

Disablement of Women:
A Comparative Study of *Lohi ni Sagai* by Ishvar Petlikar (1916-83) and
Shruti ane Smruti by Chandrakant Bakshi (1932-2006)

Zarana Maheshwari & Divya Shah

ABSTRACT

The present paper undertakes a comparative study of two Gujarati short stories 'Lohi ni Sagai' (Engagement of Blood) and 'Shruti ane Smruti' (Shruti and her Memory) by Ishvar Petlikar (1916-83) and Chandrakant Bakshi (1932-2006) respectively, and attempts to study how narrative of the stories devises various narrative techniques and disables their female protagonists Mangu and Smruti in 'Lohini Sagai' and 'Shruti ane Smruti' respectively. The paper further attempts to study how the bodies of both these women characters are rendered 'abject' (Butler, 1993), how they are relegated to a 'heterotopic space of deviation' (Foucault, 1984), and how they are denied citizenship at the end. It further brings to the fore how 'abject bodies' of people with disability pave the way for creation of the normative bodies and make the normative bodies more viable and desirable and eventually make them fit into 'paradigm citizenship'.

Key Words: Disablism, Abject, Heterotopias, Deviance

Introduction

Disability has emerged as an excessively devised trope in characterization in various cultural forms as a social category of deviance, as a symbolic vehicle for meaning making (Mitchell & Snyder, 2001). The perpetual circulation of the images of 'extraordinary bodies', their culturally filtered representations and 'disabling constructions' have led to 'normate reductionism' (Garland-Thomson, 2012, Mitchell and Snyder, 2001, Padilla, 2021). The literary and cultural representations become important sites, where discourses of disability and deviance are formed, sustained and circulated. As Garland-Thomson (2012) asserts that the medical, legal, political, cultural and literary narratives construct the discourses of disability through which the physically disabled are produced. These discursive practices

constitute disability subjectivities and bring into being disabled subjects and these subjects understand and act in the world in the way in which they do' (Tremain, 2015).

The present paper attempts to study the discursive formation of two disabled characters in two Gujarati short stories 'Lohi ni Sagai' (Engagement of Blood) and 'Shruti ane Smruti' (Shruti and her Memory) by Ishvar Petlikar(1916-83) and Chandrakant Bakshi (1932-2006) respectively. 'Lohi ni Sagai' is a story of a mentally disabled character Mangu and her mother Amratkaki. Amratkaki showers incessant love on her daughter, provides intensive care and tries to tame her daughter Mangu. However, Amratkaki does not succeed in restoring Mangu's sanity. On account of her failure in coping with the societal pressure, she sends Mangu to a mental hospital. 'Shruti ane Smruti' is a story of Shruti who loses her ability of hearing and speaking because of some ailment. Shila and Suhas, that is, Shruti's parents accept their daughter's disability and train themselves and their daughter in coping with the disability. Shruti however meets with a road accident and dies at the end.

Methodological Discussion

The present paper explores the discursive constitution of disablement by undertaking a textual analysis of the two narratives in both the short stories. By drawing insights from Butler's notions of 'abject bodies' and 'unintelligible and 'ungrievable bodies', it analyses how the protagonists Mangu and Shruti in 'Lohi ni Sagai' and 'Shruti ane Smruti' respectively are rendered deviant and abject, and how their lives become ungrivable lives. It further explores the way in which their disability is exploited as a 'narrative prosthesis' in order to reach resolution. The paper further brings to the fore the discursive practices woven in the narratives which establish the deviant bodies of Mangu and Shruti as a foil to the notion of 'paradigm citizenship' and relegate both of them to the 'heterotopic space of deviation' (Foucault, 1984:4-9).

Theoretical Framework

Butler (1993) in her seminal work *Bodies That Matter: The Discursive Limits of Sex*, argues that constructions are perceived as dispensable, but she posits that constructions are constitutive,

without which there is no 'I', no 'we'. These constructions produce the domains of intelligible and unintelligible, unliveable, and unthinkable bodies. She further argues that the domain of 'unintelligible' is not the opposite of the intelligible, as oppositions are part of intelligibility. The unintelligible is the 'excluded and illegible domain that haunts the intelligible domain as the spectre of its own impossibility, the very limit to intelligibility' (Butler, 1993). The materiality of the body is constituted by the regulatory norms that work in a performative fashion to serve the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative (Butler, 1993, 1997). This process of materialization through the discursive means enables the heterosexual imperative to make certain sexed identifications visible and foreclose and/or disavow other identifications (Butler, 1993). This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet 'subjects,' but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject (Butler, 1997). The paper by drawing some insights from the concept of 'abject body' attempts to analyse how certain bodies in their representations are rendered 'abject' and help the formation of 'normative subjects'.

It is important to note that these 'abject bodies' are also 'ungrievable bodies'. Butler (2009) in her book *Frames of War: When Life is Grievable*, elaborates on the notions of 'frames' which according to Butler, are interpretative structures that regulate the recognizability of life and loss. Frames in her view generate 'specific ontologies of subject' (Butler, 2009). The subjects are constituted through norms and when these norms are reiterated, they produce and shift the terms through which 'subjects are recognized'. She further argues that some conditions make it possible to apprehend a life or set of lives as precarious (Butler, 1993). Life has to conform to some conception of what life is in order to become recognizable, and thus, the norms of recognizability shape and are shaped by the schema of intelligibility (Butler, 1993). The apprehension is generated from something which is living, but is not recognised as life (Butler, 1993:7). However, the living figure outside the 'norms of life' is essential to the production of normativity (Butler, 1993:7). The short stories under analysis in the present paper produce the living figures who do not conform to the norms of life. They contribute to reiteration of normativity, and these abject and ungrievable lives are relegated to 'heterotopic space of deviation', as they do not meet the conceptions of 'paradigm citizenship' (Wendell, 1996:37).

Wendell (1996) in her book *Rejected Bodies: Feminist Philosophical Discussion*, while elaborating upon the concept of social construction of disability lays down perceived social paradigms that form citizenship. According to her, 'Societies that are physically constructed and socially organized with the unacknowledged assumption that everyone is healthy, non-disabled, young but adult, shaped according to cultural ideals, and, often, male, create a great deal of disability through sheer neglect what most people need in order to participate fully in them' (38). She further posits that the entire 'physical and social organization of life' is founded on this ableist assumptions which leads to an idea of 'paradigm citizenship' (Wendell, 1996:38). While providing insights into the culturally cultivated binaries of entitlement and help, she argues that those who meet the social paradigms of 'performance and productivity' (Wendell, 1996:38) of physical and social organization are 'entitled' to the services and the facilities such as education, transportation, communication, healthcare and so on, for they conform to the norms of 'paradigm citizenship' (Wendell, 1996:38-39). Those who are in need of different facilities or services, the facilities and services are called 'help' and not 'entitlement', because people availing such services are socially dependent and hence misfit for public life (Wendell, 1996:40). Wendell's insights are useful in analyzing how both the stories under discussion, through the notion of 'paradigm citizenship' reiterate the discourse of normalcy and establish the discourse of deviance. These deviant bodies are relegated to the 'heterotopic space of deviation' (Foucault, 1984:4).

Foucault (1984) in his essay 'The Other Spaces' delves into the concepts of 'utopias' and 'heterotopias'. In his view, there are some real spaces which are formed in the very foundation of society, which work as counter sites, through which the real spaces can be represented, contested (Foucault, 1984:4). He further elaborates upon various principles of heterotopias such as juxtaposition, crisis, and deviation. According to him, heterotopias of deviation refer to those spaces in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed. The rest homes and psychiatric hospitals, and prisons exemplify the heterotopias of deviations (4). The insights from Foucault's notion of 'heterotopias of deviation' help comprehend the metrics through which the disabled characters are relegated to a space which is inhabited by deviant bodies.

The formation of a deviant body in the respective stories is not only a part of an orchestrated design of normativity, it also serves as an important device 'narrative prosthesis'

(Mitchell & Snyder, 2001) for the stories to reach a resolution. Mitchell & Snyder argue that literary efforts to illuminate 'dark recesses of disability' generate a discursive subjugation (Mitchell & Snyder, 2001:6). Narrative prosthesis' implies discursive dependency of literature upon disability (Mitchell & Snyder, 2001:1-35). In their view, to prosthesis is to compensate for a body which is lacking, which is not functional or which is inappropriately functional (Mitchell & Snyder, 2001:7). However, prosthesis always carries an 'ideological aberrant (Mitchell and Snyder, 2001:8). Narrative prosthesis institutes body within the zone of tolerable and if disability is too far to conform to the norms, it aims at erasing the difference (Mitchell and Snyder, 2001:8). The short stories under analysis devise disability as a narrative prosthesis in order to fix the familial complexities and erase the difference in order to reach a convincing resolution.

Analysis

'Mangu ne ganda na davakhana ma mukva ni salah loko Amratkaki ne aapta' (People used to advised Amratkaki to admit Mangu to the hospital for the mad)

(Petlikar, 2017:78)

With the above quoted words, the story 'Lohini Sagai' by Ishvar Petlikar opens and introduces Amratkaki and Mangu as the major protagonists. The story revolves round the characters of Mangu and her mother Amratkaki. Mangu, a thirteen-year-old girl is mentally challenged from childhood. She urinates and defecates anywhere. Moreover, because she is mentally challenged, she is depicted as unable to speak and it is assumed that she is dumb. As mentioned above, people in the village advise Amratkaki to admit Mangu to the mental hospital but Amratkaki's heart bleeds the moment she thinks of doing so. The narrative further unfolds that a girl named Kusum from the village who used to throw tantrums out of her mental illness developed at a later age, got admitted to mental hospital and her illness was cured. Seeing Kusum recovering from her illness, Amratkaki convinces herself to admit Mangu in the same hospital. However, her motherhood forces her to step back but societal pressure stops her from doing so and Mangu is admitted to the hospital. The visuals of the bleak atmosphere of the hospital resurrect in Amritkaki's mind and she herself slips into madness at the end of the story.

If the story 'Lohini Sagai' begins with the societal voice which collectively endorses the idea of admitting Mangu to the mental hospital, the story 'Shruti ane Smruti' begins with the scene where a twelve- to thirteen-year-old girl named Shruti is in the hospital. Shruti is unconscious and is battling with life. As the narrative unfolds, the readers are informed that Shruti is a daughter of Suhas and Shila. Shruti is not deaf right from her birth but develops deafness out of Typhoid which she once slipped into. Like Amratkaki, Shila loves Shruti a lot and works hard to cater to Shruti's needs. Suhas and Shila gradually get accustomed to Shruti's deafness but soon after, Shruti meets with a road accident. The story ends with the depiction of Shruti's cremation.

It is important to note that both the stories begin with the references to the hospital. Hospital not only sets a tragic tone for the narrative but operates as a trope to establish protagonists as a foil to the healthy beings. Moreover, both of them fail in meeting the paradigmatic criteria of 'production and performance' required for citizenship (Wendell, 1996:38).

Both Mangu and Shruti do not fit into paradigms of 'normative body', as Mangu suffers from cognitive disorder and Shruti from hearing impairment. Mangu's cognitive disorder is proclaimed through authorial voice. The story is told through third person point of view where narrative does not provide an access to Mangu's psyche. The readers are informed: 'Mangu nanpan thij gandi hati' (Mangu was mad right from her birth). Mangu is made to perform all discursively constructed rituals of 'a mad person'. She urinates and defecates anytime and anywhere. She does not listen to the instructions given by her mother. Moreover, repetitive instructions and training by Amratkaki fail in forming Mangu's daily habits. Moreover, she is depicted as incompetent to produce meaningful sounds and it is assumed that her cognitive skills are not developed and hence, she is unable to process language, and is incapable of encoding and decoding it properly. Thus, Mangu's behaviour causes disruption in the smoothly running course of Amratkaki's family in which rest of her children are happily married (Petlikar, 2017:78).

The story 'Shruti ane Smruti' is told from first person point of view, that is, Suhas's friend. Readers are informed by Suhas's unnamed friend that Shruti loses her hearing sense due to the side effects of medicine given to her during typhoid. Like Mangu, the narrative does not

allow Shruti to express her subjectivity. Shruti comes on the scene only once in the narrative, that is to say that she remains physically present only once and in a while, disappears from the scene. She fails in meeting the standards of 'a normative body', as she does not use her vocal codes to produce language. Thus, she threatens the normative pace and functioning of the society. The bodies of Mangu and Shruti thus prove to be deviant and hence, pose threat to healthy inhabitants of society.

Both the stories devise various narrative techniques in order to establish Mangu and Shruti as deviant. Their bodies are established as 'abject bodies' (Butler, 1993) and they become the subjects of dejection. In her discussion about matter of the body and which body matters, Butler (1993) defines abject body as 'all kinds of bodies whose lives are not considered to be 'lives' and whose materiality is understood not to 'matter' (Butler, 1993: 281). This concept further becomes clear when Butler cites the metaphor of 'an ungrievable life' (Butler 2009: 38). In Butler's view, the abject refers to 'the unlivable and uninhabitable zones which are densely populated who do not enjoy the status of subjects, but whose living under the sign of unlivable is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject (Butler 1993: 3). It is to be noted that both the stories are set in different social milieu and have different time periods. The time period which the present story is set against is the backdrop of post-independence era. As far as location is concerned, it is set in a rural area. Mangu with her mother Amratkaki lives in the village and Mangu's brothers work in a city. The time period in the other story 'Shruti ane Smruti' is not clear. However, reference to the special school for deaf and dumb, the description of the Bombay city's life and fulfilled and unfulfilled desires and fragmented selves invoked through psycho narrations indicate that the story is set roughly in 1970s-80s. Moreover, the setting is urban, as the events take place in Bombay. Despite their different setting and time periods, both the stories situate their 'disabled characters' in similar ways and they devise similar tropes.

In both the stories, female characters are depicted as 'physically or mentally handicap'. Both Mangu and Shruti are of similar age i.e. around twelve or thirteen. Both of them are at the threshold of adolescence. The depiction of female protagonists entering adolescence performs a vital function for the narrative to establish them as abject. Both Mangu and Shruti are neither desiring subjects nor are they the objects of desire despite their physical beauty delineated through narration in both the stories. Mangu's mother Amratkaki while

daydreaming about Mangu's marriage thinks: 'mui nu rup evu chhe ke muratiyo ene jota samo ha padi de' (she is such a beauty that a suiter will say yes to her the moment he catches her first glimpse) (Petlikar, 2017). Similarly, in the other story, Shruti is described as: 'Shruti bahu saras ane najuk baby hati. eni mummy jevi dekhati hati' (Shruti was a beautiful and delicate baby she resembled her mother) (Bakshi, 1987). Thus, both Mangu and Shruti are aesthetically appealing. However, the functional impairments of their bodies scar their physical beauty and render their bodies abject. It not only renders them socially invisible but erases their femininity. Both of them cease to be social, aesthetic and cultural beings. Both of them refute 'normative corporeal standards', as Mangu is incapable of following any instructions. She urinates and defecates anywhere. She does not have sense of keeping herself tidy. She lifts her clothes in front of anyone. She does not match cognitive standards as well. If someone scolds her, she smiles in return. She is not attached to anyone. She does not shade tears while being left and deserted by her family in the hospital. Similarly, Shruti's aesthetic appeal is shadowed by her inability to hear. Her speech is assumed to be impaired, as she fails in encoding and decoding the verbal signs used by people around. Her presence invites curious gaze of 'normative people'. Further, the word Shruti denotes sound. However, the character Shruti has nothing to do with sound and thus, the irony invoked by the name establishes the character as foil. Thus, both Mangu and Shruti are neither desiring subjects, nor are they the objects of desire. Their physical impairment renders them desexualized and makes their bodies abject. The marriage of deviant bodies seems a far cry and therefore, Amratkaki's dream of getting Mangu married invokes a tragic tone in the story.

Both the stories disable their physically challenged characters by inflicting injuries through language and rendering them abject through linguistic means. Mangu in 'Sagai' is compared to munga dhor (dumb animal) numerous times. Her sister and her sister-in-law think that training animals is easier than training Mangu. The word dhor is colloquially used to refer to all the animals. Comparison of Mangu with dhor renders Mangu as one of the members of flocked animals and relegates Mangu's subjectivity to periphery. It not only eliminates her subjectivity but questions her identity of a human being. Moreover, Mangu's 'rushthprushth sharir' (healthy body) becomes intolerable for people, as people find it unsuitable with her cognitive disorder. The act of Mangu's anamalization is not an isolated instance of dehumanization. Davies (2021) in her essay 'Metanarrative of Down Syndrome:

Proximity to Animality' argues that there is a long history of associating intellectual disability with animality, but it is during the course of the nineteenth century that the systematic metrics of association between idiots, colonial subjects and non-human animals becomes entrenched in regular and medicalized discourse. She refers to Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871) and cites: 'imitation is a trait found in monkey, microcephalous idiots and barbarous races' (Davies, 2021:9). Charting the genealogy of the practice of locating human and non-human proximity, Davies further cites from John Langdon's brief article 'Observations on the Ethnic Classifications of Idiots' (1866) which coined the classification of Mongolian type of idiocy and connected intellectual disability with racialized categorization (Davies, 2021:10). In her view, the continuum of animal, idiocy and non-white western people became more prominent in twentieth century (10). Various scientific and medicalized discourses asserted that 'the adult chimpanzees, dogs and pigs far surpass the brain damaged infant in their ability to relate to others, act independently, be aware and other capacities that give value to life' (quoted in Davies, 2021:11). Mangu's sister and sister-in-law in the story 'Lohi Ni Sagai' reiterate the metanarrative of the disabled's proximity to animality. In their opinion, Mangu not only possesses animalistic traits, but lags behind in competing with even the animals. Moreover, Mangu is put at the end of the continuum of species ranging from human to non-human animals.

If Mangu is compared to animal in Sagai, Shruti In the story 'Shruti ane Smruti', is compared to *vidushak* (clown). Suhas while talking about Shruti's plight says: 'baheru balak bobdu pan hoy tya havbhav kari ne vat samje chhe ane samjave chhe etle e jara vidushak jevu lage chhe, loko ghani var majak karta hoy chhe..baherao ni a jara tragedy chhe' (a deaf person, despite his condition, understands the talk and explains his talk to others using gestures and therefore, he looks like a clown. People sometimes make fun of such people. This is the tragedy of the deaf) (Bakshi, 1987).

The very comparison of a deaf with a *vidushak* renders the subject to matter of laughter. The extra use of gestures does not fit into normative corporeal standards. This corporeal performance is compared with the performance of a clown who deliberately enacts and performs stylized gestures and actions which a normative body does not do, and his performance evokes laughter. Thus, the comparison of a deaf person with *vidushak* renders a

deaf person's body a laughable body and the laughter inflicts injury and pain on the body whose body is being laughed at.

Butler (1997) in her book *Excitable Speech* argues: 'Linguistic injury appears to be the effect not only of the words by which one is addressed but the mode of address itself, a mode- a disposition or conventional bearing that interpolates and constitutes a subject'. In her view, when one is called by an injurious name, one is 'being demeaned and derogated' by that name. She further posits that such words function as 'threats to physical wellbeing' and provide an alternative way to sustain certain bodies (Butler, 1997: 5). Thus, the act of inflicting injuries on Mangu and Shruti's body not only disables them but provides an alternative way of sustaining normativity of the normative subjects.

Both the stories further disable their protagonists by rendering them as objects of pity. 'khodadhor ne panjrapol ma mukia avva jevu j e to kahevay' (It's just like putting the disable cattle to the *panjrapol*) (Petlikar 2017:78). When people advised Amaratkaki to put Mangu in mental asylum, she always denied it by uttering the above words. This implied analogy between Mangu and *khodudhor* (handicap animal) makes two things clear: Mangu is almost a handicap cattle and here, the noun *dhor* is suggestive of dumbness assigned to Mangu. Secondly, the concept of *panjrapol* (an asylum for old and unserviceable animals) is suggestive of 'heterotopia of deviation' (Foucault, 1984:4), which accommodates deviant bodies. It also conforms to the metanarratives of tragedy associated with disability which are shaped and shape the charity model of disability where disable deserves pity. This model keeps the disabled outside of the mainstream. Here it is important to note that despite their contrasting settings of urban and rural, both stories support charity model of disability. The story 'Sagai' conforms to this charity model which is prevalent in the rural society. The same is apparent in 'Shruti ane Smruti' as well, where educated Suhas, father of handicap girl Shruti says, 'Andhra balak ne loko hamdardi ni drashti e juve chhe, madad kare j chhe. Out of the way jai ne madad kare chhe' (people behold blind child with sympathy, do extend help to them. Do it going out of the way (Bakshi, 1987:192). Here, Shruti's father Suhas wants people to sympathize with Shruti. He categorizes disability and thinks that deafness is not as conspicuous as blindness, and hence, the deaf do not arouse sympathy in first instance. Suhas wants to make Shruti's handicap visible only to gain sympathy not only for Shruti but for his own fate. The invocation of pity and sympathy to the body renders body deviant. Mangu's

sister in ‘Sagai’ compares mental asylum with *panjrapol* as both not just shelter the handicaps but also provide relief from the handicaps as she jeers of Mangu: ‘Davakhanu panjrapol jevu hashe ane kadach Mangu mari gai to eno ane kutumb no chhutkaro thashe!’ (If hospital is like a panjrapol and if Mangu dies, then it would be a liberation not only for Mangu but also for the family) (Petlikar, 2017:79). Mangu in the story ‘Sagai’ is none other than a burden for everyone including the family members. For Amratkaki’s daughter in law, Mangu is ‘gando hero’ (mad hero) whereas for Kamu, Mangu’s sister, her death is emancipating. Even for Amratkaki, it is emancipation as the narrator mentions: ‘manguna mot ne Amratkaki pan chhutkaro manta hata, jo e kudrati rite aave to’ (Even Amratkaki considered Mangu’s death as liberation, if it was a natural one) (Petlikar, 2017: 79). Similarly, in ‘Shruti ane Smruti’, Shruti’s death is established as liberation for the family as someone on the cremation ground says: ‘saru thayu, Suhashbhai chhuti gaya’ (It is good that Subhashbhai got liberated) (Bakshi, 1987). Thus, death of Shruti is not grievable, as her death helps narrative reach a resolution, as elimination or the erasure of deviant body helps form the normative subjects.

The reception of the story ‘Sagai’ also conforms to Mangu’s disability. Mangu’s body does not matter to anyone including the critics. Here, it is significant to note that the story ‘Sagai’ is received in Gujarati Literature as the celebration of motherhood and love of mother for the child despite child’s disability. Mangu is almost invisible in front of love of Amratkaki. The story is celebrated for ‘mata na apurva vatsalyabhav na nirupan ni vaat’ (an ultimate depiction of mother’s love) and ‘mamtamayi matani lagni nu aalekhan’ (an account of the poring of feelings of loving mother). In fact, the narrative also supports this claim especially in these sentences: ‘aavi rite gandidikri ne to Amratkaki ja uccheri sake. Bija ne gher hoy to bhukhi tarsi kyarni mari gai hoy ane jivti hoy to pan aavu hastpust sharir to na j hoy’ (Only Amratkaki can raise a mad daughter in such manner. If she had been at others’ place, she would have died out of starvation long back and even if she were alive, she would not have been so healthy) (Petlikar, 2017). Disability studies Critics have observed that disabled bodies are seen as subjects to constant care. Ghai (2002) in her essay ‘Disabled Women and Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism’ posits: ‘Strand of cultural construction conceives of disability an eternal childhood where survival is contingent upon constant care and protection’. Both the stories seem to be celebrating motherhood by accentuating dedication and sacrifices made by Amratkaki and Shila in ‘Sagai’ and ‘Shruti ane Smruti’ respectively. Amratkaki is

uneducated and tries her hands at all possible remedies suggested by the village people. She sometimes consults *vaid* to cure Mangu and visits astrologers to inquire about her good times. Shruti's parents Suhas and Shila are literate. Suhas knows English well and hence, is shown to have worldly knowledge. Shila is literate but does not know English. Shila's inability to speak English comes in the way of Suhas and Shila's conjugal life. Like Amratkaki, Suhas and Shila are also desperate to find panacea for Shruti's deafness. Suhas consults all renowned doctors because he does not want any opportunity to miss in curing Shruti's deafness. Disability of Shruti in 'Shruti ane Smruti' works as 'narrative prosthesis' (Mitchell and Snyder,) in order to fulfil the lack in Shila and Suhas' conjugal life. The narrator informs in the beginning of the story that Suhas is not completely happy with Shila, as she is not highly educated and does not know English. However, entry of Shruti in their life forces Shila to learn English. Shila learns English in order to communicate with Shruti in sign language. Thus, the short-lived life of Shruti restores companionship of Suhas and Shila. Her disability works as a prosthesis in fixing the fumbling companionship of Suhas and Shila.

It should be noted that Mangu and Shruti are not single child to their parents. Amratkaki has two sons and a daughter and they lead a happy married life. Suhas and Shila have two sons. The happy and 'normal' state of other children compensates for the lack in Amratkaki, and Suhas and Shila's lives, and the exit of the disabled child does not disrupt their family structure. However, unlike Shila, Amratkaki does not attain relief. The guilt of admitting Mangu in mental hospital constantly questions her motherhood. Her failure as a mother voiced through a co-passenger while going to city to admit Mangu to mental hospital aggravates her guilt, and guilt-stricken Amratkaki goes insane at the end. Her insanity is celebrated by critics as an epitome of empathy with her daughter Mangu. Critics' celebration of motherhood can be understood in light of their own conceptualisation of deviant bodies. In his essay 'Response to Ria Cheyne' Roussel (2017:207) argues: 'Character's conceptualization of disability is connected to reader's own concepts of normality'. In Rosemarie Garland Thomson's view, Repetitive circulation of stereotypical images of the disabled is likely to affect the way we understand each other. The disablement of Mangu and Shruti through prolongment of their childhood, their cultural invisibility, and celebration of the sacrifice made by their mothers seem to be a part of the collective consciousness of the narrator, characters and the readers. Their encoding and decoding of Mangu and Shruti as

disabled is based on their own conceptualisation of normality which is discursively created through repetition in various cultural forms. Such reading can be understood as a part of exclusionary metrics in order to form a normative subjectivity.

Both the stories find their resolution by relegating their abject bodies to the space which is reserved for abject bodies. As discussed above, both the stories open with the reference to the hospital. Moreover, the story 'Shruti ane Smruti' ends with Shruti's cremation. Thus, hospital and the cremation ground emerge as a 'heterotopia of deviation' (Foucault, 1984:4) in both the stories. Foucault defines 'heterotopias' as 'something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' (Foucault, 1984:4). He further posits that 'heterotopias of deviation' refer to those spaces in which 'individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed (Foucault, 1984:4). In his view, like public space, heterotopic space is not freely accessible. The entry is compulsory for some individuals or the individuals have to surrender to rites and purification in order to access that site (Foucault, 1984:5). Moreover, one must have permit or one is required to do some gestures befitting that space (Foucault, 1984:5). For both Mangu and Shruti, the entry into the heterotopic space of hospital is made mandatory. Both of them perform actions and gestures which make them suitable subjects of the 'heterotopic space of deviation', that is, the hospital. Their entries into hospital and cremation ground determine their exit from the society. Mangu's bodily performance proves to be unsuitable to 'healthy society', and thus, her entry into mental hospital is justified and made natural in the story. Shruti also fails in meeting the corporeal standards and her presence causes disruption in achieving the objective of creation of healthy society. Unlike Amratkaki, Shila does not lose courage and trains Shruti at home. However, the narrative uses the trope of road accident to reach its resolution. The road accident makes Shruti's entry possible into hospital and subsequently in the cremation ground possible. Amratkaki in *Sagar* wants to have an access to that heterotopic space of hospital. However, she is denied the access. When she comes to the hospital taking Mangu with her, she is not allowed to visit the room in which Mangu is supposed to be kept as the nurse informs her 'andar koi ne jova java deva no kaydo nathi' (No one is allowed to see inside) (Petlikar, 2017:85). Further, when the nurse takes Mangu inside, the narrator says, 'pelu barnu adadhu khulu thai Mangu ne gali gayu' (That half open

door engulfed Mangu) (Petlikar, 2017:85). The door metaphorically divides the two worlds here as no permission to see the *andar* (inside) world of disabled automatically creates the binary between inside and outside where not only inside world is prohibited for the society but at the same time for disabled also the entry into society is restricted. Moreover, the story provides the glimpse of the inside world in this way: ‘*tran char strio ne fagfagta vale, astvyast kapdao ma emne andar farti joi*’ (she saw inside three four women going walkabout with disheveled hair and shabby cloths) (Petlikar, 2017:85). This description of the disabled bodies creates a grotesque image of a disabled body which is abject and ungrievable for the society. Amratkaki finally surrenders to the rites of heterotopic space i.e. the hospital in order to get the access, as the narrator says ‘*Amratkaki Mangu ni nyat ma vatlai gaya*’ (Amratkaki got converted into Mangu’s community) (Petlikar, 2017:86).

Conclusion

Thus, both the stories ‘*Lohini Sagai*’ and ‘*Shruti ane Smruti*’ disable their female protagonists by devising exclusionary metrics. Both Mangu and Shruti are discursively rendered ‘abject’ and their discursively constructed abject bodies help sustain the normativity of the normative subjects and keep the paradigm of citizenship intact. The abject bodies of Mangu and Shruti send them to heterotopic space, and turn down Mangu and Shruti’s claims to the citizenship. Moreover, using disability of Shruti as a narrative prosthesis, the story ‘*Shruti ane Smruti*’ resolves the differences between the couple, and restores their companionship. Mangu’s disability works as a ‘narrative prosthesis’, as it allows the narrator as well as the readers to interpret ‘the unknowable’. However, unlike Shruti, it does not put Amratkaki’s familial life in place, as Amratkaki is also relegated to a heterotopic space of deviation. As the story struggles with rendering Mangu’s disability tolerable for the normative society, it erases Mangu’s difference by rendering her invisible.

References

- Bakshi, C. (1987). *Shruti ane Smruti: Chandrakant Bakshi ni Shreshth Vartao*. Ahmedabad: Navbharat Sahitya Mandir.
- Butler, J. (2009). *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso.

- Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of the Sex*. New York: Routledge.
- Davies, H. (2021). The Metanarrative of Down Syndrome: Proximity to Animality. In D. Bolt (ed.), *Metanarratives of Disability: Culture, Assumed Authority, and the Normative Social Order*, London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1993). About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth. *Political Theory*, 21(2), pp. 198-227. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/191814>
- Foucault, M. (1984). Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias. *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*. <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf>
- Garland-Thomson, R. (2012). Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Cultural and Literature. Villanova University lecture, You Tube: <https://youtu.be/0aOowvSRT7c>
- Ghai, A. (2002). Disabled Women and Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 17.3, 49-66.
- Goodly, D. (2012). Dis/entangling Critical Disability Studies. In A. Waldschmidt, H. Berressem, M. Ingwersen (eds.). *Culture – Theory – Disability: Encounters between Disability Studies and Cultural Studies*, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, pp. 81-110.
- Mitchell, D. T., and Snyder, S. L. (2001). *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Padilla, A. (2021). The Metanarrative of Blindness in the Global South: A LatDisCrit Counterstory to the Bittersweet Mythology of Blindness as Giftedness. In D. Bolt (ed.). *Metanarratives of Disability: Culture, Assumed Authority, and the Normative Social Order*, London: Routledge.
- Petlikar, I. (2017). *Lohi ni Sagai*. Ahmedabad: Navbharat Sahitya Mandir.
- Roussel, M. (2017). Responses to Ria Cheyne. In A. Waldschmidt, H. Berressem & M. Ingwersen (eds.). *Culture – Theory – Disability: Encounters between Disability Studies and Cultural Studies*, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, pp. 201-17.
- Tremain, S. (2015). This Is What a Historicist and Relativist Feminist Philosophy of Disability Looks Like. *Foucault Studies*, 19, pp. 7-42. <https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.v0i19.4822>.
- Wendell, S. (1996). *Rejected bodies: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*. New York: Routledge.

