideas that individuals with disabilities should form solidarity. He lives the ideas that only individuals who are aware of social intersectionalities can understand themselves and the society. He takes disability beyond medical models and calls for social, political, and cultural understanding of the issue. The novel does not project disability as a purely medical subject, instead they define italong with ethnic identity, and socio-political inclusion. Bhāśvat access to social mobility takes place once he becomes part of the network. Donor's support first provides him access to education, then his access to education and network of activities provides his social mobility a greater dynamism.

These literary works offer powerful critiques and alternatives to dominant national and ableist discourses by making visible the intersectional exclusions faced by persons with disabilities from ethnic minorities and their resilient narratives of survival and resistance.

5.7 Agency and Hope

Bhāśvat's identity is formed through his encounters with individuals living with ableist, classist, and gendered prejudiced discourse. But he earns agency via higher education, networking with resourceful people. The 'white cane' he learns to navigate life and community itself becomes a symbol of both visibility and empowerment; a tool that redefines his presence in a society accustomed to invisibilizing disabled bodies. He as a disabled subject actively reshapes his social narrative. His journey refuses to be confined within the traditional "tragedy" or "charity" models of disability, illustrating what experts call "empowerment within a matrix of domination" (Collins 224).

Similarly, Sāhinlā in *Dreams of Maya Devi* is a former Gurkha soldier. He suffers because he is born in the marginalized ethnic community. He is poor because

he was exploited by the people in power. He is looking for his disappeared son in the ongoing conflict. Yet through storytelling his act of remembering and narrating the character reasserts his dignity and historical presence through agency. Subedi, thus, offers a vision where "Even without pension, even when nobody remembered, I still had my stories. I lived in them" (54). His story retelling is powerful. His stories expose several layers of intersectional sections and myriads of lived experiences. Subedi portrays Sāhinlā 's marginal figures not as passive victims but as critical narrators of Nepali history. Sāhinlā's decision to narrate his truth to Maya Devi becomes a political act of self-authorship.

Bhāśvat in *White Cane* navigates through social exclusion, and finally emerges with the realization that "the white cane symbolizes both independence and the reclaiming of public space by a previously invisible body" (Gauchan 45). Bhāśvat, while moving across Kathmandu, feels the edges of crowded streets with his cane and imagines, "the city is opening up, street by street" (Gauchan 45). He projects himself as an agency says, "Empowerment emerges from the struggle to find a voice and gain self-definition within intersecting oppressions" (Gauchan 112). Pointing out the similar nature of rise of consciousness, Thompson states, "The disabled body forces a critical rethinking of dominant narratives of progress, independence, and perfection (19). Bhāśvat redefines his independence through his white cane. Sāhinlā narrates dignity despite systemic erasure. In the same vein, Sāhinlā's poverty and Bhāśvat 's class barriers intersect with disability oppression. Both texts ultimately frame intersectionality not merely as a site of oppression but as a source from which resistance, new forms of agencies with hope that are continually imagined.

5.8 Conclusion

Storytelling is at the heart of both texts. With story telling the characters aim to communicate the message. In *White Cane,* the story telling of personal lives brings Bhāśvat and others together and they understand each other. With the story, he wants to share the message that war does no good to ordinary people. No boss or officer is going to help one in the post-war period. Sāhinlā pleads with persons for greater thoughts and wisdom. As an Indigenous man of the eastern part of Nepal, i.e., the Kirant community, he chants the mantra from the *Mundhum,* a sacred story of human race and civilization. He seems to be concluding all tensions with a single theme of humanity: we need to love each other to coexist together. The novel projects the journey that the characters belonging to the margin take, and importantly even the characters belonging to the mainstream are guided by the political spirit of speaking for the voiceless or the victims of society. The novel points out the rise of the politically liberating nature of intersectionality in Nepal in the context of post-2005 political context. These narratives reveal that experiences of disability are never singular but intersect with other axes of marginalization, including war, class, language, access, regional and cultural identity.

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Amplifying Disability Diversity and Emancipation

6.1 Summary

Together, the writings *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns, Antardṛṣṭi, Blind Rocks, Dreams of Mayadevi,* and *White Cane* collectively challenge and demystify dominant narratives of disability that are often rooted in pity, silence, impairment, victimhood and societal exclusion. Access to resources and networkcreate capacity to claim voice, agency, and independence is unevenly distributed and deeply structured by power relations. The ability to locate and mobilize resources is shaped by class, age, caste, gender, geography, language, and institutional mechanism, as much as by disability itself.

Person with disabilities find themselves becoming vocal about their corporeality as well as society once they have access to education, exposure to network of organizations, access to intuitions and state apparatus. With this, they cease to accept disability as personal tragedy and look out of the box. They define it as a socially produced condition. They start speaking for their rights, dignity and bring awareness in public. With them, the family members learn to be more sensitive, inclusive in their attitude towards person with disabilities. Members from the neighbourhood develop more pragmatic and politically correct behaviours. Institutions become more responsive to them. With access to public spaces, they bring transformation in the prejudices they have had with disability. Importantly, when persons with disabilities become self-dependent and resourceful, the existing social discourses about disability gradually become more progressive and inclusive.

Ghimire, KC and Lamichhane emerge as successful individuals. Their success is relational as it sends the message far and wide. Individuals living with similar corporeality and mindset are inspired to engage with knowledge, community, and institutions. Moreover, persons with disabilities dismantling the existing social, cultural, and political barriers paves the way for changes and transformation at collective level. More importantly, the society executes policies in order to empower such individuals. Instead of defining individuals in a single linear forms and formats, people start engaging with the question: Who has the ability to locate and access these resources? Why do some individuals reach out and harness power whereas others remain dependent?

This dissertation reveals that dominant ableist narratives have long oscillated between two limiting tropes: the figure of the dependent, non-productive subject and the heroic individual who 'overcomes' impairment through extraordinary effort. Both frameworks depoliticize disability by obscuring the social, historical, and structural forces that shape lives of persons with disabilities, thereby denying individuals their agency, relational identities, and social complexity.

6.2 Findings

Given the socio-political history of Nepal that the writers whose works have been discussed above come from, their writings, i.e. narratives become the social sites. The centuries old centralised state craft under the autocratic regimes one after another are also responsible for creating the unjust society for the persons with disabilities. Mostly, the access to resources has still remained centralised. Persons with disabilities had to wait till the mid 1990s to get a school for them. Importantly, the rise of INGOs and disability rights did emerge in the years right after the

reintroduction of democracy in 1990. Thus, democracy is the friendliest regime to marginalised communities including person with disabilities.

The dissertation exposes that the centralized polity is responsible for the kind of social stigma that these writers as well as literary characters go through. Their access to information, institutional support, and social networks become possible only through questioning the mainstream politics, structure and bureaucracy. Their mobility, empowerment, and self-representation become possible through arduous effort and deconstructing the existing phenomena. More than disabled, they are the exploited beings. Since persons with disabilities in the past were not taken as worth consideration at policy levels, and the decision-making power lied on elite or urban networks, the emancipation for disabled individuals was postponed.

The dissertation reaches to the conclusion that it is only after studying disability vis a vis Nepal's centralized governance, unjust social hierarchies, structural inequalities, one can comprehend the issue pertinently. It reclaims that disability needs to be taken as a political and social category. Only by decentralizing power, redistributing resources in an egalitarian manner, and providing inclusive spaces for disabled individuals of all backgrounds, Nepal as a modern nation can liberate individuals living with disabilities.

These autobiographies and literary fiction foreground location and geography as intersecting issues. Disability is experienced based on economic and spatial marginality. KC has comparatively more infrastructural accessibility than Ghimire and Lamichhane as she was born and raised in the capital Valley. The characters in the literary works contest the disabling effects. They become active in comprehending the social and political issues around.

Similarly, language emerges in these texts as a critical axis of power rather than a neutral communicative tool. Since Nepali has remained the language of the state for centuries, it is natural that native speakers develop fluency in it. Compared to other literary characters, Sahinla uses language that is imbued with his local faiths and metaphysics. His marginalization is due to the language his officers abroad and the rulers at home speak. Language is thus inextricably linked to identity and power, shaping social perception, treatment, and positionality.

Since the mainstream media operates in Nepali language, it is natural for Ghimire, KC, and Lamichhāne to become vocal. Importantly, they become directly and indirectly engaged with mainstream media as their narratives reveal. Ghimire's life and work, for example, have received sustained coverage in national outlets such as *Kantipur*, which frame her resilience and literary contributions as exemplary. Similarly, KC and Lamichhāne have attained public visibility through interviews and appearances across FM radio, television, and print media.

Bhāśvat has effectively utilized media platforms to advocate for disability journeys, raise awareness on disability rights, reach audiences both within and beyond Nepal and reclaim space for alternative modes of knowledge production. In contrast, Sāhinlā, coming from an indigenous community and lacking access to dominant languages and media regimes, engages in orality and ritual, chanting mantras from the *Mundhum* to honour the spirits of those lost in conflict. His method of communication, though culturally rooted and spiritually potent, falls outside the epistemic and representational norms of modern media and thus remains largely invisible in the public sphere. Therefore, media access and by extension, media recognition is deeply conditioned by language, geography, caste, and cultural capital. While for some it becomes a springboard toward national recognition and

empowerment, for others it remains an unreachable platform. The role of media in disability advocacy, must be interrogated not only for its power to amplify but also for its limitations in representing the full spectrum of disabled lives in Nepal.

Ghimire, KC and Lamichhāne as individual talents and SallerīSāhinlā and Bhāśvat as literary characters embody the political and social ethos of post-1990s Nepal, a period marked by democratic transitions, identity movements, and growing public discourse on inclusion. They are not simply voices of personal resilience, but also represent distinct social locations marked by caste, class, gender, language, and geography that shape their access to opportunity and recognition. Each of them emerges from a particular 'situatedness' within the Nepali social order, one that has long been structured by entrenched hierarchies and exclusions. Navigating these structures, they have had to push against systemic barriers in order to claim space and visibility and emancipate themselves.

Since Nepal as a modern nation state has been embracing liberal cultural and political values, it needs to regard emancipating disabled individuals as an equally important project. It is in this political and social context, the rise of disabled writers and scholars as well as literary writers picking disability issues has risen. These works share the message that individuals living with disability know where the problems are, they know where to engage with the society, and know how to articulate their voices. They come from various social backgrounds but their readiness to claim space defines their identity. Together, they expand liberal discourses on disability. They establish a point that disability needs to be studied with the help of social science theories. Their battle may vary since many things depend on their social and economic backgrounds, language and ideological belongings as discussed earlier, but importantly they expose

a hidden fact that truths about disability are arbitrary. Liberal discourses on disability are sure to replace the archaic ones responsible for making individuals life difficult.

The literary characters in the two texts too directly question authority and embrace liberal democratic values. They too reflect the broader ideological climate of post-2005 Nepal. Figures such as Ghimire, KC and Lamichhāne operate within a context shaped by rights-based discourses and activist networks. As public actors, they strategically occupy political and cultural spaces to amplify their voices. They deliberately become part of the networks and earn the role of agency.

Collectively, these narratives affirm disability as an inherently political discourse and a site of emancipation. A synthesis of *A Flower in the Midst of Thorns*, *Antardṛṣṭi*, *Blind Rocks*, *Dreams of Mayadevi*, and *White Cane* reveals disability as a non-static, relational identity constituted through intersecting axes of gender, class, caste, conflict, geography, and structural exclusion. Collectively, these texts contest dominant cultural narratives that frame persons with disabilities as dependent or passive, instead foregrounding lived experiences of resistance, self-articulation, and collective emancipation that extend beyond the self to similarly marginalized others. Each disrupts normative expectations, producing knowledge rooted in marginalization that interrogates dominant ideologies. Rather than mere representations, these works function as dynamic sites where social meaning, identity, and justice are continuously negotiated.

6.3 Conclusion

After dealing with detailed interpretation and analysis the selected text *Jeevan Kanda Ki Phool*, *Antardrishti*, *Blind Rocks*, *Mayadevika Sapana*, and *White Cane* can highly be interpreted from critical disability and intersectional theoretical lens.All the selected text contributes a core message that disability is not a singular or static

identity, but it is shaped through intersecting forces of social identities like gender, age, class, caste, war, region, access and associations. These works powerfully challenge dominant cultural discourse that often depict persons with disabilities as ‘dependent’, ‘tragic’, or ‘passive’. Instead, they foreground their lived experiences from different positions, and status towards resilience, resistance, and self-articulation.

From Jhamak Ghimire’s radical authorship to Bhashwat’s rejection of ableist norms and from the embodied political critique of SalleriSanhila to the realist interventions in *Blind Rocks* and Lamichhane’sthese texts constitute an evolving canon of critical disability narratives in Nepal. Each story disrupts normative expectations and engages in what Patricia Hill Collins calls ‘subjugated knowledge’-knowledge born from marginalization, yet capable of dismantling dominant ideologies. These stories and narratives project disability narratives not as mere representations but dynamic sites. With them, one can comprehend the formation of discourse on disability. Together, they share the message that disability in Nepal is part and parcel of national political, military and social history. Disability alone does not make sense; understanding it along the state is a must.

These narratives assert a fact that disability is lived and experienced differently by different individuals. But this difference needs to be seen through the social variables the particular individual is part of. Someone coming from a marginalized community is bound to experience it differently than the one who has the access to resources. These narratives help one to share the Nepalis’ experience of disability to a global level.

6.4 Contribution to the Knowledge

This study makes a significant contribution to an interdisciplinary discussion in disability studies and it has given a new interpretation in the selected primary texts within the context of new scholarship. As an interdisciplinary literary text, this dissertation opens avenues in the English department to integrate disability studies, cultural studies, critical disability studies and intersectional theoretical mode in academia. Lastly, this research builds synergy to link academia with policy intervention for social transformation in the society.

6.5 Recommendations

This dissertation has focused on discussing disability studies in Nepal which could highlight diverse experiences of persons with disabilities and critically analyse the growing body of literature available in Nepali context. It also recommends scholarly discourse challenging ableism, intersectional theoretical lens, comparative study with global disability narratives in disability research. It scales up deeper investigation on cultural studies, indigenous knowledge and local forms of care, stigma, and community-based support mechanism for the further research. Additionally, analysis on emerging digital platforms and visual media reshaping the representation of disability could open up new avenues for academic inquiry and social discourse. Further, future research may particularly focus on the writings, narratives, and lived experiences of diverse persons with disabilities from Indigenous communities, foregrounding local contexts, cultural identities, and multiple intersectional realities within Nepali society.

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