

## **I. Sharon M Draper's *Out of My Mind* and the Concept of Disability and Normalcy**

This study attempts to discuss the concept of normalcy and resistance to it in *Out of My Mind* (2010) by Sharon M. Draper from the perspective of disability studies. It analyzes how normalcy creates the binary between normal and abnormal in the society and how one can resist normalcy; overcome its stigma and lead his/her life towards happiness.

The lead character of the novel, Melody, an eleven year old girl, has Cerebral Palsy due to which she cannot speak, move, feed and dress herself, nor can she communicate her desires. Her motor skills are limited to whatever her thumbs can manage. This is the reason she often suffers from injustice and discrimination in her 'Inclusion Class'. Most of her teachers and her friends often excluded and marginalized Melody. They, either ridicule for her disability, consider as if she is non living thing or invisible entity, or compel to live her in isolation. Although, with the help of his supportive parents, an encouraging and inspiring neighbor, and a caring personal mentor she is able to overcome the discrimination and resist normalcy.

Melody's disability made her a target for others. The people with disabilities are regarded as the burden, misfortune, and the cause of shame even for the family as well for the society. Melody, despite the negative image determines to achieve her dream and live a happy life as so called normal people do. She is an inspiration for many disabled people who hide themselves within their homes, cannot raise their voice for their fundamental right, nor can fight against their situation. Thus, the main concern of this research is to study Draper's *Out Of My Mind* through disability studies as disability study is the only suitable literary tool to study this text.

Disability is often seen as a disadvantage which does not allow a person to do

certain tasks or actions which are part of everyday life. It is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movement, sense activities. World health organization defines disability not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. To overcome from the difficulties they require interventions to remove environmental and social barriers.

Disability studies generally refers to the examination of disability as social, cultural, and political phenomenon. It focuses on how disability is defined and represented in the society. From this perspective, disability is not a characteristic that exists in the person or a problem of the person that must be fixed or cured. Instead, disability is a construct that finds its meaning within a social and cultural context. Disability study challenges the way in which disability is constructed in society. The critics of disability; Lennard J Davis, Erving Goffman, Larita M. Coleman, Rosemarie Garland Thomas, and others go very far from pity and empathy and seek equal space for the people with disabilities.

We all are living in the world where the concept of norms prevails. Melody's lines, "Folks got finished making a list of my problems . . ." (2) clarify how people are hegemonized by the concept of norms. Norms are such aspects that categorize us in different ranks. Whether it is education, politics, or power everywhere norms are becoming crucial part to give the positions of us i.e. 'able' and 'disable'. For Lennard J. Davis:

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 the constructions of disability as on the construction of normalcy. I do this because the "problem" is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is

constructed to create the "problem" of the disabled person. (5)

Normal is often defined as the complete absence of abnormal. In dealing with pathological process on across-sectional imaging often encounter cases in which the anatomic imagine appears normal, but the underlying functions or metabolism is needed abnormal. Some concept of norms must have existed in any society. That is the reason Melody's father at first also expects a normal baby as reflected in these lines, ". . . he was waiting for me to turn over and sit up, and walk" (3). Melody's father like other people in the society is also guided by the normal mentality who wants his child as perfectly normal. His desire, i.e. his child to be turned over, sit up or walk shows his normal attitude. In this sense, Davis further argues, ". . . some concept of the norm must have always existed. After all, people seem to have an inherent desire to compare themselves to other. But the idea of a normal is less a condition of human nature that it is a feature of a certain kind of society" (9). By taking the demarcation line with the privileged norms of any society people are categorized in the group of 'able' and 'disable'. People try to compare with other and form an idea about it.

Another concept which is inter-related with the construction of normalcy under the disability studies is the concept of stigma. Stigmatization and the concept of normalcy exist associatively between each other. However, these both terminologies are different in their position. The former is a kind of mark of disgrace whereas the later is a medium of the base through which something or somebody is stigmatize in any society.

Stigma is a mark of disgrace associated with the particular circumstance, quality, or a person. It is a social, cultural and psychological construct which is understood as a kind of negative values and attributes of the society. In other words, it

is a social process or related to personal experience of anticipation of adverse social judgment about a person or a group. Having physical disability, Melody went through stigma sometimes which is signaled by these lines, "They ask one another to play, but no one's ever asked any of us" (13). In any society, stigma has a negative connotation and its discrediting effects are very adverse. For Erving Goffman:

. . . sometimes it is also called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap. It constitutes a special discrepancy between vital and actual social identity for example the kind that causes us to reclassify an individual from one socially anticipated category to a different but equally well anticipated one, and the kind that causes us to alter our estimation of the individual upward. Note, too, that not all undesirable attributes are at issue, but only those which are incongruous with our stereotype of what a given type of individual should be. (204)

Stigma is a social disapproval of the difference, it is a social construct. A single attribute may be stigmatized in one society where as the same attribute may be desirable in another society. Also the degree of stigmatization might depends upon how undesired the difference is in a particular social group. Melody's mother, who loves and supports her unconditionally, is even stigmatize sometimes after seeing the discrimination of society to her daughter. That is the reason she does not want one more child with disability which can be clear from these lines, "I couldn't bear it . . . I'm so scared this baby is going to be messed up too!" (32). A social categorization that legitimates the negative attributes because differences are highlighted than similarity.

No people in this world are exactly alike. The variations in shape, size, skin, color, gender, cultural background etc can be stigmatized at any time. According

Goffman, "Stigma is equivalent to understand differentness"(217). First, any human differences serve as the preliminary requisite to be stigmatized. Secondary, to be stigmatized is an inescapable fate as this process depends upon cultural and historical background. Coleman says, "No one really ever knows when he/she will acquire a stigma or when societal norms might change to stigmatize a trait he or she already posses" (226). In this sense, the stigmatized people are always marginalized from the mainstream community because they do not relate the norms of specific culture and thus possess an undesired difference from what the norm anticipates.

In this regard, it has become necessary to understand the concept of the norm in the prevalent society which considers people with disabilities as a burden and because of which anyone can be stigmatized at any time. Melody's doctor thinks she is a burden to her parents so he suggests her mother, "You can also decide to put Melody in a residential facility where she can be cared for and kept comfortable. . . . You and your husband can get on with your lives without her a burden. In time, her memories of you will fade" (11). The concept of normalcy is again a social phenomenon. It is rather shaped by cultural, historical, and social forces. Goffman opines, "Normality becomes the supreme goal for many stigmatized individuals until they realize that there is no precise definition of normality except what they would be without their stigma" (225). Melody's desire to be normal is expressed though her words as, "I wish I could use crayons. I'd draw a rose" (50). A person is stigmatized because he/she fails to represent the majority of the population. This is why Lennard J. Davis says, "The concept of norm, unlike that of an ideal, implies the majority of the population must or should somehow be part of the norm" (13). In this way, the various extremes of human traits as tallness, shortness, height, intelligence, ambitiousness, strength and many more would have been seen as errors. Such

differences are therefore stigmatized in the long run. In a way, the construction of normalcy divides the total population into standard and non-standard sub-population as well as conceiving norm and non-norm.

Disability studies comes upon the control, discrimination, domination, and exploitation of the people with disabilities, challenges and defies the low expectations and the negative attitudes that the society always has towards disability and the people with disabilities. Disability study turns up side down the social discourse of disability fabricated by the so-called normal majority and questions the construction of normalcy. Hence, disability study reverses the hegemony of normalcy and institutes alternative ways of thinking about disability as visualized in Draper's *Out Of My Mind*. It is neither the lack of ability nor misfortune rather it is the diversity of human.

*Out of My Mind* by Sharon M Draper has been interpreted in many ways. It's an inspiring book as it shows how to live ordinary and happy life despite being disabled. This text has been studied and analyzed from various perspectives by different critics, such as story of a strong girl, a story of self confidence, family support, awareness of the special need, among other.

Gunawan Tambunsaribu in his research *The Psychological Approach of Melody* talks about several characters and their importance in Melody's life. He writes their support and inspiration turned her into happy and successful person like other. He writes:

Mrs. Diane Brooks is Melody's . . . strong mother. She supports all Melody's wishes to get education like a normal kid. Mrs. Chucks Brook is Melody's . . . calm and beloved father to Melody. He supports his handicapped daughter in a good way. Miss Violet is Melody's neighbor who takes care of her while her parents are working. . . . She is a best care-giver for Melody. Miss Catherine

is Melody's mobility assistant . . . good supporter for Melody in her every activity at school . . . . Mr. Dimming is one of Melody's teachers at school who finally allowed Melody to take part in a quiz team. He is a professional as well as a disciplined teacher. (11)

The above lines clarify that the main reason which gave courage Melody to overcome from her disability is all about love, care and support from her dearest one. Her parents support her in every situation. Her neighbor Mrs. V takes good care of Melody in the absence of her parents. Her aide Miss Catherine supports Melody in every school activities. And Mr. Dimming, one of the Melody's teachers, gives her a platform to show her abilities in the form of quiz competition.

Tambunsaribu, further writes about Melody's capability, and her access to the technology that is quite helpful to enhance her lifestyle. She is very talent and intelligent than other normal children in her school which is further increases by the machine which she named Meditalker. In this context he writes:

Eleven-year old Melody has a photographic memory. Her head is like a video camera that is always recording. And there's no delete button. She's the smartest kid in her whole school . . . There's a machine, she names it Meditalker, that can help her to tell what is in her mind. At last Melody has a voice by the help of the Meditalker. (11)

Melody has a unique power i.e. her memory is photographic because of which she cannot forget things. It seems her head is recording each and every thing and even there is no delete button in her head. This is the reason she is considered as one of the smartest kids in her school. Although she cannot speak nor can she write, the machine that is called Meditalker helps her to speak. It gives her a voice in order to communicate her wishes and desires.

Similarly, for Karen Coats with the support and inspiration of the neighbor, Melody is able to learn things as much as possible. She works hard to make Melody smart and successful. According to her, "The neighbor woman who takes care of Melody while her parents work is determined that Melody will learn as much as possible, and she works tirelessly to expand the girl's vocabulary"(282). Her neighbor's effort to make Melody smart is really adorable. She helps Melody to increase her vocabulary and learn words from diverse field as much as possible. Coats further talks about the communication device that makes Melody speak and communicate with her teachers and classmates. She writes, "Eventually, with the help of a communication device, Melody manages to show her teachers and classmates just how much she knows" (282). Despite being extreme intelligent, Melody is unable to express her thoughts and ideas to her teachers and to her classmates. But, the communication device ultimately gives her a voice and helps her to communicate her thoughts and desires whom she wants to tell.

Gunawan Tambnsaribu also considers Melody as a strong girl. According to him, "Melody knows how to control her behaviors by behaving as a good kid and keep her anger inside of her because she does not want her parents get angry with her. She sometimes hides her sadness in order to show other people that she is a strong girl" (20). Melody is really a strong girl who hides her sadness and tears to her parents as well as other people in order to make them feel she is the strongest one. She does not want her parents become sad or angry with her that is the reason she controls her behavior and behaves like a good girl.

Indri Mariska Safitri and Kurnia Ningsih believe that Melody is a girl with self confidence. She is such a brave girl who is committed and dedicated to her study whatever the situation is. They write, "She has self-confidence. She participates in



class actively. She makes friends. She behaves friendly to her friends and does not even hate the people who underestimate her"(86). Because of her self-confidence Melody can take her class actively and make friends. They further argue, "She does all of her efforts to convince the teacher and her friends to give her the chance to participate in the competition. She fills her mind with the commitment that she can do it although she is dragged down and underestimated" (82).Melody faces most difficult problem i.e. to convince her teacher to let her participate the quiz competition however, she never gives up her wish rather she is more determined and confident towards accomplishing her goal i.e. to participate the quiz competition and win.

Hence, in the overall review Melody Brook's character, a central character of Sharon M Draper's *Out of My Mind*, has been analyzed and interpreted by critics in diverse perspectives. Indri Mariska Safitri and Kurnia Ningsih interpret Melody's character as self confident girl. For them, her self-confidence leads her to the success and happiness. Whereas, Gunawan Tambunsaribu and Karen Coats deals with the love and care, support, inspiration, and encouragement that Melody gets from her parents as well as from her neighbor. Because of that she is able to live a good life. Though, various critics approached this novel from various perspectives, it has not been studied from the perspective of disability studies yet. Disability study explores disability as a more socio-cultural construction and questions the social formation of normalcy or ability and the way of taking somebody or something as disabled or disability.

Thus, this research focuses on Melody's strong determination and resistance against the concept of normalcy which always has derogatory and discriminatory attitudes towards the people with disabilities. This is the reason that people with disabilities always stigmatized and hegemonized like Melody exhibited as, " . . . I'd

never be able to tell anybody what I was really thinking" (24). But with the help of proper support, opportunities, and encouragement, she can defeat and overcome the stigma which is clear from her line, "I was not going to sit at home . . . . I was gonna show up and let everybody know they didn't beat me" (120). Therefore, the novel shows how Melody's becomes stigmatized and hegemonized from the concept of normalcy and how she resists normalcy as well as overcome stigma of normalcy. What are the factors that serve as strength for Melody to fight against normalcy with full of confidence.

This study is divided into three different chapters; the first chapter includes general introduction of normalcy and its stigma. The second chapter is the methodology along with textual analysis which provides the theoretical modality of disability studies that explores and resists the politics of socio-cultural discourses of disability fabricated by the so-called normal majority. It also shows Melody's courage, struggle, perseverance, revolutionary thoughts, and access to technology and physical infrastructures helps to reverse the false ideology of disability and to defeat the stigma. And the final chapter concludes the entire study with the revelation of radical thoughts and actions of Melody that question the 'normalcy', 'disability', and reverses the negative attitudes and the low expectations that the society has towards disability and the person with disabilities.

## **II. Melody's Perseverance to Resist Normalcy and Defeat Stigma in Draper's *Out of My Mind***

Sharon M. Draper in her novel *Out of My Mind*, portrays Melody as a strong and courageous girl who challenges and defeats the false ideology of normalcy by rejecting its supremacy and hegemony. By constituting counter-discourse of normalcy and disability through struggle, determination and dedication, she raises hope and confidence within the people with disabilities to resist normalcy and overcome its stigma in order to live a happy and successful life with dignity. She gets inspiration and encouragement from her family as well as from her well-wishers to protest the discriminatory attitude of the norms.

Melody's struggle and resistance begins from her early childhood days when she becomes unable to make her parents and other people understand her wish but her determination and desire make her fight the situation and draw the attention of other. Challenging the prevailing assumption of normalcy, Melody, in spite of all the difficulties surrounding her disabled body, becomes able to overcome the stigma and lead her life towards success and happiness. She does everything like so called "able-bodied" ones, she becomes an inspiration, a role model and a motivator for number of people, particularly the people with disabilities.

Melody challenges the low expectations and the negative representations that the society and culture often has towards disability and the people with disabilities. Sufferings of the physically disabled people are more from the social attitudes towards disability than from their individual condition. That is the reason that Melody engages herself in numerous remarkable activities which are thought to be an unusual performance for disabled in the society. In order to negate the "normalcy parameters" which are constructed by the normal majority, Melody watches several TV shows,

listens music, keeps pets in her home, goes school, participates in class actively, takes part in the class activities, plays vocabulary increasing games, travels across the places, among other. By doing such activities she shows her determination to challenge the authority of the so-called normal society. Melody reverses the "normalcy paradigms" constructed by the society and culture which marginalizes people with disabilities as other, inferior and weak who cannot perform the tasks in comparison to normal. Her self-confidence and determination made her strong, active, and indifferent to the consequences.

Similarly, Melody's resistance against the discriminatory society can be seen in her courage to go school, participation in the class actively among so-called normal classmates, determination to take part in the quiz competition, and so on. The discriminatory society does not behave humanly to the people with disabilities. They are treated as inhuman which leads to alienation, disjunction and fragmentation often for a life time, and is more profound. The so-called "normal" people often stare and mock at the people with disability. Therefore, Melody challenges and defies all inhuman treatments upon the people with disabilities through self-confidence and talent. The society refuses the public affair, such as education, health, economy, communication, equal opportunities and so on to the people with disabilities, but Melody crosses all boundaries and acts as the able-bodied.

Despite her disability, Melody is more aware and conscious about things that are happening the world around. She is quite updated regarding the everyday news and incidents and tries to figure out the problems and their consequences and even tries to find out the solution of those problems. This shows her ableism and smartness that those so called "able-bodied" one. However, Melody was prevented by the doctor, who was driven by the concept of normalcy, from attending a mainstream

school due to her physical disability when her mother takes her to the doctor to confirm how smart Melody is. Having physical disability Melody is regarded as mental retard which discourages Melody and her mother to get the education. This is the harsh reality of our society where the person with disabilities always considered as blunt, fool, and out of mind. Society usually judges the person with disabilities from their perception of Normalcy.

However, people with disabilities can challenge those narrow concepts, defeat those discriminatory behaviors and struggle to overcome the binary situation if they are given proper support and opportunities. They become smart, successful, and live a happy life if they get inspiration and encouragement from their family as well as from the society. Melody has strong support and encouragement from her parents that is the reason she is strong enough to resist discrimination either by doctors or by the teachers or by her classmates. Her parents are very helpful and responsible and even ready to fight the society for the sake of their child no matter she has disabilities. Their trust gives her courage to oppose the ideology of the so-called normal society. Thus, the people with disabilities if provided proper support, motivation, and care they can raise their voice against societal discrimination and resist the prevailing concept of normalcy.

Disability studies is a radical field of study that claims its space in contested areas, traces its existence, and justifies the assertions in the form of discipline. For centuries, people with disabilities have been an oppressed and repressed group. People with disabilities have been isolated, observed, written about, operated on, instructed, implanted, regulated, treated, metaphorized, stigmatized, stereotyped, institutionalized, and controlled to a degree probably unequal to that experienced by any other minority group. The discrimination and prejudices against the people with

disabilities leading to their marginalization as well as the marginalization of the study of disability. People with disabilities make up the largest minority throughout the world. They are considered more invisible than other groups. The body in its variation is metaphorized, publicized, co modified, stigmatized, normalized and abnormalized. Disability studies explores disability as a mere socio-cultural construct and questions the social formation of normality or ability and the way of taking somebody or something as disabled or disability.

Critics of disability express their radical ideas about the othering and ill treatment of the people with disabilities and dismantle the established notions of disability fabricated by the so called normal society. With their strong voices and views, they revolt to overthrow the society's deep-rooted negative attitudes towards disability and the people with disabilities. It is obvious that the problem which disability studies foregrounds are not the person with disabilities and the way normalcy is constructed to create the problems of the disabled person. No one on the earth is similar to our real human bodies which are exceedingly diverse in size, shape, skin, color, texture, structure, function, range and habits of movements and development and they are constantly changing. So human body cannot be essentialized or idealized. Yet we do not absorb or reflect this simple fact in our society and culture instead we idealize the human body. Our physical ideals change from time to time but we always have ideals. These ideals are not just out appearance; they are also ideals of strength, energy, proper control of the body and so on. We are continuously bombarded with images of these ideals.

Constructing normalcy is the seed of problems. In a so-called normal society some are considered normal as other as disabled on the basis of their physical appearance. That is the reason, the kids in Room H-5 of Spaulding Street Elementary

School considered as other and deviant and because of this they always discriminated by the teachers who have driven by the ideology of the norms. In this sense, Melody says, "People didn't really expect the kids in H-5 to learn much anyway. It was driving me crazy! Room H-5 always gets the big old leftover computers that the other classrooms no longer want" (20-50). Society assumes people with disabilities as useless and fool. As a result, most of the teachers don't want kids in H-5 to learn much. They even provided old and almost useless computers left by other classrooms. This shows the discriminatory behavior of the society towards the people with disabilities. Thus, the feeling of being discriminated makes Melody out of mind. In this context, Lennard J. Davis argues that to deviating from "normal" is to be an "abnormal". The demarcation line between the so-called normal people and the people with disabilities became the tool for oppressing the disabled. He says:

The concept of a norm . . . implies that the majority of the population must or should somehow be part of the norm. The norm pins down that majority of the population that falls under the arch of the standard bell-shaped curve. . . . "the bell curve", became in its own way a symbol of the tyranny of the norm. Any bell curve will always have at its extremities those characteristics that deviate from the norm. So, with the concept of the norm comes the concept of deviations or extremes. When we think of bodies, in a society where the concept of the norm is operative, then people with disabilities will be thought of as deviants. (13)

In the above texts Davis argues how the term normalcy functions to define what disability actually means. People those who do not meet the criterion of normalcy paradigm viewed as the people with disabilities. To have disability is to be an abnormal, to be the part of "other". So, the problem is not with disabilities but the

problem lies in the way normalcy is constructed to create the problem of the disabled person. Here, it is clear that the psychological aspect of disability is more severe or destructive than the particular condition of disability. Therefore, it is more easy to cope with the physical conditions of disability than to deal with the attitudes of normal people towards disability and the people with disabilities.

The hegemony of normalcy divides the world into two extremes i.e. normal and abnormal. As a result, people with disabilities are othered and marginalized in every aspects of life such as social, educational, health, economic, and so on. The lack of access to equal chances cuts them off from their unalienable rights. They are degraded, subordinated, and metaphorized world wide. Melody deals with societal rejection of disabled individuals from participating in social activities. She talks about how her classmates refuse to let her participate the quiz competition only because she a disabled girl and she is from the special room which is clear from these lines, " 'She can't be on the team,' I hear Clair whisper to Jessica, wrinkling up her nose. 'She's from the retard room!' "(78). Being a disabled girl and belongs to Room H-5, Melody is not allowed to be on the team for the competition. It shows the hegemonic condition of Melody's classmates who think disable individuals do not have any right to involve in any social activities. People with disabilities should not expose themselves in front of the society rather they have to limit themselves within their house. Regarding this Davis says, "One can nevertheless try to imagine a world in which the hegemony of normalcy does not exist . . . (2). The world where we live is the world of norm where the idea of normalcy is prevails. We can never imagine the world where hegemony of normalcy does not exist. Everyone tries to be normal. Every cultures or traditions assume that a person must meet certain criteria to meet normalcy parameters such as he/she must be able physically, mentally and



functionally. However, we can reverse the hegemony of norms by developing awareness regarding disability issue and by building the alternative ways of thinking about the people with disabilities.

Melody attempts to challenge the traditional mentality towards disability and the people with disabilities as inferior and weak. And she establishes herself as successful and vital person to institute alternative ways of thinking about disability. Melody revolts against the social discourse of normalcy and disability through her self confidence and courageous activities. Unlike the intention of the so called normal majority she performs the actions in bold manner which is unexpected and miraculous. She involves herself into struggle, resistance, determination, and dedication to perform the tasks which are not expected to be done by the people with disabilities. Her every attempt is an attempt to challenge and defeat the cruelty of normalcy. Although, her body is stuck within the wheelchair and she cannot move her body except thumbs, she has very active and incredible mind. She is very bright student in her whole class as well as in her school. When she is born, her parents are worried as she do not fit into the so-called normalcy parameters. She is born with Cerebral Palsy. Cerebral Palsy is the condition where a person cannot do daily activities such as, speak, walk, eat, go to bathroom, and so on. In this condition his/her motor skills are limited.

There are two states in cerebral palsy i.e. in one state a person has cognitive impairment which affects his/her intelligence. Whereas in other state, a person may have extreme intelligence and memory. Melody belongs to the second state as she has extremely intelligent mind and she is very confident about it. In this context Melody opines, "Our team hasn't done anything special. They don't need to. They have me" (91). In this way, Melody talks about her intelligence and talent despite her physical

condition where she is unable to do daily activities. She further tells about her mental state. According to her:

"I probably knew the words by heart . . . The words to every single book my father ever read to me are forever tucked inside".

. . . I'm ridiculously smart, and . . . I have a photographic memory . . . I remember the toll-free number from every infomercial, and the mailing addresses and websites, too. . . I know the names of the actors and actresses of all the shows, what time each program comes on, which channel, and which shows are repeats. I even remember the dialogue from each show and the commercials in between. (6-7)

The above text proves that the smartness and the capability of Melody who can remember millions of words .Whatever she hears ones that is saved in her memory.

So she considers herself smart as she can remember each and every thing some of them are undesired either. Though she extremely smart and intelligent, she is considered as stupid and dull as she does not fulfill the desires of norm. This makes her parents worried about their daughter. Here she says, "Mom bringing me home from the hospital—her face showing smiles, but her eyes squinted with worry "(2).

These lines show the anxiety of Melody's parents as their child does not match the so called normalcy parameters. She further explains, ". . . A lot of my parents' friends had been scared to even touch me . . ." (18). In this way, Melody expresses her experience as being deviant and other. She feels discrimination from her early childhood days. This concept is supported by Davis as, "When we think of bodies, in a society where the concept of the norm is operative, then people with disabilities will be thought of as deviants . . . have a non-ideal status" (13). These lines clear that the concept of normalcy treats the people with disabilities as abnormal and with

nonstandard status.

Society has given the tag of normal and abnormal or able and disabled to the person. When the child is born it is expected to be born with a physically perfect body i.e. with two hands, two legs, and all things normal but when Melody is born with cerebral palsy, she is regarded as other and abnormal as she does not meet the normalcy parameters constructed by the society. For them, a person who doesn't match the parameters of normalcy he/she cannot live a good and successful life. To some extent, Melody's parents are also influenced by this parameter so when she is born they are not happy and they are worried for her. They have no idea about her future. When they bring the baby home, they are worried because they don't expect the baby with disabilities. Perhaps they have a desire to have a normal child. It shows the concept of normalcy categorized the people with disabilities as weak, inferior, and thinks they cannot do anything successfully in their life.

For a person who was born with disabilities like cerebral palsy, it is not easy to live a happy and successful life, but Melody does. She deconstructs the concept of disability as inferior through her determination as well as struggle. Her determination can be reflected in these lines, "I studied at school every day with Catherine, after school every day with Mrs. V, and every evening at home as well. I reviewed words from all the levels of my board. I practiced spelling long words and matching facts and dates. I made up my own games" (74). Melody's dedication to learn terminologies from various disciplines shows her struggle to challenge the concept of normalcy for considering people with disabilities as fools and dull. She not only shows her determination but also makes herself smart and updated to fight against the difficulties.

The so-called normal society and culture treats the people with disabilities as

second class citizens and even non-human beings. In this sense she shares her experience, "I guess the question I get asked the most, in a lot of strange variations, is: "What's wrong with you?" People often want to know if I'm sick or if I'm in pain or if my condition can be fixed . . ." (74). Here she shows the mindset of the so called normal society that considers disability is a disease. People often misinterpret the condition of people with disabilities as that can be fixed. For Melody, her disabled body is not her weakness rather it is an opportunity to reverse the concept of normalcy. She says, ". . . I have spastic bilateral quadriplegia, also known as cerebral palsy. It limits my body, but not my mind . . . We all have disabilities. What's yours?"(74). In these lines we can sense her strong voice to resist the normal culture. She clearly says her disability cannot limit her mind i.e. she has strong and extreme intelligent mind which is her strength. Furthermore, she thinks nobody in this world has a perfect body, everybody lack something. In other words, to be lack something in the body if considered as disabled than everybody has some sort of disability. That is the reason she questions the so-called normal people about their disability. In this context, Larita M. Coleman gives her view, " Stigmatized people . . . have choices as to whether to accept their stigmatized condition . . . or continue to fight for more integration into non-stigmatized communities" (228). Melody's aggression towards the normal society, proves that she is fighting for the right and integration into the so-called normal community.

The demarcating line or the difference between so-called normal and abnormal people, represses the people with disabilities. And this difference is negatively imputed and linked to the marks of disgrace, shame, hatred, and guilt which spoils the normal identity and lowers the self-esteem during this flaw what Erving Goffman calls "stigma" or "spoiled identity". Stigma is an undesired differentness, undesirable

attributes, or an unwanted trait that is negatively imputed and deeply discrediting. In this context Goffman states:

Such an attributes is a stigma, . . . sometimes . . . also called a failing, a shortcoming a handicap. It constitutes a special discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity . . . the kind that causes us to a different but equally well-anticipated one, and the kind that causes us to alter our estimation of the individual upward. . . . not all undesirable attributes are at issue but only those which are incongruous with our stereotype of what a given type of individual should be. (204)

Goffman defines stigma as something that disqualifies an individual from full social acceptance. He argues that social identity is a primary force in the development of stigma, because the identity that a person conveys, categorizes that person. Social setting and routines tell us which categories to anticipate. Therefore when individuals fail to meet expectations of the society because of attributes that are different or undesirable, they are reduced from accepted people to discounted ones i.e. they are stigmatized.

Disability is one of the stigmatizing conditions constructed by the dominant group i.e. normal majority which possesses the power. This stigma reflects the value judgment of a dominant group that determines the desired and undesired groups in the society. Society teaches its member to categorize persons by common defining attributes and characteristics. Stigma has different dimensions, which have different effects and self. Rejection and social isolation lead to very weak self-confidence. Social isolation influences body images. People may believe that the person with stigma is less valuable, less human, or less desired. Unfortunately, many of us practice more than one kind of discrimination and, by doing so, effectively reduce the

life chances of the stigmatized individual. A chronic illness or disability imposes various constraints on an individual's life. The social rejection or avoidance affects not only the disabled or stigmatized people but also everyone who is socially involved with them as family, friends, and relatives. People with disabilities are believed to be the cause of shame and psychological disturbance for the family as well as for the society.

There is an established notion of the social norms in the society which iterates and reiterates the marks of disgrace as natural ones. And this process of imputation and repetition of such undesirable, devalued, and negative traits play a vital role in the continuous internalization of such feelings as guilt, shame, lack, weak, inferior, and so forth the lives of the disabled people. As a result, people with disabilities or the stigmatized people accept themselves as 'other' in the society. The so called normal people do not really accept and do not want to make contact with the people with disabilities on equal ground. In reality, such behaviors of normal people result in self-hatred, humiliation, inferiority complex, low self-confidence among other. Consequently, the people with disabilities become dependent, passive, inferior, helpless, and so on which is the real expectation of the normal or non-stigmatized majority.

Stigma, indeed, is a need or weapon of non-stigmatized or normal people to justify their false superiority and rule over the people with disabilities or stigmatized people. Goffman talks about two types of identities such as "virtual social identity", and "actual social identity" that society and culture fabricated in order to rule the stigmatized individuals. The virtual social identity is an attribute which is ideologically constructed by those who holding power in the society in order to impose the supremacy to the individuals with disabilities. On the other hand, the

actual social identity is an attribute that is real and proved to possess. Here, virtual social identity is prone to stigmatization. The people with disabilities and stigmatized individuals are characterized by the society only with their virtual social identity undermining their actual social identity. They are severely discriminated and the psychological effect of such discrimination practices is destructive and more profound which leads to the loss of self-esteem, humiliation, self-hatred, lowers the worth of life, and even leads to commit suicide. Thus, the psychological aspect of disability is more severe than the physical ones.

Melody is a strong girl with physical disability who never feels herself as a person with disabilities. Despite the several physical and psychological difficulties in her path she never gives her dreams up. She defeats all those obstacles through her strong determination and dedication. The society and culture constructs negative images, stereotypes, and stigmas regarding disability in order to dominate the people with disabilities. The so-called normal majority fabricate different stigmas i.e. stare, mock, and laugh at her. But irrespective of all the discouragements, Melody is determined in her way to resist discrimination, domination, and the ideology of the so called normal society. But by the same time she feels the effects of stigmatization. She suffers from stigma which can be seen in the following lines:

When I sleep, I dream. And in my dreams I can do anything. I get picked first on the playground for games. I can run so fast! I take gymnastics, and I never fall off the balance beam. I know how to square-dance, and I'm good at it. I call my friends on the phone, and we talk for hours. I whisper secrets. I sing.

When I wake up in the morning, it's always sort of a letdown as reality hits me. (23)

The above text shows that Melody is suffering from stigma. Though she is very strong

and self-confident girl, there is hidden suffering, deep in her mind which is expressed through her dream. Melody is very talented girl in comparison to her classmates. Due to extreme intelligence she makes her school win the inter school quiz competition. However, she time and again gets stigmatize in her life. She has the hidden desire to be normal. After all, she has the desires to play games, to run, do gymnastics, and balance herself, dance herself, talk, whisper secrets to her friends and many more. But, as soon as she wakes up, all her dreams and desires collapsed. She finds herself as disabled in a normal society and becomes depressed.

Stigma is a difficult concept to conceptualize because it reflects a property, a process, a form of social categorization, and an affective state. It represents a view of life. Lerita M. Coleman support this idea as, "Stigma is a response to the dilemma of differences" (216). Every people in this world are different from each-other. The stereotypes, undesired traits, devalued and discredited attributes all lead to the feelings of stigmatization. Melody, because of her physical disability figures out differences. She feels that she is very different from other people in the society which is clear from these lines, "I guess I figured out I was different a little at a time. . . . I couldn't do stuff. And it made me angry" (5). Feeling of being different from other individuals in the society, makes Melody angry, and which is a symptom of her stigmatization. Her stigmatization further clears from these lines:

Everybody uses words to express themselves. Except me. . . .

Thoughts need words. Words need voice.

I love the smell of my mother's hair after she washes it.

I love the feel of the scratchy stubble on my father's face before he shaves.

But I've never been able to tell them. (4)

Melody has bundle of thoughts in her mind, and bundle of emotion in her heart but



she can never become able to express such feelings. We can feel Melody's anxiety of being unable to speak and unable to express her thoughts to other. She can never be able to tell her parents that how much she loves them. These sorts of feelings make her sad. She considers herself as weak, inferior, useless, helpless, dependent, and many more. No people in this world exactly similar. The stereotypes, undesired traits, devalued and discredited attributes all lead to the feelings of stigmatization.

Stigma is a human constructed perception constantly in flux and legitimizing our negative response to human differences. Assuming that flawless people do not exist, relative comparison gives rise to the feeling of superiority to some extent. When we make comparison, we can feel the difference. Thus, stigmatization is a consequence of social comparison. Therefore, everyone at some point in life will experience stigma either temporarily or permanently. This is the reason that Melody's mother also suffers from stigma. She blames herself for Melody's physical condition. The frustration of Melody's mother can be reflected as, "No! I'm the mother! . . . It was my job to bring a child into the world safely . . . Every other woman on the planet is able to give birth to a normal baby. There must be something wrong with me!"(32). For Melody's mother, she is responsible for the condition of Melody. She thinks being a mother it is her duty to give birth a normal child, to bring a baby into this world safely like every other women do. But it is her fault to give birth a disabled baby which is her biggest mistakes of life. Thus, the degree of stigmatization might depend on how undesired the difference is in a particular social group. The physical abnormalities are the most severely stigmatized differences because they are physically silent and represents some deficiency in the bodily form. Hence, disability is one of the most severely stigmatizing conditions. Coleman argues that stigma is not inborn quality of human being rather it is the partial behavior of society. It is a

special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype. In this context, Coleman says:

Perceptually, stigma becomes the master status, the attribute that colors the perception of the entire person. All other aspects of the person are ignored except those that fit the stereotypes associated with the stigma. Stigma is a form of negative stereotyping, has a way of neutralizing positive qualities and undermining the identity of stigmatized individuals. (222)

In the above text Coleman talks about the relationship between stereotype and stigma. Stereotyping is frequently tied to the need for self-enhancement for so called normal people. Whereas stigma is a form of negative stereotyping that neutralizes the positive qualities, underestimates the identity negative and lowers the self-respect of stigmatized people. Thus, stigma is a perceptual tool to enslave and rule over the abnormal. It is a means of maintaining supremacy over the people with disabilities through social control. Stigmatized people are not expected to be active, intelligent, attractive, strong, and so on.

Similarly, fear like stigma, is another tool to rule and enslave the people with disabilities as constructed by the so called normal society. The stigmatized people are forced to be limited within the domestic zone. Their public life or social life is rejected in order to maintain the so called normalcy. In this context, Coleman says, "What gives stigma its intensity and reality is fear" (225). This is fear that gives stigma its strength and reality. Social isolation causes fear in stigmatized people. Therefore, being a physically disabled, Melody undergoes from fear time and again which causes stigma. To some extent, she considers herself as a burden to her parents. In this sense, she says, "I stared at Mom frantically. I didn't want to be sent away. Was I a burden? I never thought about it like that. May be it *would* be easier for them if I weren't

around. I gulped. My hands got cold"(11). Melody never imagines to go away from her parents that is the reason of her fear about the possible separation with her parents made her shiver in fear. This fear is no other than the fear of negative imputations of non-stigmatized majority and their oppression and repression. The stigmatized people do not resist stigma, ignore the norms and disobey the existing laws based on stigma because of the fear of more stigmatization. They begin to see themselves and their lives through the stigma, or they allow themselves to be poisoned by stereotypes and live in fear that they will corresponds. Stigmatized people become more stigmatized because of fear and this stigma represents a kind of social death.

Melody's fear increases when her sister Penny got deadly accident. She blames herself not being able to speak her Mom that Penny is underneath the car and that is the reason that Penny is hit by her Mom's car. When Mrs. V trying to soothe her that whatever is happened that is not her fault. Rather she did best to warn her Mom so she should proud herself, she says "Not Proud. Not enough" (127). She is never proud of herself as she is unable to warn her Mom about the possible consequences. She thinks if she doesn't insist to go school, it would not be happened as she states, "Made Mom take me to school" (128). She is so worried about her sister Penny. Her fear and worry for her sister can be clears from sentences "Will she die?", "Her brain? Messed up?" (128). She is stigmatized by the concept of normalcy. Her line, "It should have been me" (128) shows her stigmatization. Being a person with disability, she considers herself as useless and burden to her parents and to the society. On the other she thinks her sister Penny is normal, able, and beautiful gift for her parents. Thus, she wished herself who got accident rather than Penny. Or she has desire to be as normal as other kids. This is clear from the line, "I want to be like other kid" (128). Hence, the concept of normalcy stigmatized Melody like so many people with disabilities who

wish to be as so called normal and able ones. However she can resist and overcome the stigma through her determination, courage, and support.

People with disabilities can defeat the stigma and overcome it as it is a social construct. Goffman argues that the stigmatized people can defeat the stigma and correct the stigmatized condition in two ways, directly and indirectly. The direct way refers to the medical treatment or the surgery, whereas the indirect way includes personal effort, and inner strength of the stigmatized person. In this sense, Goffman states, ". . . it will be possible . . . to correct . . . failing . . . when a physically deformed person under goes plastic surgery, a blind person eye treatment . . . The stigmatized individual can also . . . correct . . . condition indirectly by devoting much private effort to the mastery of areas of activity " (207-8). Here, Goffman talks about stigma that is not a permanent condition rather it is temporary which can eliminate by the stigmatized people through direct or indirect attempt. Some stigma can be removed directly through medical treatment such as eye operation, ear treatment etc. And some can be removed by individual's personal dedication and strength to get mastery in at least one area.

Melody, being unable to move her body and being unable to speak, becomes stigmatized again and again. However, she is always trying to overcome such feelings through her courage and determination as seen in these lines, " I just shake my head and think, Delete, delete, delete. No way am I letting their negativity mess me up" (91). Melody is quite conscious about the ideology of norms towards the people with disabilities. She knows the negative attitude of the so-called normal people shatter the disabled individuals. This is why, Melody is indifferent towards the discriminatory behavior of her classmates and other normal people around her. Thus, people with disabilities should resist the stigma and live a dignified life within the so-called

normal society. Melody's perseverance in finding out the technologies is also helps her to challenge the stigmatized condition. She is quite optimistic and enthusiastic about the modern technologies which are very helpful to make her life easier and comfortable. The following text exhibits her dream about disable friendly computer as, ". . . dreaming of the perfect Melody-made computer. First of all, it would talk! Oh, yes. People would have to tell me to shut up! And it would have room to store all my words . . . It would have big keys. So my thumbs could push the right buttons, and it would connect to my wheelchair" (54). In this way, Melody negates stigma by dreaming some fruitful subject like the computer that can help people with disabilities to do their tasks. As a result, such behaviors engage Melody seriously that she forgets her stigma and forgets the discrimination of the society.

In this context, people with disabilities resist normalcy and eliminate the stigma by strong determination, self-confidence, support, encouragement, technological access and so on. The major reason of stigma for George Teleporos and Marita P. Maccabe is the body image. According to her, ". . . the individual would be expected to adjust to the disability and begin to accept his or her body" (163). Body image is the combination of an individual's psychological experiences, feelings and attitudes that relates to the form, function, appearance, and desirability of one's own body which is influenced by individual and environmental factors. People with disability if adjust with their body and accept their body image, then it will be easier for them to resist stigma. In this sense, Melody opines, "My arms and hands are pretty stiff, but I can mash the buttons on the TV remote and move my wheelchair with the help of knobs that I can grab on the wheels. I can't hold a spoon or a pencil without dropping it. And my balance is like zip—Humpty Dumpty had more control than I do" (2). She talks about her physical condition where she cannot grab things. She

even cannot hold pencil, spoon which very easy stuff for those so called normal kids.

In this regards she says:

I probably should mention that feeding me is a real process. I can't chew very well, so I mostly get soft foods like scrambled eggs or oatmeal or applesauce. Since I can't hold a fork or spoon . . . someone has to place the food into my mouth, one spoonful at a time. It's slow. . . . I can't hold a glass and I can't sip from a straw, so somebody has very carefully hold a cup to my lips and tip a little bit of liquid into my mouth so I can swallow. (34)

Melody's acceptance of her body image can be seen in the lines. She admits how she is and trying to adjust in her situation helps her to overcome the stigma of disability. If an individual has lived in an environment of acceptance of oneself it is therefore likely that those people whose bodies are devalued by society may devalue themselves, and these feelings may impact negative on their body image. Negative attitude is the cause of individual's stigmatization. Stigma can eliminate by supporting people with disabilities. In this sense, Susie Miles says, ". . . mothers have been extremely effective in organizing themselves in support groups. . . . Parental involvement in the struggle for disability rights has effectively challenged the predominant attitude" (340). Mothers in any situation love and support their children unconditionally. In this context, help, support and inspiration from their parents encourage the people with disabilities to resist discriminatory concept of normalcy. Every parents and nearest people of disabled individuals should accept the body image of their children and encourage them to live their lives without being stigmatized and challenge the so called concept of the norms. Melody's parents are very supportive and aware of their daughter's condition. They make each and every possible effort to make Melody strong and brave girl. She says, "When he could, Dad

read to me. Even though I know he had to be tired, he'd smile, pick out a book or two . . . " (6). The effort of Melody's father to make her daughter genius is really adorable. Despite his tiredness, he reads out books because of that Melody can remember thousands of words and know their meaning as well as their uses. He always inspires Melody to accept her condition which is clear from the line, "Your life is not going to be easy, little Melody," he'd say quietly. "If I could switch places with you, I'd do it in a heartbeat. You know that, don't you? " (6). He gives her courage to fight the situation, to fight the society and assures her that he is there for her in every steps.

Melody's mother is very supportive and encouraging Melody can raise her voice against the discrimination. Whenever she finds prejudice and unfairness towards her daughter she protests it immediately. She raises her voice against the discrimination and inequality to the children with disabilities. It can clear from these lines, "I dare anything for my daughter," Mom replied, her voice dangerous, "and for the rest of these children! . . . Melody can't walk. Melody can't talk. But she is extremely intelligent! And *you* better learn to accept *that!* Mom spat out." (26) Without the support of her mother Melody would not have been able to do simple bathroom activities. She wishes her mother's help everywhere. "Going to the bathroom at school just plain sucks. I have to be taken out of my chair, lifted onto the toilet, and held there so I don't fall. Then someone has to wipe me when I'm finished. It's not so bad when it's Mom . . . " (82). Hence, the support and encouragement from her parents made Melody a self-confident girl, a strong enough to raise the voice against the so called normal society and to overcome the disability stigma. Teleporos and Maccabe opine:

Positive feedback from partners and others can help a person with a disability

to achieve a positive body image . . . an important factor in the development of a positive body image in people with physical disability may involve focusing on the positive aspects of their body and perceiving the impairment as just one sign of physical imperfection, with which we all struggle. (163)

People with physical disabilities are the extreme bearers of stigma. They may experience shame, self-hatred and a negative body image. Thus to reduce the stigma from them support of the society and positive thinking of the individual is needed. The support of family and society and their own positive thinking help people with disabilities to overcome the stigma and resist the concept of normalcy.

Besides her parents, Melody gets support and inspiration from her neighbor Mrs. V, her personal mentor Miss Catherine and her teacher Mr. Dimming. Melody proves that, the people with disabilities if provided support, inspiration and proper opportunities can reverse the normalcy concept and can defeat the stigma caused by their disability. In this sense, Melody says, ". . . you've got the fastest, strongest brain in that school, and you are going to try out for the quiz team next week. . . . They'll want you . . . They'll need you, Melody. You are going to be their secret weapon" (71). Mrs. V is the strong inspiration and encouragement for Melody. She accepts Melody's body image, believes her, explores her capabilities and strength and more importantly raises hope in Melody that she can do anything if she has the willpower to do that. Melody gets courage from Mrs. V to deal with any situation as created by the so called normal society. Similarly, Miss Catherine is another support of Melody to achieve her dream. Regarding this she says, "So now it's Catherine who helps me at lunch so I don't make a mess. And Catherine who reads off the answers I point to on my board. She added some more new words and phrases to it. . . .She even makes sure the headphones don't fall off my ears" (46). Catherine like Melody's mother helps her



to do the tasks such as eat, read and so on. Melody's school life becomes easier only because of the Catherine. Her help and support becomes inspiration to Melody in order to fight the concept of normalcy. Melody further says, "Catherine speaks up. "By law, she cannot be excluded. You know that, sir"(79). Catherine not only help her rather she goes against the excluding attitude of the norms. She is very conscious about the rights of the people with disabilities that is the reason she even raises her voice against Melody's teacher, who has discriminatory attitude towards the people with disabilities.

Melody's strong determination and dedication to achieve her dream i.e. to participate the quiz competition is fulfilled when her Mr. Dimming allows her to be in the team. At first he underestimates Melody as being hegemonized by the concept of normalcy. He does not believe in Melody's intelligence. But later, Melody's hard work makes him realize his fault. In this sense, Melody says, "Mr. Dimming clears his throat. "I must apologize. I think we have all underestimated a member of our class. [...] I'm very proud of Melody. I regret I underestimated her, and I'm glad to have her on our team" (84). His apology and the acceptance of Melody's intelligence and capability is the symbol of societal acceptance of the people with disabilities. Like Mr. Dimming, who accepts Melody's capability and intelligence and let her participates the quiz competition, people with disabilities with their courage, hard work, determination, and dedication can resist the concept of normalcy and defeat stigma of disability.

Disability friendly infrastructures is another factor that raises hope in people with disabilities and helps them to be independent. Disability friendly vehicles, roads, buildings and so on make Melody's life more easier and comfortable. Melody talks about the disability friendly bus as, "The special needs bus . . . has a cool wheelchair

lift built in the door . . ." (13). The disability friendly bus with a wheelchair lift makes Melody and her disabled friends easy to travel and because of this they become independent. Likewise, Melody's father buys a portable wheelchair ramp for her which is very helpful to roll her wheelchair wherever she wants to go. In this sense Melody says:

. . . I did get an electric wheelchair, . . . The wheels are almost like car tires, which makes the ride smooth and easy . . . I can propel myself down the hall with just a little lever on the handrail. . . . he bought a set of portable wheelchair ramps that fold and fit in the back of our SUV. . . . For me, it's all about the freedom. Now I don't have to wait for somebody to move me across the room. I can just go there. (40)

The electric wheelchair and its portable ramp stands for Melody's freedom, as she can go everywhere on her own effort. It makes her life easier and comfortable, as a result, she becomes independent as well. Due to the lack of disability friendly infra-structures, and assisting materials, many disabled individuals compel to limit themselves within their homes. Melody herself in previous days needs assistance to move. However, the time has changed. Nowadays, disability friendly infra-structures, transportation, and assisting materials help to enhance the life of the people with disabilities and lead them towards success and happiness. That is the reason why Melody gets enough courage to question the discriminatory attitude of the norms and overcome the stigma.

In this way, accessibility refers to the freedom for the individuals with disabilities. They can do their possible tasks on their own if they have the access in technology and in disability friendly physical infrastructures. According to UNCRPD, "To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate

fully in all aspects of life, State Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to physical environment, to transportation, to information and communication . . ." (9).

In this way, accessibility in technology and physical infrastructures enable people with disabilities to live an independent life and participate in every societal activities.

It is clear that technology plays vital role to change the lives of people with disabilities. It makes them empowered and competent to resist the discrimination by the so called normal society. It makes them believe on their own.

The speaking machine which Melody finds for herself depicts the need for technology to help the disabled children to live their life better. She uses the speaking machine to empower herself. In this context she says, "As I've been . . . using Elvira over the last month, life at school has been almost pleasant. . . . I can ask Connor about a TV show . . . or tell Jessica that I like her new shoes. . . . I can answer questions in class lots better with Elvira to help me"(64). The given text shows Melody's desire to be active in class like the other students in her class which is only possible only by her access to the technology. Now she is able to talk and share her feelings with her friends, answer the question from her teacher and so on. In this way, modern information and technology plays a vital role to enhance the life of the persons with disabilities, like Melody, and makes them independent. In her early days, Melody learns words from the communication tray attached to her wheelchair. But slowly and gradually, she feels that the tray is so limited to store words from diverse field. It's very hard for Melody to communicate with that tray as it has very limited words. As a result, she cannot express all her wishes through that tray and it makes her stigmatize. But as soon as she gets Meditalker, she becomes able to express all her wishes and desires. It's like a miracle for Melody. This idea i.e. the importance of

technologies is supported by Sauart Blume and Myriam Winonce as they argues, " . . . Modern information and computer technologies. . . helps individual people with disabilities change their own lives, but can also serve to project a different more empowered or competent—image to society at large" (274-76). Technological accessibility empowers people with disabilities to raise their voice against discrimination and domination by the so-called normative society. Thus, the society and the government should be conscious about the disability friendly physical environment, transportation, and technology in order make disable individual independent.

To sum up, Melody despite her physical disability, comes upon the normative society which oppresses people with disabilities through negative imputation such as stigmatizing, stereotyping and many more. She challenges the normative ideology through her courage, determination, struggle and with her family and well-wisher's support which leads her wherever others go, whatever others do. Hence, her self-confidence, determination, hard work, disability friendly physical infra-structure and accessibility in technology help Melody to resist the assumption of normalcy.

### **III. Confidence and Determination as an Inspiring Force in Draper's *Out of My Mind***

In Sharon M. Draper's *Out of My Mind*, Melody, a protagonist, shows her struggle and determination to resist the concept of normalcy and to defeat its stigma. She comes across many difficulties in her life as she is born with cerebral palsy. She has to depend upon others to do her each and every task. Melody is very different from other children around her, this makes her stigmatized time and again. But she overcomes such feelings through parental as well her sympathizer's support who are the strong inspiration and encouragement to her. Her strong determination and self-confidence is the result of the support of her nearest and dearest people around her who are worried about her. Similarly, accessibility in technology and physical infrastructures makes her able to refute the discriminatory attitudes of the normative society.

Disability is often seen as a disadvantage which does not allow a person to do certain tasks or actions which are part of everyday life. People with disabilities are not treated on equal ground, they are marginalized in every aspects of life, such as social, educational, economic and so forth. The inhuman treatment of disabled people makes their life series of complete hardships. Their abilities are overshadowed by the single trait of stigma.

In this context, this thesis shows Melody's self-confidence and strong determination to resist binary attitude of the so-called normative society. Melody, as is born with cerebral palsy, becomes strong, intelligent, and confident to achieve her goal. She is guided by dedication and free will which makes her successful and happy. Her unwillingness to be beaten has developed her courage, perseverance, optimism, and determination which lead her towards the success.

To conclude, Melody's struggle i.e. the way she learns to remember words from various fields, learns to communicate, gets education, defeats stigma, and resists the normative ideology, makes her a strong, determined, self-confident girl who can inspire and encourage the people with disabilities who are hegemonized and stigmatized by the concept of norms. This study exhibits the biased attitude of the norms which consider Melody as a burden and misfortune. Melody's classmates, who are guided by the false ideology of the concept of normalcy, believe Melody as weak and inferior who makes them lose the competition as she cannot do her tasks by herself. That is the reason that they leave Melody alone and fly themselves to participate the competition. Despite her extreme talent and intelligence, Melody is always regarded as dull by many of her classmates and the teachers and because of this they always tries to justify their abilities and to impose their false superiority over her. However, Melody negates those so called normal ideologies and proves that the people with disabilities can be independent and can live a good life if they get proper support, opportunities, and if they have access in technology and disability friendly physical infrastructures.

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