Visual Impairment, Creativity & Fulfilment: Contextualizing Select Autobiographies and Memoirs

Thesis Submitted to the University of Calicut

for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

by

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July 2025

DECLARATION

I, **Akbar C.**, herby declare that the thesis entitled **Visual Impairment, Creativity & Fulfilment: Contextualizing Select Autobiographies and Memoirs** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of **Doctor Philosophy in English**, is a record of bona fide research carried out by me under the supervision of **Dr. A. I. Vilayathullah**, Professor (Rtd), Postgraduate & Research Dept of English, Govt. Arts & Science College, Kondotty, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

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Malappuram
20th July, 2025

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Visual Impairment, Creativity & Fulfilment: Contextualizing Select Autobiographies and Memoirs** submitted by Mr. **Akbar C.** to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of **Doctor Philosophy in English**, is a record of bona fide research carried out by him under my supervision and guidance. It is further certified that the same has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

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With the blessings of the Almighty, I feel humbled and gratified to submit my PhD thesis titled **Visual Impairment, Creativity and Fulfilment: Contextualizing Select Autobiographies and Memoirs**. This research is deeply rooted in my own lived experiences as a visually impaired individual navigating the world of literature. I have often observed that mainstream literary traditions, consciously or otherwise, tend to reflect an ocular-centric worldview. As a student of literature, I was compelled to raise the issue as to whether the works of the blind authors reinforce this optical consciousness or propose alternative frameworks that emphasize extra-visual realities. Since autobiographies are intentional acts of self-reflection, they offer a unique space to explore the subjective positions and embodied experiences of their authors. It is on this backdrop that I selected the present topic for my study.

This journey would not have been possible without the support, encouragement, and contributions of many individuals to whom I remain deeply indebted. First and foremost, I express my heartfelt gratitude to my research guide and mentor, Dr. A. I. Vilayathullah, for his unwavering guidance, insight, and motivation throughout the research process. His scholarly support has been instrumental in shaping the direction of this work and ensuring its timely completion. From the stage of grappling with the idea of finalising the topic, he has guided me with clarity and precision. Given my visual impairment, he extended special care in reviewing the manuscript—paying attention to everything including

alignment, formatting and punctuation. His patience, empathy, and academic wisdom have left a profound impact on me.

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activist among the visually impaired in Kerala, has been a constant source of intellectual and emotional support. His theoretical insights and encouragement were invaluable in shaping the direction of this study. I also thank my sister, Habeera, brother-in-law, Mansoor C. T., and sister-in-law, Ruksana V., for their continued love, encouragement, and support. I am also indebted to Mr. C. K. Aboobacker, Mr. K. Satyasheelan, Dr. Asha Muhammad and Dr. Rohith P. for providing valuable insights related to the studies on blindness. Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to all those who, directly or indirectly, have contributed to the successful completion of this research.

Akbar C.

ENGLISH ABSTRACT FINAL

The thesis submitted to the University of Calicut titled 'Visual Impairment, Creativity & Fulfilment: Contextualizing Select Autobiographies and Memoirs' by Akbar C. under the supervision of Dr. A. I. Vilayathullah examines the selected autobiographies of the visually impaired, focusing on areas such as creativity, aesthetics and perception of blindness in the selected texts and fulfillment of the concerned authors in their personal life tackling the limitations caused by their impairment.

The thesis statement of the study is: Visual impairment can stimulate a wide variety of textual responses in a writer, which could be aesthetic, philosophical, psychological, emotional, political, or cultural depending on his or her degree of impairment, education, familial environment, external support, awareness, and above all the creative imagination that he or she relies on to overcome the loss and tackle the obstacles.

The major texts selected for the present study are, The Story of My Life (1903) and The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays (2009) by Helen Keller, Face to Face: An Autobiography (1957) and All for Love (2001) by Ved Mehta, If You Could See What I Hear (1989) by Tom Sullivan, On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness (1997) by Professor John M. Hull, Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness (1994) and On my Own: The Journey Continues (1997) by Sally Hobart Alexander, Planet of the Blind (1998) and Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear (2006) by Stephen Kuusisto and Sight Unseen (1999) by Georgina Kleege.

The whole thesis is divided in to 5 chapters. The first introductory chapter presents the structural design of the thesis, states its main objectives, explains the research gap and analyzes the available resources. The second chapter titled 'The World of Blindness and the World of Letters: Visual Impairment, Autobiographies and Creativity' focuses on the areas of autobiographies, Disability Studies, A conceptual, technical and historical examination of blindness and the relationship between blindness and creativity. The researcher observes that among the selected authors,

Helen Keller, Professor John M. Hull and Stephen Kuusisto employ a highly distinguished language to represent their own experiences of blindness. Whereas, Tom Sullivan, Sally Hobart Alexander and Ved Mehta compose their texts in a general language accentuating the practical nuances of blindness. Georgina Kleege subtly shifts between these subjective ruminations and practical observations. Sufficient passages from the selected texts are quoted to substantiate this argument.

The third chapter titled 'From the Visual to the Multisensory World: The Aesthetic and Perceptive Realms of the Texts' emphasizes the areas of aesthetics and perception of blindness by different authors. Sensory hierarchies of different authors and their subjective understandings on blindness are analyzed. Helen Keller, Professor John M. Hull, Georgina Kleege and for a certain extent Stephen Kuusisto present their own aesthetics of blindness in their autobiographies. They rely on senses other than sight or move from the visual to a multisensory paradigm to become successful in life. The others focus more on the practical realities of blindness with occasional subjective contemplations.

The fourth chapter, 'In the Innermost Corridor: The Personal Life of the Authors and their Prospects of Fulfillment' discusses the personal life of the concerned authors concentrating the areas such as the nature of impairment and immediate reaction to it, social and familial life, marriage family and sexuality, strategies to overcome the hurdles created by the impairment and the prospects of fulfillment in their personal and social life transgressing their impairment. Major events in the life of each author are surveyed for this analysis.

In the 5th and final chapter, major findings of the research are summarized while listing the important challenges and the adopted solutions to tackle such issues. Noteworthy directions for the future research are also provided. The study is concluded citing the major primary and secondary resources used.

Akbar. C

Dr. A. I. Mayathullah

പ്രബന്ധസംഗ്രഹം (Abstract)

വിഷയം: കാഴ്ചപരിമിതി, സർഗ്ഗാത്മകത, സാക്ഷാത്കാരം: തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ആത്മകഥകളുടെയും ഓർമ്മക്കുറിപ്പുകളുടെയും സന്ദർഭീകരണം

ഗവേഷകൻ: അക്ബർ സി.

കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുള്ളവരുടെ ആത്മകഥകളിലും ഓർമ്മക്കുറിപ്പുകളിലും 'അന്ധത' എപ്രകാരമാണ് പ്രതിനിധാനം ചെയ്യപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നത് എന്ന അന്വേഷണമാണ് അക്ബർ സി.യുടെ ഈ ഡോക്ടറൽ പ്രബന്ധം. കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുള്ള ഒരു വ്യക്തിയുടെ പാഠനിർമ്മിതി, കാഴ്ചയുള്ളവരുടേതിൽ നിന്ന് വ്യത്യസ്തവും വൈവിധ്യവുമാർന്നതുമാണ് എന്ന പരികല്പനയിലാണ് ഈ പഠനം ഊന്നിയിരിക്കുന്നത്. ലാവണ്യപരമോ, മനഃശാസ്ത്രപരമോ, രാഷ്ട്രീയമോ ആയ ഈ പ്രതികരണങ്ങൾ എഴുത്തുകാരന്റെ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ തോത്, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, കുടുംബപശ്ചാത്തലം, ബാഹ്യപിന്തുണ എന്നിവയെക്കൂടി ആശ്രയിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് ഗവേഷകൻ സമർത്ഥിക്കുന്നു.

ഹെലൻ കെല്ലർ, വേദ് മേത്ത, ടോം സള്ളിവൻ, ജോൺ എം. ഹൾ, സാലി ഹോബാർട്ട് അലക്സാണ്ടർ, സ്റ്റീഫൻ ക്രെസിസ്റ്റോ, ജോർജിന ക്ലീജ് എന്നിവരുടെ വിഖ്യാതമായ കൃതികളെ ആസ്പദമാക്കിയാണ് ഈ ഗവേഷണം നിർവ്വഹിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്.

പഠനത്തിന്റെ പ്രധാന ഘട്ടങ്ങൾ:

* സൈദ്ധാന്തികവും ചരിത്രപരവുമായ വിശകലനം: ആത്മകഥ എന്ന സാഹിത്യരൂപം അരികവത്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ടവരുടെ സ്വത്വപ്രഖ്യാപനത്തിനുള്ള മാധ്യമമായി മാറിയതെങ്ങനെയെന്ന് പ്രബന്ധം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. അംഗപരിമിതി പഠനങ്ങളുടെ (Disability Studies) പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ സാമൂഹിക-ചരിത്ര പരിണാമങ്ങളെയും ഹോമർ മുതൽ ബോർഗസ് വരെയുള്ളവരുടെ സർഗ്ഗസൃഷ്ടികളെയും വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

* ബഹിരിന്ദ്രിയ ലോകത്തിന്റെ ആവിഷ്കാരം: കാഴ്ചയുടെ അഭാവത്തിൽ ശബ്ദം, സ്പർശം, ഗന്ധം, കമ്പനങ്ങൾ എന്നിവയിലൂടെ രൂപപ്പെടുന്ന ഒരു സമാന്തര ലാവണ്യലോകം ഈ എഴുത്തുകാർ എങ്ങനെ നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് പഠനം വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നു. ഹെലൻ കെല്ലറുടെ സ്പർശനാനുഭൂതികളും, ജോൺ എം. ഹള്ളിന്റെ ശ്രവണാനുഭവങ്ങളും, സ്റ്റീഫൻ ക്രെസിസ്റ്റോയുടെ സംഗീതാത്മക ലോകവും ഇതിന് ഉദാഹരണങ്ങളാണ്.

* ആഖ്യാന ശൈലികളുടെ വൈവിധ്യം: കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയെ ദാർശനികമായും വൈയക്തികമായും സമീപിക്കുന്നവരും (ഉദാ: ജോൺ എം. ഹൾ), പ്രായോഗിക അതിജീവന തന്ത്രങ്ങളിൽ ഊന്നുന്നവരും (ഉദാ: വേദ് മേത്ത) എന്നിങ്ങനെ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളിലെ വൈവിധ്യത്തെ ഗവേഷകൻ തരംതിരിച്ച് വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

* വ്യക്തിജീവിതവും അതിജീവനവും: ജന്മനാ അന്ധരായവർ, പിന്നീട് കാഴ്ച നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടവർ എന്നിങ്ങനെ എഴുത്തുകാരെ വർഗ്ഗീകരിച്ച് അവരുടെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, പുനരധിവാസം, വിവാഹം, സാമൂഹിക നിലപാടുകൾ എന്നിവയെ താരതമ്യം ചെയ്യുന്നു. വ്യക്തിഗതമായ പ്രതിബന്ധങ്ങളെ സർഗ്ഗാത്മകമായി മറികടന്ന് ഇവർ എങ്ങനെ ജീവിതസാഫല്യം നേടുന്നു എന്നത് ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ കാതലാണ്.

ഉപസംഹാരം:

കാഴ്ചപരിമിതി എന്നത് സർഗ്ഗാത്മകതയ്ക്ക് തടസ്സമല്ലെന്നും, മറിച്ച് അത് ലോകത്തെ വീക്ഷിക്കാൻ പുതിയൊരു ഇന്ദ്രിയാനുഭവ മണ്ഡലം ഉറപ്പുനൽകുന്നുവെന്നും പ്രബന്ധം . കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുള്ളവരുടെ ആത്മകഥകൾ വെറും അതിജീവന കഥകളല്ല, മറിച്ച് തനതായ ലാവണ്യശാസ്ത്രം (Aesthetics of Blindness) പുലർത്തുന്ന ഗൗരവമേറിയ സാഹിത്യസൃഷ്ടികളാണെന്ന് ഈ ഗവേഷണം സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നു.

അക്ബർ. സി.

Dr. A. I. Vijayathilak

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

Literature is hailed as a perpetual platform for self-expression. The subjective realm of literature gained rapid and unusual momentum after the establishment of 'individual' as a centre of imagination by European Enlightenment and Literary Modernity. The quests for individuality and identity were further intensified by the extraordinary space given to the voice of the marginalized sections in the society by Postmodernism. In such a context, autobiographies and memoirs came to be accepted as favorite methods in celebrating physical, mental, social, cultural, political and other substantial differences in the world.

Since the dawn of civilization, literature echoed the discourses of the dominant social groups. Rarely, people like Homer or John Milton ensured the presence of the physically marginalized groups such as visually impaired in the literary world. The world wars created a new awakening with regard to the problems and demands of the disabled across the globe. This discussion in turn created a new academic, legal, cultural, political and professional consciousness among the disabled in general and the visually impaired in particular.

Autobiographies became a dominant medium to discuss the issues related to the visually impaired such as, the nature of impairment, social and economic disadvantages, social attitude, options for survival and diversity in the perception of the world. It is in such a context that, the researcher proposes to analyze the selected autobiographies of the visually impaired, focusing on areas such as creativity,

aesthetics and perception of blindness in the selected texts and fulfillment of the concerned authors in their personal life transgressing their impairment.

The researcher holds the hypothetical position that visual impairment can stimulate a wide variety of textual responses in a writer, which could be aesthetic, philosophical, psychological, emotional, political, or cultural depending on his or her degree of impairment, education, familial environment, external support, awareness, and above all the creative imagination that he or she relies on to overcome the loss and tackle the obstacles. The major texts selected for the present study are, *The Story of My Life* (1903) and *The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays* (2009) by Helen Keller, *Face to Face*: *An Autobiography* (1957) and *All for Love* (2001) by Ved Mehta, *If You Could See What I Hear* (1989) by Tom Sullivan, *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness* (1997) by Professor John M. Hull, *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness* (1994) and *On my Own: The Journey Continues* (1997) by Sally Hobart Alexander, *Planet of the Blind* (1998) and *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear* (2006) by Stephen Kuusisto and *Sight Unseen* (1999) by Georgina Kleege. Rather than attempting a detailed discussion of these texts, the passages and contents relevant for the current topic are selected and analyzed. Thus, textual Analysis is the preferred method for the present study. The passages representing diverse aspects related to blindness are critically analysed in the backdrop of theoretical and technical studies on visual impairment. The inputs from those studies on blindness are the major theoretical sources for the current study.

Helen Keller, who became deaf and blind in the nineteenth month of her life, describes her journey into the world of letters, education, worldly experience and social participation with the aid of her beloved teacher Mrs. Anne Sullivan through her famous autobiography *The Story of My Life*. The book is noted for her delicate perception of the world and her adventurous journey in the world of the ableists. The later part of her life is described in the book *Midstream: My Later Life*. The collection of her autobiographical essays titled *The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays* records her interaction with a collection of objects and situations and the sensory hierarchy of her perceptive realm. Most of the essays in this collection record her understanding of different senses such as touch, smell and taste.

Ved Mehta gives a survey of his life in his celebrated autobiography *Face to Face: An Autobiography*. It is done in three phases. His early life, the life in Post-independent India and his life in America. The first and the second stages are described in a more detailed and imaginative manner in the book *The Ledge Between the Streams*. His third autobiography, *All for Love,* depicts his relationship with four ladies and his quest for fulfillment. Tom Sullivan's *If You Could See What I hear, Adventures in Darkness: Memoirs of an Eleven-Year-Old Blind Boy* and *As I See it: My View from the Inside Out* depicts his eventful life as a visually impaired person. Sullivan, who suffered from a condition of retinopathy of prematurity, records his complex, active and dynamic life as a writer, actor and artist in his autobiography *If You Could See What I Hear*.

Professor John M. Hull's *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of*

Blindness records his adventitious blindness and his contemplations on the resultant physical, emotional and psychological consequences. John M. Hull, a professor of religious education in the British Midlands, describes the major events in his life related to his adventitious impairment. The continuing decline of his sight due to inoperable cataract and resultant retinal detachment, its impact on his personal, professional and social life and the ups and downs in his post impairment life are described in a highly emotional and philosophical language. He describes a world which cannot be easily penetrated by a sighted person. The complexities and polarities of such a peculiar world are the major topics of discussion in *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness*.

Sally Hobart Alexander's *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness* and *On My Own: The Journey Continues* discuss her blindness in her 20s, the related difficulties and her concrete strategies of survival. Some of her major concerns in these books are, her visual impairment in the 24th year of her life, various consequences of the unexpected tragedy, the fear, the frustrations of partial information and false hope, the tension between herself and her fiancé (they finally called off the engagement), the support (and also confusion and pain) of friends and family and the emotional adaptation to a whole new life while learning to become independent as a blind person. She overcomes her troubles by receiving a rehabilitation course from Greater Pittsburg Institute for the Blind. The second book, *On my Own: The Journey Continues* depicts the further developments in her life such as her career prospects, further problems related to her impairment, her struggles to establish herself in life and her quest for a meaningful relationship with

men. Finally, she becomes successful in her life while overcoming the major barriers in her path.

Stephen Kuusisto, in his book, *Planet of the Blind: A Memoir* describes the conscious rejection of his blindness by his parents and the incomparable traumas suffered on account of this rejection. Kuusisto is neither fully blind nor sighted due to his peculiar visual condition. His sight becomes insufficient to do any meaningful activities in his life. However, he is not accepted as a blind person due to the conscious rejection of the reality by his parents. The resultant traumas and challenges in his life are put in a highly metaphoric, emotional and philosophical tone in *Planet of the Blind: A Memoir*. Finally, he finds meaning in life with the help of a white cane and a dog called Corky. His lyrical memoir titled *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear* registers his intense passion with the art of listening.

Georgina Kleege discusses her blindness due to macular degeneration and its impact on her personal and social life in the book *Sight Unseen*. In a blend of memoir and pointed cultural criticism, she describes how she comes to terms with being blind in a world that fears and stigmatizes blindness. After her futile attempt to hide her impairment, she accommodates the reality and tries to repair the loss by all available possibilities. Although sometimes didactic, Kleege gives readers an enlightening look at life with marginal eyesight.

Among these books, those which are mentioned earlier are accentuated in the present study. However, others are also occasionally discussed as per the demand of the situation. Most of these writers in the introductions to their books confess that the names of some of the key figures involved in their life are consciously disguised

to guarantee the privacy and secrecy of the affairs mentioned in the texts. However, they ensure alike that this does not affect the authenticity or veracity of the incidents mentioned in the plot. The major discussion of the research revolves around different facets of blindness represented in these selected autobiographies.

As to the title of the research, the areas of creativity, aesthetics and perception are discussed in connection with the presentation of blindness in the concerned texts. The area of creativity is discussed with regard to the relationship between the condition of blindness and the language of different texts. The key question analyzed is whether the selected authors in their autobiographies use a general language or record their experiences with a more intense, sensual, emotional or philosophical language pertaining to the degree of their impairment. The concepts of aesthetics and perception are studied in connection with the contemplation of blindness by different authors. The sensual hierarchy in the texts, different authors' understanding of the world, their emotional reaction to the impairment, the evolution of their textual attitude to the reality of blindness and the multidimensional analysis of the experiences of blindness are major factors emphasized in these areas. Bodily responses have a major significance in this analysis. The construct of fulfillment is evaluated with regard to the practical consequences of blindness in the life of the selected authors. The nature of their impairment, the social and familial support, their options for survival and the more interior aspects of family and sexuality are focused here. The strategies of survival and the tackling of blindness by the authors concerned are given importance. Thus, this study is a synthesis of the theoretical and practical dimensions of blindness represented in the selected texts.

The whole thesis is divided into five chapters including this introductory chapter. After this minimal description of the structure of the research, major areas emphasized in this chapter are: a) the main objectives of the study b) the relevance and scope of the research topic and c) a review of the available literature and the elucidation of the research gap.

The second chapter titled "The World of Blindness and the World of Letters: Visual Impairment, Autobiographies and Creativity" is designed as a theoretical introduction for the textual analysis conducted in the third and fourth chapters. Some of the main tasks done in this chapter are: a) a brief introduction to the genres of Autobiography and Disability Studies b) the illustration of the context in which autobiography became a major platform to depict the experiences of the visually impaired and other marginalized communities c) a conceptual and historical explanation of blindness d) a brief survey of the literature of the visually impaired from Homer to the present and e) a study of the connection between visual impairment and creativity accentuating the linguistic orientations of the selected authors and the texts. Thus, this chapter progresses from a theoretical analysis to a scrutiny of the chosen texts.

The third chapter titled "From the Visual to the Multisensory World: The Aesthetic and Perceptive Realms of the Texts" focuses on the research areas such as a) the aesthetic properties of the selected texts b) a comparison of the textual orientations of the selected authors accentuating on the multisensory realities in the selected texts c) a comparison of the perception of blindness by different authors while emphasizing the subtle differences in their emotional, psychological, and other

responses to the reality of blindness and d) a discussion of the subjectivity of the selected texts and a comparison among them as to what extent they are decided by the respective impairment of the selected authors. Thus, this chapter elaborates on the areas of aesthetics and perception of blindness in the concerned texts.

The fourth chapter, "In the Innermost Corridor: The Personal Life of the Authors and their Prospects of Fulfilment" discusses the following aspects related to the fulfillment of different authors in their personal life transgressing their degree of blindness: a) classification of the authors on the basis of their degree of blindness and a description of their respective physical conditions b) a description of the familial and social support for the selected authors to overcome the barriers created by their blindness c) a discussion of their most intimate aspects such as sexuality, marriage and family in connection with their impairment and d) a comparison of the concrete strategies through which various authors deal with and survive their impairment. Thus, this chapter focuses on the practical management of blindness by different authors.

Besides formally concluding the study, the fifth and final chapter describes at length the serious challenges and major findings related to the study. It also explains the future research prospects in the related areas. It is followed by a citation of the major primary and secondary sources used for the current study.

As a totally blind person from birth and being a student of literature, the present researcher always noticed an ocular centric perception in the mainstream literature. In the structure, imagery and content, sight has an unparalleled significance in the literary world. This domination is not simply restricted to

literature. All major social and cultural artifacts are shaped and guided by a predominantly optical perception. While understanding the subtle nuances and patterns of literature and becoming more aware of the technical, social and aesthetic dimensions of the experience of blindness in the empirical world, the current researcher had an innate curiosity to know whether, the visually impaired persons also use the same ocular normative perception or do they explore alternative paths in their texts. The question, how far their orientations on blindness are modified and guided by their realization of the contemporary dimensions and cognizance of blindness becomes very important in this respect.

A reading of the available autobiographies of the visually impaired convinced the researcher that some of the authors explore blindness using alternative possibilities. The researcher’s own experiences as a totally blind person from birth and the understandings on the subtle nuances and mechanisms of literature further augmented this perception.

Autobiographies being deliberate attempts to reflect on one's own self, there are abundant opportunities to express the authors' sensory perceptions of the world. Thus, the availability and possibility of alternative sensory models and aesthetic consciousness can be clearly analyzed through the selected texts. Moreover, knowledge about how different writers afflicted with visual impairment in various phases of their life struggled and surpassed their unexpected misery is highly significant. The scarcity of similar studies in the academic field doubly redoubled the significance of the present study. It is in such a broad context that the researcher has decided to pursue the enquiry in the current area.

This research has the following broad objectives. The aesthetic features of the selected texts are analysed while focusing on the areas of perception, consciousness and their subtle linguistic patterns. The study also enquires whether these texts are written in a profoundly ocular centric language or do they employ alternative linguistic experiments filled with stimulus responses or extra visual realities? The reaction of various authors towards their impending blindness and their management of their diminishing eyesight are also surveyed. The relationship between visual impairment and creativity is also studied focusing on the social, psychological and emotional transformations of the selected authors during different phases of their impairment. This study enquires in depth the personal aspects of different authors and compares their diverse management of the mundane affairs in life accentuating on their degrees of impairment. The role of different institutions such as family, marriage, educational institutions and professional spheres in instilling confidence in the selected authors to overcome the difficulties related to their impairment are also analysed. Finally, multiple strategies adopted by these authors to tackle and circumspect their impairment are also studied from a comparative perspective.

Coming to the available literature in the area, most of them belong to the technical studies on blindness. Historical and conceptual analysis of blindness, studies on the representation of blindness in multiple platforms and examination of blindness using interdisciplinary tools are some of the major categories in such studies. Since the aesthetics, subjectivity and multidimensional textual reactions by

blind authors to the reality of blindness are seldom studied as a part of the available literatures of the area, an obvious research gap is visible in this domain.

Most of the early studies about various aspects of visual impairment were done by sighted scholars in the field. Many of them discussed the technical aspects of visual impairment and its consequences. Such studies inevitably represented the fallacies and inhibitions of the authors. Some of such books are, the 1961 publication *Blindness: What It Is, What It Does, and How to Live with It* by Reverend Thomas Carroll and *The Story of Blindness* by Gabriel Farrell in 1956. Father Thomas Carroll's book approaches blindness as a very shocking reality demanding huge adjustments from the sufferers of the impairment and those who assist them. He registers 20 major losses as the consequences of blindness. His text is analyzed by later scholars mostly for its prejudices and inhibitions rather than for its theoretical insights. The book is however noted as the first study of its kind. Father Gabriel Farrell in his book provides a historical perspective on the reality of blindness. His book is noted for its neutral tone citing all the major available historical and scientific resources as a part of his study.

For the first time, *The Changing Status of the Blind* by Berthold Lowenfeld, who was a real expert in the field, tried to impart a research perspective and scientific outlook in his discussion of the issues related to visual impairment. His other books such as *On Blindness and Blind People: Selected Papers* and *Our Blind Children* approach blindness from a more open and theoretical angle. For example, he has minimized the twenty losses described by Reverend J. Carroll as the consequences of blindness in a person in to three. He says:

> Blindness imposes three basic limitations on the individual: 1. In the range and variety of experiences. 2. In the ability to get about. 3. In the control of the environment and the self in relation to it. These restrictions affect the blind individual interestingly and in different ways and degrees. Only a thorough understanding of them can lead to the development of special methods in the education of blind children (Lowenfeld, 68).

Thus, he studies blindness for the first time from a more factual and theoretical perspective.

Another major stream related to the studies on blindness is those discussing the representation of blindness in the mainstream literature and other artifacts. Jacobus TenBroek, Kenneth Jernigan, Jessica L. Langworthy and David Bolt questioned the wrong and fallacious representations of the visually impaired in mainstream literature. Jernigan's speech such as “Is Literature Against Us?” and Langworthy's articles such as “Blindness in Fiction” are seminal works in this field.

Jernigan in his speech classifies the representation of blindness in the mainstream literature in to nine types. He identifies examples for these types from a wide variety of literatures. Ato Quayson in his book, *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* expands this typology of representation in to the realm of the literature on the other disabled as well. Using the concept of Aesthetic Nervousness, Quayson rereads the representation of disability in the books of several renowned authors like J. M. Coetzee, Samuel Beckett, Tony Morrison, Ralph Ellison and so on. David Bolt, in his book, *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A*

Rereading of 20th Century Anglophone Writing critically examines a collection of celebrated British texts in the 20th century.

The same concept is treated from a different angle in his essay titled "Aesthetic Blindness: Symbolism, Realism, and Reality", published in the 5th edition of *Disability Studies Reader* Published and edited by Lennard J. Davis. By Aesthetic Blindness, Bolt means the ignorance regarding blindness in mainstream literature and the perception of the aesthetic faculties in literature only through visual means. He argues that Aesthetic Blindness produces an ocular centric social aesthetic-an aesthetic that disqualifies disabled people. So his focus is also on the representation of blindness in mainstream literature.

Literature and Disability by Alice Hall also rereads the western literature depicting the disabled using the inputs from the new genre of Disability Studies. Recently, Dr. Habeeb C. in his thesis titled *Representation and Construction of the Visually Challenged in Selected Fiction*, submitted to the University of Calicut also analyzes the stereotypes and false ways through which visually impaired are constructed in English novels. The thesis of Dr. Salini Satyaseelan titled *Disability and Identity: Construction of Body and Self in Select Narratives* submitted to the Central University of Kerala Kasargode evaluates the representation of disabled in the multiple literary genres. While analyzing a collection of selected texts such as autobiographies, short stories and fictions, her study explores the possibility of literary narratives to reconfigure normative ways of thinking about disability and disability identity.

Tobin Siebers in his book *Disability Aesthetics* published during 2010 further comments on the representation of disability in common literature. He questions the

erasure of disability from the general textual parlance using the norms of beauty and perfection of human bodies. He defines Aesthetics as the responses produced by some human bodies in accordance with other bodies. He discusses how mainstream aesthetics disqualifies some bodies in conscious ways. However, he identifies a parallel stream in which this mainstream rhetoric is challenged through a different aesthetic pattern recognizing the beauty and agency of the disabled bodies. His chief preoccupation is with the representation of the disabled bodies in the visual arts including paintings. All these studies focus on the representation of disability or visual impairment in mainstream social and literary discourses.

The third significant area related to the enquiries on visual impairment relies on the technical and scientific aspects of blindness. Mostly such studies depend on certain interdisciplinary parameters to analyze multiple dimensions of blindness. Their focus is clearly extra textual and experimental in nature. Bruno Del Tufo, a research scholar in Middlesex University has recently submitted his thesis on the topic *Visual Impairment: Its Impact upon and Implications for Aesthetic Experience*. His focus is on, how visually impaired people interpret the sensory inputs that artwork evokes together with the spatial environment that they engage with. It intertwines concepts of aesthetics that have specific relevance for visually impaired people, together with the processes and concepts associated with vision.

It further reflects upon how human cognitive processes are different for blind people, the use of verbal description used by visually impaired people and comments upon the logical reasoning processes developed by people with sight loss. Aesthetics in this study is, however, treated from a more scientific and technical dimension. He makes certain graphical and scientific experiments in the course of

his study. So, it is essentially different from the textual aesthetics invoked in the present study.

Another study in this respect is the research undertaken by Chiara Renzi, Zaira Cattaneo, Tomaso Vecchi, and Cesare Cornoldi titled *Mental Imagery and Blindness*. In this study, they exhibit evidence pertaining to different aspects of cognition showing that blind individuals are able to generate analogical mental images based on haptics or auditory input. They also study how these representations allow blind individuals to perform efficiently in a variety of domains which require the use of imagery (such as memory, spatial and navigation abilities, numerical cognition) though exhibiting, in some cases, specific limitations or differences, which depend on the modality in which information is usually acquired in these individuals (e.g., via haptics and hearing) and the particular strategies employed.

The study titled *Imagery in Blind and Sighted* by Alison F. Eardley and Linda Pring is a pragmatic study conducted on twelve visually impaired candidates. The Thrust area of the study is whether or not imagery is experienced by people with and without sight in similar ways.

A medical study titled, “The Nature of Consciousness in the Visually Deprived Braine” by Ron Kupers, Pietro Pietrini, Emiliano Ricciardi and Maurice Ptito examines differences in the cerebral properties in sighted and blind individuals.

The historical evolution of an optical sensibility and related developments are also addressed by some other recent studies from a different angle. For example, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* by

Martin Jay evaluates the emergence of a visual consciousness in the western metaphysics. He traces the growth of this consciousness from Plato to Descartes while identifying the subtle interactions and transitions between sight and other senses in the realm of perception. He clearly points out the upper hand gained by optics in the Descartean philosophy. Finally he enquires about the subordination of such a visual metaphysics by the 20th century French thinkers such as Jean Paul Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Mark Paterson's book *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* discusses the evolution of the tactile sensibility in the western world. His analysis progresses through several historical incidents, documents and debates regarding the authenticity and supremacy of the experience of touch in comparison with the other senses, especially that of sight.

Thus, to conclude, most of the studies on visual impairment revolves around the technical aspects of blindness and its representation in the mainstream literature and other artifacts. Some of these studies focus on the areas of aesthetics. But the term is most often treated in connection with the multidimensional representations of blindness in the literary canons. The experience of blindness depicted by authors becoming blind in different stages of their life is hardly studied in the literary circle. A huge research gap still remains with regard to the discussion of the subjectivity of the visually impaired in their self-writings and creative manifestations. As per the best understandings of the researcher, the present study is one of the first attempts of its kind in the subject matter and textual orientation. Thus, the researcher feels that the study is relevant and substantial with its academic impact and literary significance.

Chapter 2

The World of Blindness and the World of Letters:

Visual Impairment, Autobiographies and Creativity

Literature in the twentieth century moved to a more subjective and individualistic turn. From the social and objective realms, it began to address the concerns and issues of diverse sections in society with apparent social, economic, physical and other differences. A more radical turn in the literary theory obviously boosted this new dimension in literature. The experiences of diverse marginalized communities such as racial, sexual, physical and other minorities received an unprecedented momentum in this new literary scenario.

Autobiographies have emerged as a favourite medium to register the multifaceted experiences of such marginalized groups. It is in such a context that the autobiographies and memoirs of some selected visually impaired authors are analyzed while accentuating the aesthetics, creativity and perception of blindness in these texts and the fulfillment in life of these authors.

The present chapter is designed, more or less, as a theoretical background to the textual analysis in the subsequent chapters. However, in the course of the study, this chapter progresses from a theoretical scrutiny to a more practical realm of textual survey. The present chapter focuses mainly on the following aspects of the study. This chapter analyses the context in which autobiographies became a favourite medium to establish the subjectivity of the marginalized sections. The recently developed discipline of Disability Studies is given a short introduction. It is

followed by a conceptual and historical explanation for visual impairment. This chapter also attempts a brief survey of the literature of the visually impaired from Homer to the present. In the final part of the chapter, the relationship between visual impairment and creativity is examined with special reference to the selected texts. The diverse creative orientations of these authors are juxtaposed and compared with one another while analyzing the subtle differences in their linguistic orientations.

As mentioned above, autobiographies have emerged as a strong medium to record the experiences of different marginalized groups. The new awakening was the result of the space and agency granted by postmodernism to a host of communities with apparent differences. This turn happened during the final decades of the 20th century. The development of a new sensibility which respected the experiences and realities of such groups paved the way for this new stream of expressions.

The term autobiography is derived from three Greek words; “auto” meaning “self”, “bio” meaning “life” and “graphia” meaning “record”. In the simplest way, an autobiography is the narrative of an author about his or her own life. Critics have given multiple definitions of autobiographies. For example, in his *Autobiographical Pact*, Philippe Leujeune defines autobiography as a “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence” and proposed that the author, narrator and protagonist have to be identified, using the proper name of the author as reference. (Lejeune, 298).

In her paper titled “On the Genre of Autobiography: Typology and Evolution”, Rosy Singh identifies the subject I as the most distinctive feature of

autobiographies. Autobiography developed as a distinctive genre in the late 18th and early 19th century rather as a subgenre of biographies. Early biographies were written on the life of Christian saints to commemorate their religious contributions and to provide inspiration for the people in the spiritual cause. Even Miracle plays in Europe were based on the lives of saints. A major element in the construction of biographies was their emphasis on objectivity and adherence to facts. Dr. Johnson developed a new type of criticism called biographical criticism in which the literary outputs of a particular author were evaluated in connection with the events of his life.

Johnson's *Life of Milton* for example is often noted for its curious blend of historical details and literary observations. The production of several renowned biographies was the result of painstaking efforts by their authors. For example, William J. Long records the case of James Boswell's biography of Dr. Johnson in his book, *English Literature its History and its Significance for the life of the English World*. Boswell followed Dr. Johnson like a shadow during the former's lifetime. His biography was published 20 years after the death of Dr. Johnson. Three or four of his biographies were already published before this masterpiece by Boswell. However, his book was noted for its meticulous and minute description of most of the major events in the life of Dr. Johnson.

Early literary autobiographies were received by readers with a sense of suspicion and antipathy. James Treadwell records a prominent example for this hostile reception of autobiographies in his book *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature* (1783-1834). When a small fragment from the autobiography of

Dr. Johnson saved by a servant from the fire to which he had bequeathed them was published in 1805, a disappointed writer in the Edinburgh Review lamented its pathetic details of lanced boils and bad dinners. It must be noted that this antipathy happened after the popular reception of Boswell's biography of Johnson. This example brings out the readers' preoccupation with facts and their skepticism towards the subjective details. But there was a gradual shift in this attitude.

A switchover from biographies to that of autobiographies created a remarkable shift in perception from the objective turn to that of the subjective one. Different studies locate different books and authors with regard to the beginning of autobiographies. Most of them, however, agree that *Confessions* by Saint Augustine during 4th century AD was one of the earliest autobiographies. *Confessions* was produced in Latin consisting of 13 books. The text recorded the significant transformation of Augustine from a hedonistic youth to a Christian theologian. This book however was read more for its spiritual cause and religious message rather than for its literary merit.

Confessions, the autobiography of the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau was published in the year 1782. It is quite coincidental that Rousseau selected the same title used by Saint Augustine 12 centuries ago in spite of the differences in their content and structure. The term "autobiography" was first used in English by the British scholar William Taylor. The early autobiographies in English such as William Wordsworth's *Prelude* and *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* by Thomas Dequincy were more lyrical and imaginative in nature than

the literary autobiographies, texts which focus more on survival, struggles, activism and sociopolitical perspectives evolved.

Conventional autobiographies are narratives that chronologically or retrospectively record the events in the life of a person. They may begin with the birth of a person or the events preceding it and often end with a distinct and culminating point in the author's life. Memoirs are considered different from the autobiographies. Memoirs are mostly experiential meditations or ruminations of an author related to specific objects, situations, events or other particularities in life. The focus in the memoirs is more on the persons, objects and situations experienced by the author rather than the development of the authorial self. Autobiographical essays record such events in a more organized or structured manner.

The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays by Helen Keller, for example, is a collection of autobiographical essays describing her sensual hierarchy in her conditions of deafness and blindness. This collection also records her interaction with a host of objects. Stephen Kuusisto's *Eavesdropping, A Life by Ear* is a collection of ruminations depicting his intense passion with the art of listening. In some of the chapters of this book, Kuusisto experiments with a new variety of memoirs called auditory postcards. Small daily occurrences in his life are composed in the form of auditory postcards and are addressed to some of his friends or renowned persons. Memoirs are now considered as a subcategory of autobiographies.

Autobiographies moved to a more dynamic and activistic character during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. From the final decades of

the 19th century onwards, a good number of authors from different marginalized sections came forward with their life narratives. The earliest examples came from the black population in America, especially by self-emancipated slaves during and after the civil war. Frederick Douglass produced three autobiographies recording his highly eventful life as a slave. They were, *Narrative of Frederick Douglass*, *My Bondage and my Freedom* and *The Life and Works of Frederick Douglass*.

Booker T. Washington's autobiography titled *Up from Slavery* records the struggles of a self-made black activist in the post-civil war America. This stream of Black autobiography considerably increased during the 20th century. The autobiographies of Martin Luther King Junior and Malcolm X provided two major dimensions of the black struggles in America during the 20th century. The Afro-American Black poetess Maya Angelou produced seven autobiographies to record her highly turbulent and dynamic life as a black woman. These new self-narratives with an activistic zeal were not restricted to Blacks alone.

Other marginalized groups also followed the same path slowly and steadily. *Joothan* by Omprakash Valmiki and *Akkarmashi* by Sharankumar Limbale are two renowned autobiographies of Dalits in India depicting their struggles against casteism and discriminations. It is in such a broad context that the emergence of the autobiographies of visually impaired and other disabled during the second half of the 20th century must be analyzed.

After the Second World War, a host of disabled people came forward with their autobiographies describing different dimensions of their experiences related to multiple disabilities. Thomas Couser's essay "Disability, Life Narrative, and

Representation" published in the fifth edition of *Disability Studies* edited by Lennard J. Davis evaluates the causes and context of the emergence of a host of autobiographies or life narratives by the disabled after the Second World War. He says:

> The cultural representation of disability has functioned at the expense of disabled people, however, in part because they have rarely controlled their own images. In the last several decades, however, this situation has begun to change, most notably in life writing, especially autobiography: in late twentieth century life writing, disabled people have initiated and controlled their own narratives in unprecedented ways and to an extraordinary degree (Davis, 356).

These autobiographies were produced by people with multiple disabilities such as blindness, deafness, polio, Lou Gehrig's disease), Alzheimer's, aphasia, Aspergers syndrome, asthma, cerebral palsy, chronic fatigue syndrome, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, disfigurement, down syndrome, epilepsy, locked-in syndrome, multiple sclerosis, obesity, obsessive-compulsive disorder, stuttering, stroke, and Toilette syndrome. America became a major location of these autobiographies.

During the world wars, a lot of abled people became disabled due to accidents in battles. As a part of the rehabilitation strategies, several new inventions were developed for the strengthening of the disabled. A host of NGO's were developed among the disabled. The new confidence instilled by such NGO's encouraged the disabled to express their experiences to the world in multiple ways. All the authors selected for the present study except Helen Keller produced their

texts after 1950. The passing of Disability Act in America became a major landmark in this respect. All the authors included in the present study except Professor John M. Hull belong to America. Even though Ved Mehta was born and brought up in India, he finished his education in America and finally settled there. Thus, this empowerment in America gave a new confidence and courage for the disabled to express themselves.

Another major study in this area is done by Beth A. Ferri in her article titled *Disability, Life Writing and the Politics of Knowing*. In this article, she analyses the politics behind the representation of different disabilities in autobiographies. She concludes:

> There is much to be learned by attending critically to disability life writing. By allowing the personal to inform the social, we insist on an embodied disability theory as an important site of knowledge production and social critique. Read in this way, memoir becomes an intervention into the politics of knowing as well as the politics of representation. As such, memoirs should not be seen as counter to theory or politics, but should be understood as a form of social action for their ability to talk back to dominant scripts and point to a more embodied form of social critique (Ferri, Disability Life Writings and the Politics of Knowing).

She assigns some critical and interrogative functions to the autobiographies with regard to their social, political and literary status. Thus, the autobiographies of the disabled including the visually impaired have developed to a more cultural and political turn from an experiential one. The autobiographies of blind people have not

only explored in great detail their type of blindness and related consequences but also consciously or unconsciously activated a new horizon for the visually impaired with enormous aesthetic, political and creative potentials. This new awareness must be placed in the broad context of the new theoretical discipline called Disability Studies.

Disability Studies emerged as a new theoretical discipline to evaluate the literary activities of the disabled and the representations about them. Several books by individual authors were produced on behalf of this task. But the new genre was officially inaugurated with the publication of the first edition of *Disability Studies Reader* edited by the American theoretician Lennard J. Davis during 1997. This is considered as a foundational text in the area. So far six editions of the same are compiled by Davis. Disability Studies has a very wide and complex spectrum of academic enquiries. It has both a theoretical and textual dimension.

Lennard J. Davis writes regarding the objective of the new initiative and the previous condition of the disabled people through the following quotation in the introduction to the second edition of *Disability Studies Reader*:

> Disability studies is a field of study whose time has come. For centuries, people with disabilities have been an oppressed and repressed group. People with disabilities have been isolated, incarcerated, observed, written about, operated on, instructed, implanted, regulated, treated, institutionalized, and controlled to a degree probably unequal to that experienced by any other minority group. (Davis, xv).

Thus, Disability Studies have both a creative and critical function. The critical function is related to the representation of multiple disabled groups in mainstream literature, cinema and other cultural artifacts. It also provides a theoretical and creative framework to analyze the literature produced by people with different disabilities.

From a theoretical spectrum, Disability Studies have evolved to a more activist turn. The legislations for the disabled, education and employment, social visibility and accessibility and social, political and cultural empowerment of the disabled have become some of the major concerns of this study.

'Disability Studies' is an expanding discipline. Regarding its theoretical potentiality Davis further writes; "the body in its variations is metaphorized, disbursed, promulgated, commodified, cathected and de-cathected, normalized, abnormalized, formed, and deformed. In other words, is it not time for disability studies to emerge as an aspect of cultural studies, studies in discrimination and oppression, postmodern analyses of the body and bio-power"? (Davis, xvi). Thus, Disability Studies has aligned itself with a host of other theoretical disciplines.

Marxism, Postmodernism, Feminism, Lacanian Psycho-analysis and Cultural Studies are some of the major areas with which this theoretical affiliation is possible. Cultural Disability Studies has emerged as a highly dynamic field discussing different paradigms of representing the disabled in the mainstream life, literature and other artifacts.

David Bolt in his book *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Re-reading of Twentieth-Century Anglophone Writing* discusses the prospects of Cultural

Disability Studies while quoting Ria Cheyne. “The key point about cultural disability studies, according to Ria Cheyne's *Theorising Culture and Disability* (2009), is that it "seeks to contribute" to our "understanding of disability and its role in wider culture," as well as to our "understanding of the particular cultural form or artifact under consideration" (101). (Bolt, 4).

Thus, Cultural Disability Studies is a fast-evolving discipline in the contemporary academic scenario. Lennard J. Davis’s parents were deaf. So their experiences and their conscious subjugation by the mainstream society provoked him to think of a new theoretical genre for the disabled. However, most other people involved in this discussion are individuals with manifest disabilities. Some of the major theoreticians and concepts involved in this study are *Stigma* by Erving Goffman, *Disability Aesthetics* by Tobin Siebers, *Narrative Prosthesis* by David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *Aesthetic Nervousness* by Ato Quayson and so on. Some of the other major theoreticians in the field are James C. Wilsom, Michael Davidson, Susan Sontag, Simi Linton, Shelley Tremain, Tom Shakespeare, Susan Wendell, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, David Johnstone, Alice Hall and so on.

Disability Studies also discusses the terminological inconsistencies related to the representation of the disabled. The debate revolves around the political correctness of the labels such as ‘disabled’, ‘impaired’ and ‘differently abled’. A fundamental problem with regard to the definitions of disability is that several of them are highly negative and redundant in tone and content. Simi Linton in her essay “Reassigning the meaning”, published in the second edition of the *Disability*

Studies Reader discusses these incongruities related to the definition of disability. She writes:

> The term disability, as it has been used in general parlance, appears to signify something material and concrete, a physical or psychological condition considered to have predominantly medical significance. Yet it is an arbitrary designation, used erratically both by professionals who lay claim to naming such phenomena and by confused citizens. A project of disability studies scholars and the disability rights movement has been to bring into sharp relief the processes by which disability has been imbued with the meanings it has and to reassign a meaning that is consistent with a sociopolitical analysis of disability (Davis, 162).

Regarding the negative tone of such common definitions, Linton writes:

> A glance through a few dictionaries will reveal definitions of disability that include incapacity, a disadvantage, deficiency, especially a physical or mental impairment that restricts normal achievement; something that hinders or incapacitates, something that incapacitates or disqualifies. Legal definitions include legal incapacity or disqualification. Stedman's Medical Dictionary (1976) identifies disability as a medico legal term signifying loss of function and earning power, whereas disablement is a medico legal term signifying loss of function without loss of earning power (400) (Davis, 162).

Thus, most of the definitions of disability have obviously negative connotations. Disability Studies have multiple models with regard to its analysis.

Social model, Cultural model, Medical model and Human rights' model combining the social and cultural models are some of the significant ones in this field. A very affirmative view of disability is given by United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). UNCRPD treats disability as a part of human diversity. It ensures freedom, full participation, equal rights and opportunities for the disabled persons. Respect should be given to the autonomy and difference of the disabled persons. A detailed discussion of the major tools and concepts of Disability Studies is beyond the scope of this study. Now it suffices to say that Disability Studies has provided greater agency and authenticity for the disabled in the academic scenario. It has provided a theoretical framework to interrogate the representation of the disabled in literature and offered a new initiative to represent textually the experiences related to multiple disabilities.

Visual impairment or Blindness is treated as a major area in Disability Studies. In comparison with several other conditions such as mental retardation, muscular dystrophy or down syndrome, the difficulties of a visually impaired person can be managed in multiple ways with relative success. However, blindness is generally treated as one of the most troublesome physical states by the mainstream society. There can be multiple reasons for this perception. In the contemporary society, eyes are, by and large, considered as the most reliable gateways to knowledge. The quotation ascribed to father Thomas J. Carroll that "the loss of eye is the loss of I" clearly reflects the ocular centric perspective profoundly rooted in the society. Moreover, blindness gives immense potentiality to represent it in literature, cinema and other cultural medium. This symbolic value makes blindness the most depicted, discussed and often misunderstood disability in the world.

The epistemological authority and supremacy often associated with sight is a major topic of study in the contemporary Disability Studies. David Bolt discusses this situation using such terms as Metanarrative of Blindness and Aesthetic Blindness. Sight is treated as the primeval medium of understanding and perception in the contemporary world. This unusual authority to sight naturally leads to the representation of blindness in life and literature synonymous with ignorance and darkness. Dr. Habeeb in his doctoral thesis titled *Representation and Construction of the Visually Challenged in Selected Fiction* submitted to the University of Calicut discusses such prejudices and negative stereotypes regarding the representation of the visually impaired in literature. He writes:

> One of the most illusory and problematic ideas that govern most of the perceptions about the visually impaired ever since the origin of civilizations is the misunderstanding that visual impairment is darkness. From the linguistic level to the literary and cultural paradigm, this perception is instrumental in building the existing images and constructs. One can trace the origin of such a belief to the hunting ages, where the involvement of the visually impaired was very limited due to the absence of vision. However, when sighted people began connecting this illusory association between darkness and visual impairment to their own experiences in the absence of light, this mythical and illusory association struck such a deep root in society that they were not ready to part with it, even when questions were raised on it by the competent authorities (Habeeb, 185).

This highly consequential association between blindness and darkness has governed all major representations of the blind in literature and other artifacts.

Another major debate revolves around the terminological inconsistencies related to the term blindness. It is believed that the term blind emerged from the window blinds or curtains that conceal light. Thus, this term has a clear negative connotation. Visually Challenged is the term preferred by those who want to portray the absence of sight in a more positive manner. However, the activists among the visually impaired negate this term for its euphemistic nature and its removal from the physical reality. Visually impaired is a medically and politically correct term. But the organizations and institutions for the visually impaired in the national and international scenario still retain the expression Blind on account of its currency and high prevalence. Thus, in this research, the terms Blind and Visually Impaired are simultaneously used.

Another major hurdle with regard to the expression Blind is the unusual frequency of negative connotations associated with this word. David Bolt in *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Rereading of 20th Century Anglophone Writing* and Georgina Kleege in *Sight Unseen* discuss the negative associations with the term. Mostly they indicate a sense of ignorance, stupidity or other such negative states. David Bolt illustrates this point while quoting Lennard J. Davis and Georgina Kleege. He refers to the thirteen meanings of blindness given by the Encarta World English Dictionary. All except the first one that is ‘unable to see permanently or temporarily’ has some obvious detrimental implications. For example, unable to recognize: unwilling or ‘unable to understand something blind to the consequences’, ‘unquestioning: not based on fact and usually total and unquestioning blind prejudice’,

Thus, all such meanings given have some pejorative or negative associations. Bolt feels that these definitions have nothing to do with the actual condition of physical blindness. The hidden implications of this terminological wilderness are explained while quoting Lennard J. Davis;

> The word blind is problematic because it denotes much that bears no intrinsic relation to visual impairment. For example, Lennard J. Davis points out that the word blind contains "moral and ethical implications" (Enforcing Normalcy 5) and as such resonates with the religious models of disability that interpret blindness as a punishment for sin (Bolt, 18).

A common feature of all these associations is that they alienate the actual blind persons from the mainstream society and deliberately remove them from the empirical reality. A detailed discussion of such terminological inconsistencies and representational fallacies is beyond the purview of this study.

Blindness is measured and classified on multiple ways. However, Snellen chart is treated as an international standard in measuring the degree of visual impairment. This chart for the scientific measurement of vision was developed by a Dutch ophthalmologist named Herman Snellen. Dr. Snellen became the professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Utrecht. He was a renowned eye specialist and became an expert in surgeries. Dr. Snellen wrote that the visual acuity is measured in the same way as the tactile sensibility is determined. If two touches with minimum distance can create two different sensations, it is the same case with two different points of visual acuity. He designed this special chart with the assistance and guidance from a German ophthalmologist named Dr. Albrecht von Graefe.

The motivation behind the development of this chart was to create an international standard for measuring visual acuity and visual field. Father Gabriel Farrell in his book, *The Story of Blindness* describes in detail this process of measuring the eyesight. There are seven lines in Snellen chart indicating different levels of visual acuity. The number in the top line stands for 60 and in the bottom line for 6. These lines are indicated by numbers or letters with fixed and varying size.

A person's amount of vision is decided in accordance with his capability to read the lines in the chart from respective distances. If he or she is able to read the top line of 60 from 60 meters and the bottom line of 6 from 6 meters, his visual acuity is 60/60 or 6/6. That person has hundred percent eyesight. The seven lines are indicated with the numbers as 6, 9, 12, 18, 24, 36 and 60. If a person's visual acuity is less than 6/60, he is considered as a blind person as per the American standard. In other words, after all possible corrections in the better eye, if a person is not able to see from 6 meters or 20 feet an object which is seen from 60 meters or 200 feet by a person with normal eyesight, he is considered as a blind person. A person below the visual acuity of 6/18 is treated as low vision in this category. In America, this is measured in feet and in other countries including India, this is calculated in metres. RPD Act passed by Government of India during 2016 defines the visual acuity in the following way.

a) "Blindness" means a condition where a person has any of the following conditions, after best correction: (i) total absence of sight; or (ii) visual acuity less than 3/60 or less than 10/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with best possible

correction; or (iii) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of less than 10 degree.

(b) "Low-vision" means a situation where a person has any of the following conditions, namely: (i) visual acuity not exceeding 6/18 or less than 20/60 up to 3/60 or up to 10/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with best possible corrections; or (ii) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of less than 40 degree up to 10 degree (The schedule of disability RPD act, 33 34) India followed the American standard of 6/60 in the PWD Act passed in 1995. But this was revised to the British standard of 3/60 or 10/200 during the RPD Act. Thus, those with the visual capacity between 3/60 and 6/60 also got included in the category of low-vision.

The focus in the American model is to give assistance to maximum persons who suffer from different degrees of blindness. British model however focuses on giving maximum assistance to those who suffer from intense amount of sight loss. Dr. Farrell argues that visual efficiency must be given equal importance to that of visual acuity while measuring the amount of sight. This is more complicated with regard to the near vision. While describing the intricacies and complexities in this field, he writes:

> It is now being recognized that defining blindness in terms of ophthalmic measurements, even when most scientifically determined, is not always accurate or fair. In the first place, a measurement of visual acuity attained on the basis of the Snellen Chart is not adequate, a fact which Dr. Snellen pointed out, for that formula applies chiefly to distant vision and is more accurate in the upper range of sight. In many cases, near vision is the critical

> factor, certainly for admission to schools for the blind. In arriving at an acceptable definition, near vision must be given the same scientific consideration that is now given to distant vision. A second factor that must not be overlooked is the ability of a person to use his residual sight, or visual efficiency. Too many visually handicapped persons are classified as blind on the basis of the Snellen tests who by "using their brains" need not be considered blind. As previously quoted, "a first-class brain can make very good use of an imperfect eye." A third factor that is fundamentally related is the need of more consideration of the kind of work that can be successfully performed with limited vision. More effort to find such fields of occupation might considerably reduce the number now considered economically blind. The wide variance to be found in these human factors militates against the effectiveness of determining blindness by ophthalmic measurements and calls for a more flexible type of definition (Farel, 206).

However, Snellen chart is now accepted as an international standard. A more recent document called Log MAR chart is developed but has not gained much currency in use.

Blindness is classified in multiple ways. The amount of sight and the time of the occurrence of the impairment are the two chief criteria for classifying visual impairment. As per the amount of sight, blind people are classified as totally blind and partially blind. A totally blind person suffers from total absence of sight. A person with a little residue of vision with minimum capacities such as the ability to count fingers or the capacity to recognize hand movements are also identified as

blind. They are also eligible for the benefits and assistance provided by the governments for the visually impaired. In India, this category includes the persons with the visual acuity below 3/60 and in America, it is below 6/60. The low-vision is those people with a little residue of sight but is below the sight level of 6/18. Those people with the sight level more than this are considered as people with normal eyesight. In the second edition of *The Encyclopedia of Blindness and Vision Impairment* edited by Jill Sardegna, this classification is elaborated:

> The terms blind and blindness are defined in a variety of ways according to the user. Rehabilitation experts, doctors and ophthalmologists, educators and leaders in the field determine and define the terms according to their own preferences and viewpoints. Over the past 150 years, blindness has been described using various terms including medically blind, legally blind, partially blind, partially seeing, low vision, functionally blind, Braille blind, vocationally blind, economically blind, visually defective, visually impaired, visually handicapped and visually disabled. Medical diagnostic guidelines define blindness as no light perception (NLP), or light perception and projection, or central acuity up to hand movements plus a large field loss. Hand movement and hand motion are terms used to describe someone who cannot see the separate fingers but who can discern some movement when the hand is waved. Light perception, or LP, describes the person who can perceive only light or its absence. NLP or no light perception refers to one who is unable to discern any light. (Sardegna, 28).

Thus, the amount of sight is an important criterion in classifying the visually impaired.

Legally blind is a term that is popular in America. In America, legally blind persons are only eligible to get state and federal assistance for the visually impaired. Regarding the selection and classification of the legally blind persons, Sardegna writes:

> The classification for legal blindness is determined by measuring visual acuity (how much detail one sees at a specific distance) and visual field (the area of vision). A person is classified as legally blind if the visual acuity of the better eye, with correction, is 20/200 or less. This involves a loss of central vision.
>
> One may also be described as legally blind if the visual field of the better eye, even with 20/20 vision, is limited to 20 degrees or less. An individual with loss in the visual field may experience peripheral or central vision loss. Loss in the peripheral, or side, vision may result in tunnel vision. Loss in the central, or straight- ahead, vision may result in difficulty in seeing an object in the center or direct line of sight. Because the classification involves measurement of the better eye only, people who are blind in one eye are not considered legally blind. (Sardegna, 29).

This term ‘Legally Blind’ has more currency in America. The difficulties in this case can be reduced for a great extend with sufficient adaptive devises and

techniques. Thus, blindness can be divided in to multiple varieties depending on the degree of sight.

On the basis of the time of its occurrence, blindness can be divided into congenitally impaired and adventitiously impaired. If a person becomes blind within the first five years of his life, he is treated as congenitally blind. Congenitally blind persons can be totally or partially blind. An individual totally blind from birth does not have any traces of visual memory. He or she further cannot have any idea of such constructs as colours, visual shapes and so on. An adventitiously blind person acquires the condition after five or more years due to accidents or any of the medical conditions. Diabetic Retinopathy, Retinitis Pigmentosa, Macular degeneration, Progressive Retinal Detachment, Glaucoma and Trachoma are some of the major reasons for adventitious blindness.

World Health Organization feels that more than 80 percent of adventitious blindness can be controlled and prevented with adequate medical and nutritional interventions. Cortical, Hysterical and snow blindness are some of the other varieties mentioned in the *Encyclopedia of Blindness and Vision Impairment* edited by Jill Sardegna. A detailed discussion of these types is not attempted here.

Among the selected authors, Helen Keller, Tom Sullivan and Ved Mehta were congenitally impaired with total blindness. Helen Keller lost her sight and the power of hearing 19 months after her birth due to a fever. Tom Sullivan became blind due to the condition called retrolental fibroplasia. Ved Mehta lost his sight due to Cerebrospinal Meningitis while he was three and a half years. Professor John M. Hull and Sally Hobart Alexander lost their sight in the later part of their life due to

medical reasons. Professor John M. Hull started to suffer from Cataract when he was 13. His condition worsened with Retinal Detachment and after 38 years, he became a totally blind person. Sally Hobart Alexander was diagnosed with a retinal disorder when she was 24. It developed in to a retinal hemorrhage and she completely lost her sight within a span of 2 years. Georgina Kleege and Stephen Kuusisto were legally blind. Both of them had a minimal sight which was not useful for any fruitful visual enterprises in life. Kuusisto became congenitally impaired due to the condition of retinopathy of prematurity. In case of Kleege, macular degeneration was diagnosed in both eyes when she was 11. The visual conditions of these authors are discussed in detail in the coming chapters.

The selected authors are classified into three categories for the present study. This classification is, however, arbitrary. The experience, degree and nature of blindness with respect to each of these different authors are the basis of this categorization. Helen Keller, Tom Sullivan and Ved Mehta are considered as congenitally impaired with total blindness. Sally Hobart Alexander and Professor John M. Hull are included in the group of adventitiously impaired. Stephen Kuusisto and Georgina Kleege are classified as legally blind writers. Being Americans, the expression “Legally Blind” is legitimate in the federal and state rules of America. Kuusisto can be treated as congenitally impaired and Kleege can be included in the group of adventitiously impaired writers. However, these authors are treated as a separate group due to multiple reasons. Their experiential similarity is the first factor. Both Kuusisto and Kleege had only marginal vision which was not sufficient for any fruitful visual enterprises. Moreover, irrespective of the differences in the

time of the occurrence of their impairment, their parents wanted to bring up them as sighted and thus increased the volume of sufferings in their life. Finally, they both attain fulfillment while accepting their blindness physically and emotionally. Thus, Kuusisto and Kleege are included in a separate category, namely Legally Blind.

The status of visually impaired in the society underwent radical changes through the progress of civilizations. People such as Berthold Lowenfeld and Father Gabriel Farrell discuss these transformations in the life of the blind persons over the centuries. The position of the blind moved from a state of annihilation to the present state of acceptance while passing through different stages. In ancient tribal societies, people with differences such as the visually impaired were deemed to be unfit to live. Deification and annihilation were the two methods used by such societies while addressing the visually impaired and other disabled. Berthold Lowenfeld summarizes this tribal attitude towards the disabled in his book *On Blindness and Blind People*:

> Annihilation of blind and imperfect children was, for instance, practiced by the Spartans who set them out in the wilderness of the Taygetus Mountains and left them to starve; in Athens, they were put into clay vessels and left by the wayside; and in Rome, baskets were sold on the market so that infirm children could be put into them to be floated on the Tiber River in which they drowned. These practices were legitimate under the laws of Lycurgus in Sparta and of Solon in Athens. Plato, Aristotle, and Seneca approved them in theory (Lowenfeld, 130).

Ancient tribal societies cherished a homogeneous social pattern. Those who were different from this pattern were treated as the symbols of evil and were exterminated from the existing social structure. Ancient religious cult often associated disability with sin and evil. Hinduism, for example, treated disabilities as punishments for the sins committed in the previous births in accordance with "the Law of Karma" in Puranas and other Vedic texts. However, some exceptional personalities in such cults were deified and respected. Homer, Demodocus, the "bard divine", and the prophets Tiresias and Phineus are some of the important examples in the Greek mythology. In Mahabharata, Dhritarashtra, the king of Hastinapura was totally blind by birth. Lowenfeld feels this veneration as another concrete form of separation. Both annihilation and deification overtly or covertly declared the physical differences of the disabled from the mainstream society.

With the arrival of the monotheistic religions, visually impaired and other disabled were treated as wards of the society. Christianity treated children, the aged and blind as the wards of the church. Hebraic law emphasized the obligations of the individual towards the needy and the responsibility of the family towards its weaker members including the blind. Lowenfeld analyses the reception of the blind in the early Christian communities:

> In the early Christian communities, the deacons took special care of the blind, and wealthy Christians took blind people into their households as their special wards. During and after the fourth century, asylums and hospitals were founded which also received the blind, such as the one by St. Basil in Caesarea-in-Cappadocia. However, there is no doubt that most of the blind

> were left to a beggar's lot, relying upon the good deeds of individuals and upon alms from the Church (Lowenfeld, 130).

A reasonably better treatment of the visually impaired and other disabled can be noticed in the religion of Islam. The present researcher and his supervisor Dr. A. I. Vilayathullah study the treatment of blindness in the Quran in the paper titled "Blindness in the Quran: A Reading of Selected Verses", published in the journal IJARISM. While summarizing the Quran's treatment of blindness, Akbar and Dr. A. I. Vilayathullah write:

> Quran treats blindness only as a physical condition and does not discriminate or degrade individuals on the basis of this condition. It assesses the scopes and limitations of visual impairment in a very realistic manner. From the example of Ummu Makhtum and other disciples, it is clear that blindness was not a hurdle in achieving spiritual fulfillment in life. Quran grants certain legitimate exceptions and privileges demanded by the absence of sight. Here, the respect is given to the autonomy and freedom of the blind person, unless it is against the established morality of the religion. So, the Quran offers one of the most cherished models of disability with its emphasis on inclusion and reasonable accommodation (Akbar C., Blindness in the Quran: A Reading of Selected Verses).

A prominent disciple of Prophet Muhammad, Abdullah-bin-Ummi Makhtum, was totally blind by birth. He was asked to lead the prayers in the mosque at Madeena when prophet Muhammmad and his companions left the city for battles and other enterprises. Such privileges were granted only to those persons with a

pious attitude in life. Imam or the leader of the prayer in Islam has judicial authority. Thus, theoretically and practically, Islam proves that blindness is not a major hurdle in realizing one's spiritual mission. But this model is very rare and exceptional.

After the 16th century, a minor set of self-emancipated people emerged from among the visually impaired in Europe. Such individuals were educated and had secured their own distinctions in the society. Lowenfeld calls this phase in the life of the blind people as the stage of self-emancipation. Nicholas Saunderson, the renowned mathematician and a contemporary of Sir Isaac Newton, John Metcalf, the famous road engineer, Francois Huber, the famous Swiss naturalist, Thomas Black Lock, the Scottish preacher and poet and Maria Theresia von Paradis, the celebrated Austrian musician are some of the prominent examples for such outstanding visually impaired geniuses in Europe.

Valentin Hauy established the first special school for the blind in 1784, The National Institution for Young Blind People in Paris. He got the inspiration for this school from a casual encounter with a blind beggar. The skill of the latter to identify a 10-shilling note inspired new ideas for Hauy about the potentials of the visually impaired. Soon blind schools were established in different European countries. The new schools taught the students using the embossed text books. Normal letters were printed on large substances so as to identify their shapes by touching them. The principle behind this strategy was that what is attractive to the hands must be attractive to the eyes as well. The difficulties in printing, the enormous effort needed for the task and the large space required for such texts were some of the major

limitations of this method. The discovery of Braille system by the French musician Louis Braille during 1829 created a revolution in the education of the blind.

A military man named Charles Barbier had developed a code of 12 dots for communication between soldiers. With his consent, Louis adopted this 12-dot system to that of 6 dots. With the 63 shapes derived from these 6 dots, all languages in the world could be produced in Braille. It was 2 years after the death of Louis in 1854 that Braille was accepted as the official medium of instruction in Royal Institute for the Blind in Paris, where Louis had his education. Soon this method spread to different parts of the world.

Two world wars have an important role with regards to the strengthening of the disabled including the visually impaired. A lot of abled people became disabled with the casualties of war. Since the loss of the human potentials from earlier abled persons would adversely affect the total potentials of the society, the governments were forced to make serious investigations in this field. A lot of new instruments, techniques and resources were developed for the blind and other disabled as a part of the postwar rehabilitation program. It is at the same time that the educated and unemployed among the disabled came out with new NGOs to achieve their rights and to express themselves in an assertive manner. It is in such a situation that the literature of the visually impaired became relevant and significant.

Any survey on the literature of the visually impaired will begin with Homer. There are no authentic records about the age or lifespan of Homer. Most of the critics feel that Homer was blind. He is often known as the chief among the blind bards. It is believed that a collection of other blind bards followed the Homeric

tradition. Demodocus is a bard mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey*. Ossian, the son of the Caledonian hero, King Fingal, was a blind bard who lived about A. D. 300. In his article titled "From Homer to Borges: A List of Blind Writers", Matt Riemann discusses the contributions of major blind authors. He quotes Oscar Wild while discussing Homer's blindness:

> I have sometimes thought that the story of Homer's blindness might be really an artistic myth created in critical days, and serving to remind us not merely that the great poet is always a seer, seeing less with the eyes of the body than he does with the eyes of the soul, but he is a true singer also, building his song out of music, repeating each line over and over again till he has caught the secret of its melody, chanting in darkness the words that are winged with light. (Riemann. From Homer to Borges: A List of Blind Writers).

While discussing Wild's perspective of Homer, Jorge Luis Borges in his essay on blindness writes; "We may believe that Homer never existed, but that the Greeks imagined him as blind in order to insist on the fact that poetry is, above all, music; that poetry is, above all, the lyre; that the visual can or cannot exist in a poet" (Borges, Essay on Blindness). An astounding thing about Homer is that his poems such as *Iliad* and *Odyssey* contain umpteen images related to war and other such physical encounters. How could a blind poet like Homer perceive such visual images and aspects with such a clarity and poetic flavor is a baffling question inviting future research. Poetry during Homer's time was aural. His epics were written long after his death. The connection between this aural poetry and his blindness are still quite mysterious. Some other critics feel the Homeric epics in

another way. They cite the importance given to extra visual images in Homer's poems as the reasons for the understanding of Homer as a blind poet.

John Milton is the next blind writer who is often counted in the series. Milton lost his sight during 1651-1652 when he was 44 years old. Milton had led an active life in the literary and political fields before he lost his sight. Since Milton enjoyed the visual beauty of nature with all its grandeurs and charms during a major portion of his life, whether the expression blind writer suits him is a point of debate. However Milton produced his great masterpieces such as *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* after the loss of his sight. Milton had to depend on his daughters for writing and rewriting the drafts of *Paradise Lost*. He often felt that the loss of sight gave him a new insight to view the world.

However, his pessimistic perspective on blindness is much explored in his sonnet "On his Blindness". He concludes the poem with the lines, "They also serve who only stand and Wait".

Even though Milton had seen the world up to his forty-fourth year, his legitimacy to write a text like *Paradise lost* with abundant visual images was debated in the 20th century. This happened during the arguments between T. S. Eliot and F. R. Levis on their essays on Milton. Eliot criticized Milton for his inconspicuous visual imagination in his first essay on Milton. He felt that Milton's faculty of sound is very strong which is reflected in his verses. But Milton's style of rhetoric in poetry has done considerable damage to English language. While commenting on the adverse effects of Milton's auditory and rhetorical style, Eliot writes:

> A disadvantage of the rhetorical style appears to be that a dislocation takes place, through the hypertrophy of the auditory imagination at the expense of the visual and tactile, so that the inner meaning is separated from the surface, and tends to become something occult, or at least without effect upon the reader until fully understood (Eliot, Milton I).

Eliot feels that the blindness of Milton has reduced the visual ambience of his poems. F. R. Levis in his essay on Milton almost agrees with this perspective of Milton. He feels that Milton's strength is related to sad disabilities. Milton has character, moral grandeur and moral force. But in his writings, he is disastrously single-minded and simple minded. Levis treats Milton's defect as the defect of imagination. Eliot has, however, considerably revised his position with regard to the sensibility of Milton in his second essay on Milton. He felt that the celestial world described in *Paradise Lost* is beyond the scope of the visual imagery. While comparing Milton with James Joyce, Eliot writes:

> *Paradise Lost*, like *Finnegan's Wake* (for I can think of no work which provides a more interesting parallel: two books by great blind musicians, each writing a language of his own based upon English) makes this peculiar demand for a readjustment of the reader's mode of apprehension. The emphasis is on the sound, not the vision, upon the word, not the idea; and in the end it is the unique versification that is the most certain sign of Milton's intellectual mastership. (Eliot, Milton II).

He feels that too much visual emphasis is irrelevant with regard to such celestial locations such as heaven and hell. Thus, Milton's blindness has become a

matter of debate even for centuries after his death. Some critics see obvious autobiographical elements in the representation of Samson in his final play, *Samson Agonistes*. Like Milton, Samson, the champion of Israel becomes blind and a slave among the Philistines. Milton might have connected his dwindled political and personal fortunes with the life of his tragic hero.

James Joyce, the famous 20th century Irish writer also suffered from blindness during the later part of his life. Joyce suffered from severe pains in his eyes and subsequent blindness in his last years. His blindness was to be the result of continuous surgeries to ameliorate his worsening eye pain. Joyce was not ready to dictate his texts to others and took enormous pains to finish his last book, *Finnegans Wake*. There are abundant references to blindness in his books. Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a partially sighted individual and has to wear spectacles. The breaking of Stephen's spectacle and subsequent incidents are very vividly depicted in the text. Stephen's anxiety that eagles will gouge his eyes if he is sinful is another example for his preoccupation with blindness. In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom helps a blind youth who passes through the street. Joyce took seventeen years to finish *Finnegans wake*. This novel with abundant portmanteaux words is criticized for being highly obscure and complex in perspective. This obscurity is often associated with his acquired state of blindness.

Jorge Luis Borges, the famous Argentinean author became blind in his 30s due to the condition called Progressive Retinal Detachment. This blindness increased gradually but did not affect his creativity. When his difficulties to write increased, he focused on lecturing and teaching. In his essay, "Blindness", Borges

talks about the role of disability and blindness in his writings. He discusses the irony of being a man of letters and losing his sight. However, he expresses his happiness over being the director of the National Library of Argentina. He further states that the two previous directors of this library, Paul Groussac and José Mármol were also blind quite coincidentally.

Citing Homer, Borges finds something harmonious between writing and blindness. He concluded; “Blindness has not been for me a total misfortune; it should not be seen in a pathetic way. It should be seen as a way of life: one of the styles of living” (Borges, Essay on Blindness). Wyndham Lewis, the poet, painter and dramatist also became blind in the twilights of his life. James Thurber, the American writer, was shot with a toy gun during his childhood and resulted in the loss of the sight of his left eye and the impairment in the other one. He became a famous cartoonist and fiction writer surpassing his impairment. It is significant that all these writers excluding Homer with known recorded history are adventitiously impaired writers.

Helen Keller is the first established congenitally blind writer often discussed in the literary scenario. It is quite coincidental that she is the first author considered in the present study. All the writers discussed in this study excluding Helen Keller produced their writings in the second half of the 20th century. Naturally, the facilities and options for the blind people have undergone radical transformations. However, these texts declare that the attitudes of the society towards the blind people have not changed much during the course of this progress. Thus, their narrations of blindness often tell the tales of struggles, discomfitures and quest for survival and realization

of their goals in life. So, the study hereafter discusses the relationship between blindness and the creativity of the different authors selected here. The selection of language and the expressions and techniques they use to depict blindness are significant tools while analyzing the creative moods of these authors. The primary understanding of the researcher is that it is the intensity of blindness and subsequent experiences which shape the linguistic orientation of a particular author. This is to be elaborated with regard to the texts discussed.

Helen Keller, Stephen Kuusisto and Professor John M. Hull have selected a highly distinguished language to represent their own experiences of blindness. The selections of their respective styles or creative flavours are decided by a host of internal and external factors. The time of the occurrence of blindness, the particular academic orientations and one's own philosophical and emotional temperament are vital factors in the selection of such a language. Since blindness adversely affects the growth of an individual, the assistance from multiple corners to overcome the barriers related to blindness also influences the process of survival. However, the trials and challenges in the actual life may become a boon in the textual realm. The case of Stephen Kuusisto and Professor John M. Hull testify this fact with ample textual evidence.

Helen Keller has used a very sophisticated or polished language to depict her personal triumphs over blindness. She herself clarifies the scopes and limitations of such a language. This is illustrated while discussing the plagiarism controversy elaborated in the fourth chapter. Her language learning is detailed in the third chapter with observations from critics and experts in this field. Here the survey is

restricted to the kind of language used and its dimensions. While discussing the plagiarism controversy elaborated in the fourth chapter, she writes in *The Story of My Life*:

> Now, if words and images come to me without effort, it is a pretty sure sign that they are not the offspring of my own mind, but stray waifs that I regretfully dismiss. At that time, I eagerly absorbed everything I read without a thought of authorship, and even now I cannot be quite sure of the boundary line between my ideas and those I find in books. I suppose that is because so many of my impressions come to me through the medium of others' eyes and ears (Keller, 34).

This observation by Keller is the key to unfold the secrets of the highly metaphorical and referential language used by Helen in her texts. The use of this language is not restricted to her autobiographies; *The story of My life* and *Midstream: My Later Life*. Her collection of autobiographical essays *The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays* and her prose writings such as *My Religion* are composed with the same language. The rich similes, allusions metaphors and other figures of speech often complicate her sentences. How far these constructions are her own productions and how many of them are used from her unconscious reflections on her acquired stuff, is a complex question. However, it can be inferred that she might have used such a language to depict her extra ordinary realm of experiences.

She gives more insights regarding the nature of her language in *The Story of My life*. She describes a letter written to Mr. Michael Animus, the director of Perkins

Institute during her childhood. Since she understood the passion of Mr. Animus for Italy and Greece and his enthusiasm for antiquity, she used all the bits of poetry and history that she has acquired with regard to these subjects in her letter to him. He highly appreciated the creative nature of such information and could not doubt an eleven-year-old deaf-blind girl quoting such sophisticated details in her letters. Regarding the nature of her early compositions, Helen writes; “Those early compositions were mental gymnastics. I was learning, as all young and inexperienced persons learn, by assimilation and imitation, to put ideas into words. Everything I found in books that pleased me I retained in my memory, consciously or unconsciously, and adapted it” (Keller,35). As stated here, she was using all her available knowledge in order to express her ideas clearly and precisely.

Helen compares this early invention of language with the crazy patchwork made by her during the initial days. As she puts it; “This patchwork was made of all sorts of odds and ends--pretty bits of silk and velvet; but the coarse pieces that were not pleasant to touch always predominated. Likewise, my compositions are made up of crude notions of my own, inlaid with the brighter thoughts and riper opinions of the authors I have read” (Keller, 35). She compares the process of writing with a Chinese puzzle. She feels that the words will become sufficient to express her thoughts and impressions through a deliberate will. By this way, she was hopeful of her success as a writer by outgrowing her ‘periwigged’ compositions.

Another major debate is regarding the veracity of the facts and experiences stated in the books and letters by Helen. Helen herself admits this skepticism related to her writings in her book, *The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of*

Essays. In the second chapter titled “The Hand of Others”, she discusses the criticism of people regarding the authenticity of her description of diverse situations. She writes; “am told that the words I have just written do not describe the hands of my friends, but merely endow them with the kindly human qualities which I know they possess, and which language conveys in abstract words. The criticism implies that I am not giving the primary truth of what I feel; but how otherwise do descriptions in books I read, written by men who can see, render the visible look of a face” (Optimism, 9). In order to explain her point, she states her impression or understanding of a ‘human face’. She has read that the face is gentle, strong and it is full of patience. She asks as a writer whether she has the right to record this impression acquired due to her not seeing the actual human face.

Helen here discusses an important problem related to the use of the language by a visually impaired person. The crucial question is whether a blind author uses a distinguished language of his or her own or follows a common language. Different authors have their own answers for these questions. Helen Keller uses a language impregnated with metaphors, similes and other devices to register her highly special realm of experiences. Her vociferous reading supplies an extra ordinary terrain of references to her books. Extra visual factors have a clear upper hand in such a language. Abundant examples from her texts can be cited for this highly referential language. Her description of the experiences of coolness and hardness in *The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays* is a beautiful example for it:

> The coolness of a water-lily rounding into bloom is different from the coolness of an evening wind in summer, and different again from the

> coolness of the rain that soaks into the hearts of growing things and gives them life and body. The velvet of the rose is not that of a ripe peach or of baby's dimpled cheek. The hardness of the rock is to the hardness of wood what a man's deep bass is to a woman's voice when it is low. (Optimism, 8)

The experiences of coolness and hardness are distinguished in such a keen manner that all her available faculties like smell, touch and taste are combined to reflect on these states. These comparisons beyond the primary logic are the product of a highly imaginative mind. But whether this unusual comparison is a product of her realization or her imagination is a complex question inviting future research. This is the pattern used by Helen throughout her books. She employs all her available sensual impressions to beautify her textual constructions. Thus through such a highly figurative, metaphorical and referential language, Helen becomes successful for a great extend in transgressing her blindness and deafness in the textual realm. Indeed, Helen's disabilities don't hamper her creativity but supplied a language filled with abundant references, frequent shifts between her three sensed realities and repeated use of the expressions and usages that she has acquired through her vociferous reading. Thus, blindness and deafness become boons in creating a unique style of her own in the world of letters. Her writing style is scarcely imitated and often admired for their uniqueness and distinctness. The aesthetic dimension of this language and the process of its learning are elaborated in the next chapter.

Professor John M. Hull in his book, *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness*, describes his experiences related to blindness in a highly

emotional and philosophical language. His post-impairment trauma is written in a highly morbid and cynical style. Many of his frustrations are manifested in the form of his dreams. The progression of these dreams registers a gradual shift in perspective from a melancholia and pessimism to optimism and spiritual consolation. The language of the text almost follows a very unique pattern. He begins a particular chapter while narrating an incident in his life after blindness. Being a professor of theology, he himself comments on it and reaches on a conclusion. Many of the conclusions are however rather vague and flimsy in spirit. But the undertone of despondency provides a particular charm and lyrical beauty to his style.

Here is a positive example from his description of his situation after his impairment. Regarding the sonorous aspects of the voices of others while understanding their moods or attitudes, he writes:

> The capacity of the voice to reveal the self is truly amazing. Is the voice intelligent? Is it colourful? Is there light and shade? Is there melody, humour, gracefulness, accuracy? Is it gentle, amusing and varied? On the other hand, is the voice lazy? Is it sloppy and careless? Is it flat, drab and monotonous? Is the range of vocabulary poor and used without precision and sensitivity? These are the things which matter to me now (Hull, 18).

Here the expression ‘colourful’ may perhaps appear very odd with regard to the perception of voice by a blind person. However, it is significant that this entry is recorded in a very early phase of his transformation. But even in this stage, his faculty of understanding the subtle nuances of human voices is put in a highly lyrical

manner. This ambience is maintained even in those passages with highly skeptical or pessimistic tones. A profound example for his sadness is his description of the impact of asthma. His physical perspiration is connected in an extraordinary manner to his condition of visual impairment:

> Reaching the bedroom, I sat on the edge of the bed. I was suddenly aware that my hands, my forehead and, indeed, my whole body were perspiring. I had an intense feeling of being enclosed. I desperately needed to get out. I must get out. I felt that I was banging my head, my whole body, against a wall of blindness. I had to break through this black curtain, this dark veil which surrounded me. Somewhere, out there, there was a world of light. I had to get out into it. At the same time, I had a sense of outrage. How could this happen to me? How could it be possible? What right had they? Who could ask me to go through this? Who had the right to deprive me of the sight of my own children at Christmas time? (Hull, 40-41)

In these passages, his experiences of breathing difficulties and perspirations are connected with his present state of blindness in an unusual manner. Even though the comparison can be treated as a result of the inertness or frustrations caused by his impairment, the language used for such contemplation makes the situation worth pondering or reflecting.

Professor Hull follows the same pattern throughout his text. The essential undertone of sadness might be necessitated by his extraordinary terrain of blindness. A gradual progression in his mood is also reflected in the selection of his language. He also comments on the problem of the language for the abled persons used by a

disabled person. This illustrated in the section, “I see What You Mean”. Professor Hull feels that the common language is filled with an extreme amount of visual metaphors and expressions. He quotes such examples as, “Well, I'll see you around.”, “Nice to see you again.”, “I see what you mean.” And “I am pleased to see you”. From a primary reading, these expressions have obvious visual implications. He quotes some of his friends teasing him when he uses such expressions in his ordinary conversations. However, he feels that seeing can be here equated with understanding. Since a blind person lives in a world created for the sighted, he cannot often negate such obvious visual expressions from his language. These expressions are unconsciously forced even into the language of the blind, because the ordinary language presupposes a visually dominant world. As elaborated in the next chapter, he identifies a clear connection between seeing and knowing. He asks the significant question, whether a disabled person must refrain from using such expressions with metaphorical bearings on disability. He elaborates this with an example of an orthopedically disabled parliament member talking about standing on the parliament:

> Most disabled people refrain from using that part of the language which makes metaphorical use of the disability from which they suffer? How absurd this would be. It would impose a new, linguistic disability upon people already disabled. When somebody in a wheelchair says that she is thinking of standing for parliament, I don't draw attention to the disability by commenting wittily 'You mean you will go in your wheelchair to parliament'. If one of my friends remarks that she bumped into so and so the other day in

> the High Street, I do not, as a rule, guffaw and ask 'Did you hurt him? (Hull, 25).

Here he feels that our ordinary conversations are not often dictated by such theoretical principles governing disability or blindness. This understanding on the language of the disabled must be however contrasted with the criticism of those expressions or structures with a derogatory implication on disability. The other dimensions of this discussion are dealt with in the next chapter.

Hull has used a highly evocative and metaphoric language to describe his eventful life as a blind person. In spite of his generalizations on the language in some places, he has used a language filled with extra visual images. However, it is with considerable difficulty that he tries to detach himself from the visual world. This remarkable shift happens very slowly but fruitfully. Being a newly impaired person, the early chapters of his book are filled with full of his misapprehensions, strange fears, disturbing dreams, hallucinations and irrational anxieties related to his blindness. These frustrations are demonstrated in a highly morbid language with an undertone of melancholy and pessimism. The gradual shift in his mood and confidence, of course, influence the tone of his writing as well. Thus, his emotional and mental frustrations provide a lyrical beauty and meditative quality to his writing. While assessing the progress of his text, one understands that the emotional despondency in his life provide an unusual depth and philosophical undertone to his writing. Thus, blindness doesn’t act as a barrier to his creativity but boosts it in an unpremeditated manner. The subtle aesthetic and other practical dimensions of this language are discussed in the coming chapters.

Stephen Kuusisto has suffered the most serious traumas related to visual impairment in his life. Rather than his actual blindness, it is the conscious rejection of the same by his parents that caused his constant and incomparable misfortunes in life. Naturally, his language is so diverse and emotionally intense to describe his eccentric situations in life. He employs two distinct patterns of languages in his autobiography *Planet of the Blind: A Memoir* and his lyrical memoir titled *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear*. The second text was written a long time after the first one. The changes in time may be instrumental in causing such a shift in style in the second book. However, the reality discussed in the former book is much graver and more complex, and a highly lyrical, metaphorical and referential narrative is inevitable to describe his intricate situation. Unlike Professor Hull, Kuusisto's *Planet of the Blind: A Memoir* is a curious blend of pathos and humour. He uses irony and mockery as the undertones to elaborate the tragedies related to blindness.

This lyrical and highly referential style is visible throughout the text. A simple example is in the first section while describing his own attitude to blindness often created and modified by his parental attitude:

> Raised to know I was blind but taught to disavow it, I grew bent over like the dry tinder grass. I couldn't stand up proudly, nor could I retreat. I reflected my mother's complex bravery and denial and marched everywhere at dizzying speeds without a cane. Still, I remained ashamed of my blind self that blackened dolmen. The very words blind and blindness were scarcely to be spoken around me. I would see to this by my exemplary performance. My

> mother would avoid the word, relegating it to the province of cancer (Kuusisto, 6).

Here is a clear example for the kaleidoscopic style which is continued through the book. He presents the reality in a much-accentuated fashion with his emphasis on the expression “blind”. One particular specialty of Kuusisto’s style is that it can be hardly paraphrased. Instead of stating the facts, he mixes them with his abundant imagination, the information that he has acquired and so many other odd things. For example, he depicts the alienation in the primary school in a very unusual manner:

> IN SCHOOL THE printed word scurries away from my one "reading eye"--words in fact seem to me like insects released from a box. While the class reads aloud, I watch the spirals of hypnotic light that ripple across my eyes when I move them from side to side. I do not belong here. My little body at this desk is something uncanny--a thing that belongs in the darkness and that has been brought to daylight. But I talk, answer questions, make others laugh. I'm interested in everything and tell the class that I can spell Tchaikovsky (Kuusisto, 19).

Here his alienation in the classroom due to the absence of proper assistance or guidance is described while covering the sorrow with a hint of humour and sarcasm. This strange blend of pathos and humour is present throughout the text.

Kuusisto’s *Planet of the Blind: A Memoir* is a multisensory paradise. He evokes all the senses such as smell, touch, taste and hearing in order to elaborate his

varying experiences of blindness in his life. Kuusisto quotes a lot of writers such as Dickinson, Frost, Milton, and Wallace Stevens and so on during the course of his writing. In other words, his writing is hyper textual in tone and content. His style is very unique in structure and content. His losses and frustrations are depicted in a highly referential framework with a superior craftsmanship. For example, his problem of reading in the college is described while quoting the experiences of several renowned writers:

> Roaming in needy tandem with the others who can see is no substitute for a room of one's own--this I understand. I need to live somehow, I don't know, like Carl Jung, who had a stone turret for his personal ruminations. Robinson Jeffers, he had Tor House, a homemade castle by the sea in Carmel, California. Montaigne had a tower of some kind. Shit, I don't need a tower. A tent will do. Didn't young Robert Lowell pitch a tent on Alan Tate's lawn? But he could read. I need a companion (Kuusisto, 92-93).

How can one analyze or elaborate such heavy passages rather than enjoying their supreme literary ambience or lyrical beauty? This exuberant or spontaneous style is continued throughout *Planet of the Blind*. The kaleidoscopic style of this kind makes him one of the superior blind writers in the contemporary world. The derelictions, alienation and deprivations caused by the conscious rejection of his blindness are converted to a highly illusive hyper textual world. Thus, Kuusisto's troubles become a boon in his writing.

Blindness here supplies a special creative flavor while mixing his despondent affairs of life with an undercover of humour or satire. The evolution of this

transformation is described in the fourth chapter. Another dimension of his language is experimented in his memoir called *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear*. However, in this work, the content is more important than its language. So, a detailed analysis of the same is attempted in the next chapter.

Ved Mehta, Tom Sullivan and Sally Hobart Alexander use a very general or ordinary language to comment on their experiences of blindness. There are subtle variations in their language owing to the differences in their literary taste, stylistic preferences and other subjective textual features. But these differences are dictated by their distinct textual orientations rather than by the impact of the visual impairment on their writing. There are multiple factors which could be responsible for such a textual attitude. First of all, all the three authors mentioned above give importance to the practical consequences of blindness. Naturally, they narrate their experiences in a more common language. These authors could also overcome the difficulties related to blindness with relative ease. Finally, all of them conclude their texts with an optimistic note. However, the subtle variations in their language have to be elaborated for comparing their diverse perceptions on blindness.

Tom Sullivan has decided his book *If You Could See What I Hear* as a motivational text. He clarifies his position in the author's note itself. He is hopeful that the readers may be boosted by the optimistic perspective which he has developed with considerable skepticism. He declares at the outset that his clear-cut message is that his joy of living life to the full has far outgrown his physical disability. He plans to inspire others by example and selects a language suitable for his motivational propositions. Sullivan's language has a rich eloquence and a flavour

for describing things in a highly imaginative manner. His expressions are filled with umpteen comparisons, contrasts and other literary devises. However, his style lacks the emotional depth of Professor John. M. Hull or the metaphorical narration of Kuusisto. Here is an example from his description of the childhood. He narrates his celebrated wrestling match with his father's friend and the famous boxer Tussey Russell:

> Gloves were found and the whole company moved into the yard, there to circle Tussey and small Tom. I would feel a feather touch on my nose and would wildly pummel back, my fists flailing like the sails of a windmill. Once Tussey must have been bending down or looking north, because my small fist shot out and connected with his jaw. The old champion of the ring rolled in the dirt. From the circle of Dad's friends there rose such a thunder of applause that it threatened to bring down the porch roof (Sullivan, 18).

This distinct style is followed throughout the text. His other autobiographical narratives such as *Adventures in Darkness: Memoirs of an Eleven-Year-Old Blind Boy* and *As I See It: My View from the Inside Out* also are written in the same kind of language.

Another powerful example for his skillful, slightly hyperbolic and highly entertaining narrative style is the description of his attitude after his first experience in skydiving. The situation is put in a very philosophical manner:

> Both my skydiving and my rowing were therapeutic for me. They provided escape valves for the critical build-up of frustrations on the Harvard campus.

> Without these recreations I don't think I could have survived my twenty-first year. But these pastimes did not heal my spirit, being eaten away by the leprosy of cynicism; nor did they answer my urgent need--the need of every human being--for love. Cynicism and love cannot be companions in one human heart, for they are mortal and eternal enemies (Sullivan, 116).

His frustrations in Harvard and new adventurous experiments are put in a highly philosophical manner. But these are occasional digressions from the factual and plain method in which he depicts his own life. Wherever needed, he provides twists and turns to make his narrative enthralling and appealing. But this narration clearly revolves around the practical aspects of blindness and doesn't show any special reserve of language related to blindness. Thus, Sullivan gives importance to the practical nuances of blindness and composes a motivational story with his fluency, fondness for adventures and his unique imaginative flavour.

Ved Mehta is an internationally acclaimed writer. Born in India, he had his education in America and Britain and finally settled down in America. Being a versatile writer, he has experimented with multiple literary forms such as autobiographies, biographies, fictions, histories, journalistic pieces and other multiple literary forms. His most celebrated autobiography *Continental Exiles* was published in several volumes. The first volume *Dadaji* is a partial biography of his father Amolak Ram Mehta, a medical officer in British Indian Civil service. Mehta's *Face to Face: An Autobiography* is a brief survey of his life up to the completion of his education and settling in America. In this book, the narration is more factual in

content. The events are narrated with a tripartite structure. The first part comprises of his education and activities in undivided India.

The second part describes his life in post-independent India up to his departure to America. The third part includes his life in America, his education, part time career and his management of blindness there. The first and the second periods are described in a more imaginative and detailed manner in another of his autobiographies titled *The Ledge Between the Streams.* Many of the more interior and subjective stuff left in *Face to Face: An Autobiography* is elaborated in *The Ledge Between the Streams* in a highly picturesque manner. The third book, *All for Love* depicts his relationship with four ladies and his quest for fulfillment in the course of his love affairs. In each of these books, he chooses the language suitable for the particular content. Like Tom Sullivan, his focus is however on the practical aspects of blindness rather than its more subtle aesthetic dimensions. This selection of language may be necessitated by his attitude to blindness which is elaborated in the third and fourth chapters.

Mehta's language has a lyrical beauty and dynamics of its own. His descriptions are more picturesque and meticulous in nature. In his writings, the visual element is predominant. The birth in an upper-class family and his contact with the higher professionals in society might have helped him to produce such a dynamic language. Moreover, Mehta, in his writings, seldom discusses the subtle aesthetic dimensions of language related to blindness. For example, he describes the appearance of the markets and salesmen in Simla. The surroundings are described in meticulous details:

> In the evening, however, we found diversion along the main street of Murree Hills; the Mall Road was about two miles long, with a quarter-mile stretch in the center lined on both sides by small shops with Western- style show windows. The salesmen were well-groomed prototypes of their fellow tradesmen in England, with jovial extrovert mannerisms and hearty handshakes. All the summer habitants of Murree Hills flocked to the Mall Road after six o'clock, strolling up and down until they had sized up the bargains in the show windows, and greeted and chatted with their friends from the valley. Wearied by their walk, students might stop in at the coffeehouse, where all the current political ideas clashed over cafe" au lait and roasted nuts, until the growing heat of arguments rivaled the noise of the Mall. A slender street sloped from the Mall Road like an out- flung arm, and along this street was the Indian bazaar, with large baskets spread out from one end to the other, half hiding vegetable vendors and the dilapidated shops of cobblers and blacksmiths chords (*Face*, 65).

These passages are put in such an exuberant manner that it is very difficult for a blind person to comprehend the minute details of the surroundings in this way. Mehta composes his descriptions in such elaborate and visually appealing ways. He gives very tiny details connected with a particular incident or object. This must be contrasted with the more contemplative or concentrated mode of narration by Professor John M. Hull or Stephen Kuusisto. Mehta’s discussion of blindness is restricted to its practical and mundane aspects. He selects a language with importance to vivid details and dynamics of his life. Such a language is more

empirical or descriptive than experiential or subjective. Thus, blindness doesn't' have a major impact on his selection of language or the subject matter.

Sally Hobart Alexander in her autobiographical narratives such as *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness* and *On My Own: The Journey Continues* employs a common language with her straightforward and factual narration of her story. She describes the incidents related to the loss of her sight and subsequent developments in a very simple but eloquent style. There are no many embellishments or metaphorical expressions in her style. Her focus is on the minute details related to the loss of her sight and the major strategies used for her overcoming the barriers. Like Mehta and Sullivan, she also emphasizes the practical consequences of blindness. So the matter is more important to her than the manner.

In the first book, *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness*, the narration is simple and direct. She doesn't use circumlocutions or such other devises in her descriptions. The very first chapter of the book describes the incidents leading to the loss of her sight in a very plain and smooth manner:

> I couldn't imagine what had caused that black line. So when I got back to my apartment, I called and made an appointment with the eye doctor who'd sold me the contact lenses. I shoved my unmade bed up into the wall, grabbed a Tab from the refrigerator, and hopped into the shower. I let the water trickle into my eye. Maybe I was suffering from eyestrain or fatigue. I worked as usual the next day, drilling my third graders in math and spelling, ending our citrus unit with a picnic lunch and a hike through a nearby orange grove (Alexander, 1).

These passages depict the reality in a plain and effortless manner. The same mode of narration is followed throughout this book. She elaborates on the subtle nuances of her survival and describes the most delicate aspects related to the surmounting of her blindness. The process is described, however, in a very involved style.

This style becomes much more intense and complex in her second book *On My Own: The Journey Continues*. The reality expressed in this book is grimmer and more troubling. Naturally, the language acquires a little more emotional intensity in her descriptions. For example, she describes her intense frustrations and claustrophobic attitude during the first lonely day in her flat after becoming blind:

> I shuddered. The Paul Simon fan could turn out to be the murderer!
>
> "Stop it," I said, steadying myself against the wall. The blindness made such a big difference. I pressed my hand against my mouth. Above the blare of the television, another sound caught my ears--a low, rumbling groan. I swung around and tensed. But the groan came from me.
>
> "I am losing my mind," I whispered.
>
> I walked over to my bed and pulled a heavy ceramic vase from the shelf above it. A weapon. I wouldn't succumb without a fight!
>
> One moment I'd convinced myself that there was no murderer. In the next I braced myself for a violent death.
>
> I stretched out on the bed with the vase. Truth was, there already had been a death--to my sight; to my sighted self (Alexander 5-6).

Here the passages are very terse and emotional in tone to describe her terrible loneliness and fear of the unknown. But her focus is more on the practical aspects of blindness rather than its subtle aesthetic or emotional dimensions. Thus, her language doesn't offer anything special with regard to the subjective realm of blindness. The practical side of her blindness and the strategies of her survival are elaborated in the coming chapters.

Finally, Georgina Kleege in her *Sight Unseen* presents a perfect blend of the two distinct styles discussed in this study. She combines the emotional intensity, contemplative nature and philosophical undertone used by Professor John M. Hull or Stephen Kuusisto and the more practical, simple but eloquent style used by Tom Sullivan and Ved Mehta. She approaches blindness from both a creative and critical angle. Wherever needed, she provides subtle embellishments or figurative textures to her narration. She also maintains a strict adherence to facts in her descriptions.

Kleege subtly shifts between the first and the second style as per the need of the situation. At times, her narration is simple and straightforward. For example, she depicts the ill-treatment of the blind by the American Airlines:

> As the blind, like other Americans, began to fly more and more, the airlines and the Federal Aviation Administration adopted regulations to deal with them. Blind activists have been forcibly removed from airplanes for refusing to give up their white canes. The airlines saw the canes as a hazard to other passengers: "You might poke out someone's eye." in fact, there is a well-documented case of an emergency crash landing in which a blind man was the first passenger to find and open an exit door. Accustomed as he was to

> navigating without eyesight, a little smoke and darkness were no obstacle to him. Today, the FAA has amended its policies, though individual airlines and flight crews sometimes still discriminate (Kleege, 38).

Here she describes the things in a very factual and plain manner. However, this style is not unique in her book. She drifts to her subtle variants when the situation demands it. For example, she describes the limitations of her fragmented vision in a highly lyrical and referential style:

> A good baker smells when the bread is done. An auto mechanic hears the trouble in the engine — isn't that why they call it a tune-up? You can fasten a necklace at the back of your neck without looking, shampoo your hair with your eyes closed and find the light switch in the dark. "But when I do those things, I'm not renouncing sight," you may argue, "I just sometimes get by without it." This hits on a dilemma that faces the blind like me who have, in the phrase of experts, "some usable sight." The phrase is troubling because it seems to denote a hierarchy with visual elite (20/20 or better) on top and the blind with absolutely no sight on the bottom. Also, the phrase is imbued with the notion that there is a right and wrong way to use sight (Kleege, 113-114).

Here the reality of her fragmented vision is presented with a lot of comparisons, contrasts and other devises. The passages have an aesthetic beauty of their own and present the things in a slightly hyperbolic manner.

Kleege also discusses the problem of the visually dominant language used by a blind person. She explains the difficulties when a blind person experiences an

optical-centered world. All the major artifacts in the world are designed for a sighted person:

> Through nature or nurture, I know how to make the most of what I see.
>
> But beyond my taste for the visual, I know what it means to be sighted, because I live in a sighted world. The language I speak, the literature I read, the art I value, the history I learned in school, the architecture I inhabit, the appliances and conveyances I employ were all created by and for sighted people. I find it easy to imagine what it's like to be sighted. I had to write this book to learn what it means to be blind (Kleege, 2).

Even though the experiences described here are highly subjective in the case of Kleege, it has a universal dimension with regard to the life of the visually impaired. Like Professor Hull, Kleege suggests the problems confronted by a blind person while living in a world designed in its multitude aspects for the sighted. Kleege elaborates on this proposition while defining the constructs of blindness and sight. With regard to a blind person's use of language, she writes; "Of course people who are blind use language the same way. Though the joke "'I see,' says the blind man" can always get a laugh out of children and perhaps adults as well, blind people are as likely as anyone else to say, "I see what you mean," or "Let me look at that," and without excessive self-consciousness or irony" (Kleege, 22). Thus, Kleege combines the aesthetic and practical dimensions of blindness in her writing style. The more subtle analysis of her depiction of blindness is reserved for the next chapter. Now it suffices to say that her literary style or language becomes a perfect amalgam of the theoretical or aesthetic and pragmatic dimensions of blindness.

Now, to conclude, Visual impairment in an author can generate a wide variety of textual or linguistic responses owing to multiple subjective and objective factors. Autobiographies became a favourite medium to record the subjective experiences of the visually impaired and other disabled communities. This new terrain of representation achieved an unpremeditated boosting after the Second World War. The language used by an author in his discussion of disability and the related incidents are directly linked to a host of factors. The intensity and the degree of blindness, the time of its occurrence, the consequences of impairment on a particular author and the capacity for survival and adaptation are major tools while analyzing the language of the autobiographies of the visually impaired. Among the selected authors, Stephen Kuusisto and Professor John M. Hull have employed a very emotional and philosophical language to represent their experiences of blindness. Helen Keller has selected a highly referential and polished language to discuss her realities of blindness and deafness.

Ved Mehta, Tom Sullivan and Sally Hobart Alexander have written their texts in a very general language accentuating the practical consequences of blindness on their life. Georgina Kleege employs an amalgam of all these approaches mentioned. She successfully shifts between a highly involved contemplation on her personal triumphs over blindness and the factual narration on the socio-cultural representation of the same. Her narration of blindness is a fruitful blend of the two divergent attitudes to blindness discussed above. The aesthetic and pragmatic dimensions of this discussion and different degrees of the authors' survival while transcending their impairments are discussed in the next two chapters.

Chapter 3

From the Visual to the Multisensory World: The Aesthetic and Perceptive Realms of the Texts

The mainstream society has always preferred to evaluate the literature of the visually impaired from a significantly ocular centric perspective. However, in the post-modernist realm, this perception has undergone a radical shift due to the greater agency and authenticity granted to the element of subjectivity of different kinds. Post-modernism recognized the diversity and complexity in the experiential zone of the marginalized pertaining to different degrees of social out-casting. It is in such a scenario that hither to neglected experiential platforms like that of visually impaired become highly valid and relevant.

In this chapter, the researcher would like to analyze the selected texts while emphasizing their aesthetic and perceptive faculties. The current chapter, thus, focuses on the following areas. The aesthetic aspects of the selected texts are examined with special reference to their sensory hierarchy. In such a study, the importance given to the extra visual realms are highlighted. For this analysis, the textual passages with extra visual implications from different books are compared on the basis of their discussion of multiple aspects related to the subjective experiences of blindness. The subjectivity of different authors is compared with regard to their discussion of more intimate and minute aspects of visual impairment. The realms of touch, sound, smell and taste are compared with the depiction of the visual imagery in the selected texts. Here, the focus is more on the emotional,

psychological and philosophical realms of blindness rather than its practical dimensions. Subtle differences in the perception of the experience of blindness by different authors are explored with relevant textual examples.

In such a study, the extra visual factors are given prominence. The influence of the degree and variety of visual impairment on the particular author and how far this distinction in the impairment dictates his or her perception of the world is to be analyzed. The language patterns of different authors are important components in such an analysis. The sensual hierarchy of the texts and their adherence to reality should also be taken in to account.

The degree and nature of blindness suffered by a particular author and his or her socio-cultural surroundings have a major role in shaping their aesthetic perspective as writers. As stated earlier, visual impairment can be classified on various grounds.

This distinction in the nature and degree of blindness of the respective authors is very crucial in shaping their aesthetic and creative faculties. Among the selected authors, Helen Keller, Tom Sullivan and Ved Mehta can be considered as congenitally impaired writers.

Ved Mehta lost his sight due to Meningitis when he was three and a half. Since he did not carry any traces of visual memory, he can be considered as a congenitally impaired writer. However, he has written his text in a very general language without much accentuation on the extra visual aspects. The selection of such a language is related to his outlook on life. Rather than accepting the condition

of blindness emotionally and physically, he was trying in every way to overcome the issue in a practical manner. His birth in the upper strata of the society, his father's international contacts and affluence, his education in an American school when most of the blind persons in India were dreaming of an education and his multifaceted skills as a writer decided his aesthetic perspective. The particular historical juncture also had a profound impact on his sensibility. His experience of the partition of India and Pakistan, his contact with eminent persons such as Jawaharlal Nehru and his journey through different parts of the world further modified his sensibility. These multidimensional experiences shape his literary outlook. Helen Keller lost her sight due to a fever when she was nineteen months old. The doctors concluded that the fever was due to an acute disturbance in stomach and brain. This fatal illness not only took her sight but her abilities of hearing and partially her skill of speech. She summarizes the situation in *The Story of My Life*:

> I still have confused recollections of that illness. I especially remember the tenderness with which my mother tried to soothe me in my waling hours of fret and pain, and the agony and bewilderment with which I awoke after a tossing half sleep, and turned my eyes, so dry and hot, to the wall away from the once-loved light, which came to me dim and yet more dim each day. But, except for these fleeting memories, if, indeed, they be memories, it all seems very unreal, like a nightmare. Gradually I got used to the silence and darkness that surrounded me and forgot that it had ever been different, until she came--my teacher--who was to set my spirit free. But during the first nineteen months of my life I had caught glimpses of broad, green fields, a

> luminous sky, trees and flowers which the darkness that followed could not wholly blot out. (Keller, 2).

It was the arrival of her teacher Annie Sullivan which changed the life of Helen. Her parents contacted Michael Animus, the director of the best Blind school in America then called Perkins Institute for the Blind. Helen's mother came to know the success story of the deaf blind girl called Laura Bridgeman while reading Charlse Dickens' American notes. It was through Alexander Graham Bal that her parents contacted Mr. Animus. Michael Animus recommended his disciple called Annie Sullivan to train Helen. Sullivan herself was a partially blind person. It was after constant trial that she could gain some stability in her sight. It was the ingenious and highly creative strategies of Sullivan which resulted in the miracles of Helen's life.

Tom Sullivan lost his sight soon after his birth due to Retrolental-Fibroplasia. As he was born three months premature and as being underweight, he was put in an incubator. Too much of Oxygen in the incubator spoiled his eyesight. Before the scientists and Medical Professionals recognized the danger, about ten thousand American babies had lost their sight. All the three authors mentioned above lost their sight during their infancy. So, they did not possess any trace of visual memory. Even then, their linguistic and aesthetic orientations sharply differ due to heterogeneous reasons and it will be discussed in detail later.

Professor John M. Hull and Sally Hobart Alexander became adventitiously blind due to medical reasons. Sally Hobart Alexander lost her vision when she was twenty-four due to some serious retinal disorder caused by continuous hemorrhage.

Within a span of six months, she almost became totally blind. She was forced to undergo severe physical and emotional strains to survive this catastrophe. Professor John. M. Hull also lost his eyesight when he was in the peak of his career. He was diagnosed with Cataract while being a student. He had to wait for another 38 years to confirm his disease as Retinitis Detachment and to be declared a legally blind individual. His perspective is unique and complex due to the extra ordinary experiential terrain through which he had to move in his life.

Georgina Kleege and Stephen Kuusisto were recognized as legally blind in their childhood. But the conscious denial of their impairments by their parents created unparalleled traumas in their lives. To live as sighted persons with a highly fragmented vision was traumatic and risky. Just like Tom Sullivan, Stephen Kuusisto was also born prematurely. He was born three months earlier than expected. Excess of oxygen in the incubator resulted in a condition of the retinopathy of prematurity. However, he did not lose his full vision as Sullivan did. But he was forced to live as a sighted person with his very limited and highly fragmented vision. Further he did not confess his vision loss to his closest friends including his lover. This created all the tragedies in his life. Kuusisto describes his malady in the following words in *Planet of the Blind*:

> Many children born prematurely in the fifties and early sixties suffer from visual impairments. The condition (which still exists, though it is less common today) is known as the "retinopathy of prematurity". The tiny blood vessels of the retinas are formed in the last trimester of pregnancy, so if a child is born prematurely, the retinas are often underdeveloped. In the fifties

> incubators were overly oxygenated, which further complicated the retinopathy--babies incubated with too much oxygen would routinely go blind. In my case the retinas were scarred.
>
> Nystagmus is an additional complication of "ROP." My eyes dart uncontrollably and often appear to be jumping in my head. Such "darting eyes" make it nearly impossible to focus. I was also born with strabismus, or crossed eyes, and though later surgery would try to correct this, the operation was only an aesthetic exercise--I never gained muscle control over my eyes. (Kuusisto, 5).

This uneven nature of his eyesight and the complexities and limitations aroused due to such a condition dictate his unique aesthetic perspective. Kleege was recognized with the condition of Macular degeneration when she was eleven. Instead of suggesting any remedial measures or training to overcome the troubles, the ophthalmologist simply declared her as legally blind. This coupled with the attempt of her parents to bring her up as a child with normal eyesight doubly redoubled her tragedy. She had a little residue of vision which was insufficient to perform any fruitful task. But even with this limited and marginal vision, she gained remarkable things which determine her aesthetic outlook.

Helen Keller’s language learning is one of the most miraculous incidents. Some of the critics are skeptical regarding the possibility of her learning of language in such an extra ordinary manner and doubt the very probability of a person lacking sight, hearing and speech becoming an international genius. However, there are authentic historical records and statements by the most established persons that

validate Helen's unparalleled achievements. Since Helen lost her abilities of speech and hearing during the nineteenth month of her life, she did not possess any reasonable amount of vocabulary. She however quotes her parents testifying that she had uttered the expression 'water' before she lost the skill of speech. As she puts in *The Story of My Life*:

> Am told that while I was still in long dresses, I showed many signs of an eager, self-asserting disposition. Everything that I saw other people do I insisted upon imitating. At six months I could pipe out "How d'ye," and one day I attracted every one's attention by saying "Tea, tea, tea" quite plainly. Even after my illness I remembered one of the words I had learned in these early months. It was the word "water," and I continued to make some sound for that word after all other speech was lost. I ceased making the sound "wah-wah" only when I learned to spell the word. (Keller, 2).

Incidentally, it is with the same word that she is initiated in to the world of language. A few days after the arrival of Anne Sullivan, she tried to teach Helen language. A doll of cloth was put in to the left hand of Helen and simultaneously spelled the letters 'd-o-l-l' in her other hand. Since she failed to correlate between the object and the action, she became frustrated and tore the doll in to pieces. Sullivan was not ready to fail and repeated the experiment in a different manner. As Helen herself states:

> We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one

> hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still; my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten--a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.
>
> I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me. (Keller, 11)

This correlation between the spelling and the concept was the miracle with which Helen registered all her achievements in life. Experts and critics have different observations regarding this unusual language learning miracle of Helen. Anne Sullivan herself writes regarding Helen's language learning that Helen could describe highly sophisticated visual images or instances as if she had experienced it.

In the Appendix of *The Story of My Life* Sullivan quotes a letter by Helen to bring to light her extra ordinary sensibility in language. As she writes:

> Helen's mind is so gifted by nature that she seems able to understand with only the faintest touch of explanation every possible variety of external relations. One day in Alabama, as we were gathering wild flowers near the

> springs on the hillsides, she seemed to understand for the first time that the springs were surrounded by mountains, and she exclaimed: "The mountains are crowding around the springs to look at their own beautiful reflections!" I do not know where she obtained this language, yet it is evident that it must have come to her from without, as it would hardly be possible for a person deprived of the visual sense to originate such an idea. In mentioning a visit to Lexington, Mass., she writes: "As we rode along, we could see the forest monarchs bend their proud forms to listen to the little children of the woodlands whispering their secrets. The anemone, the wild violet, the hepatica, and the funny little curled-up ferns all peeped out at us from beneath the brown leaves." She closes this letter with, "I must go to bed, for Morpheus has touched my eyelids with his golden wand." Here again, I am unable to state where she acquired these expressions" (Keller, 221).

Helen had learned the language rather than acquired it, as she was taught it only during her seventh year. However, Bertolt Lowenfeld quotes the German linguists William Stern and Karl Buhler while analyzing the language learning process of Helen. He shares the observation of William Stern in his article titled "Helen Keller: A Remembrance". As he summarizes:

> William Stern published in 1905 an extensive article about Helen Keller entitled "Helen Keller: The development and Education of a Deaf-Blind Girl as a Psychological, Pedagogical, and Language-Theoretical Problem." He stressed that in spite of the extraordinary and abnormal way of her language acquisition, Helen went through a sequence of steps in her language

> development that is very similar to that of normal children, though her older age made it possible for her to do it three times as fast. Professor Buhler used Miss Sullivan's report of Helen Keller's acquisition of language as an extraordinary documentation of the symbol-functioning of words as the first step toward the intellectualization of words. (Lowenfeld, 187,188).

Since she learned the language rather than acquired it naturally, her language is a highly metaphorical and sophisticated one impregnated with meaning and sensations. Her acquisition of such an extra ordinary language is beyond logical explanation. For example, she writes in *Midstream: My Later Life*, the second part of her autobiography:

> What zest we had for life in those days! We thought nothing of a ten-mile tramp over country roads or a forty-mile ride on our tandems. Everything interested us—the autumn woods bright with jewelled leaves and sparkling sunlight, the migrating birds, the squirrels gathering their winter stores, the wild apple trees raining their fruit upon our heads, the Medford marshes spangled with sapphire pools and red cat-tails.
>
> But my memories are not all of summer weather, with the odours of meadow, field, and orchard floating out to us on balmy breezes. Winter, too, brought its delights. On clear nights we used to go sleighing in Shay's express wagon which had been put on runners and filled with sweet-smelling hay. Patrick held the prancing horses until we climbed in, but no sooner were we seated than they sprang forward, and we sped away, to the music of the sleigh bells, to a universe of snow and stars!

> And the homecoming! How inviting was the cosy warmth that breathed in our faces as dear Bridget opened the door for us, her sweet, patient face alight with welcome! How good the smell of coffee and muffins! How jolly the confusion of rushing about and putting the supper on the table, everyone getting in Bridget's way. But she only smiled the more, happy in our youth". (*Midstream*, 21, 22)

It is amazing to think that a person who was deprived of the gifts of sight and sound wrote passages of such profound sensual insights with highly visual and sonorous metaphors. Only her unending hard work and complex spectrum of reading could induce such a rich, diverse and aesthetically simulated language in her writings.

Another significant dimension of Helen's aesthetics is expanded in her collection of autobiographical reflections titled *The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays*. In this book, she explains how she maximizes her available three senses to secure a better perception of the world and to enjoy a more meaningful and productive life using the available options of smells, touch and taste. In the chapter, "The Seeing Hand" for example Helen explains the scope of tactile sensibility for a person devoid of the gifts of sound and sight. While stating her interaction with her dog, she imagines him to be saying that "paradise is attained by touch; for in touch is all love and intelligence" (*Optimism*, 7).

She feels that eye and ear for an abled person are substituted for her by the prospects of touch. She distinguishes the differences in vibrations, while a bird is

passed in to her hand or when she touches a callous butterfly. This dynamic impulse of touch is summarized in a beautiful passage like this:

> The delicate tremble of a butterfly's wings in my hand, the soft petals of violets curling in the cool folds of their leaves or lifting sweetly out of the meadow-grass, the clear, firm outline of face and limb, the smooth arch of a horse's neck and the velvety touch of his nose--all these, and a thousand resultant combinations, which take shape in my mind, constitute my world. (*Optimism*, 8)

In the next chapter "The Hand of Others", she further elaborates the possibilities of hands and their interactions. She associates different hand-shakes with diverse emotions. She probes into the communication of different emotions by people from various walks of life using their hand to her. However, she is aware of the fact that this dwelling of her about the hand may not be convincing to a sighted person. She also indicates her communication using manual Alphabet. Sullivan taught her this method in which the common letters are rapidly spelt into her hand and she does the same thing to her counterpart in the communication. She and several of her associates created miracles using this method. By sufficient training and practice, Keller became a master of this technique. Several renowned persons including Mark Twain talked to Helen through this method of Manual Alphabet. Hands were also highly significant for her during the reading and writing of Braille. It is amazing to think that Sullivan transcribed all major classes, lectures and other sessions to Helen using this method wanting precision, quickness and accuracy. In

this chapter, she rather humorously states that, hands cannot be classified and there is no democracy in hands.

In the next chapter “The Hand of Race”, the importance of hands to her is put in another set of brief epigrams as, “The hand is defined as the organ of apprehension. How perfectly the definition fits my case in both senses of the word apprehend! With my hand I seize and hold all that I find in the three worlds--physical, intellectual, and spiritual” (*Optimism,* 11).

In the next chapter “The Power of Touch”, she contemplates on the limitations ascribed by the society on a person lacking sight and sound. While quoting Descartes, she finds touch as a metaphysical reality to establish her Being. She further treats touch as a wonderful certainty. She rejects the critics’ denial of the experiences of sound and sight to her completely. She accepts the fact that she may acquire such experiences through reading and communication. Through a collection of wonderfully crafted passages, she differentiates the impressions provided by diverse kinds of footsteps to her. As she states:

> Footsteps, I discover, vary tactually according to the age, the sex, and the manners of the walker. It is impossible to mistake a child’s patter for the tread of a grown person. The step of the young man, strong and free, differs from the heavy, sedate tread of the middle-aged, and from the step of the old man, whose feet drags along the floor, or beat it with slow, faltering accents. On a bare floor a girl walks with a rapid, elastic rhythm which is quite distinct from the graver step of the elderly woman. I have laughed over the

> creak of new shoes and the clatter of a stout maid performing a jig in the kitchen" (*Optimism*, 13).

These are very vibrant examples for her creative strategies to overcome her barriers and deliberate attempts to expand her universe.

Helen's enjoyment of music in cassettes, different musical instruments and dance depended on her sensing of vibrations. She enjoyed the Piano music played by somebody when she touched it. Obviously, her perception fully depended on her sensing of the vibration in the instrument. Similarly, she could feel the ebb and flow in the notes of violin using the same technique. However, she admits that apart from enjoying music, she could not distinguish one music from another. Helen thinks that it may be possible spending enormous amount of energy and time. But she could differentiate the changes in the tone of the singer while placing her hand on the latter's throat. In the chapter called "Visual Impairment, Smell, the Fallen Angel", she describes the importance of smell in her sensory world. In her sensory universe, smells are equated with time, childhood memories, seasons and so many other things. She further states some major distinctions between the tactile and olfactory abilities. As she puts it:

> Touch sensations are permanent and definite. Odors deviate and are fugitive, changing in their shades, degrees, and location. There is something else in odor which gives me a sense of distance. I should call it horizon--the line where odor and fancy meet at the farthest limit of scent.

> Smell gives me more idea than touch or taste of the manner in which sight and hearing probably discharge their functions. Touch seems to reside in the object touched, because there is a contact of surfaces. In smell there is no notion of relieve, and odor seems to reside not in the object smelt, but in the organ. (*Optimism*, 18).

Different professionals such as carpenter, mason or the chemist are identified by discriminating the smells of wood, iron, paint, drugs and so on clung to their garments. Thus, she has very potentially and more productively made useful the possibility of olfactory sensation as well. Indeed, these are not some special gifts bestowed on Helen. But a sighted person on account of his or her excessive dependence on sight rarely utilizes this diversity in perception.

In the seventh chapter titled "The Relative Value of Senses", Helen categorizes the hierarchy of her sensual world. She recalls her experience of a temporary loss of the faculty of smell. Even though it was painful, it did not completely obliterate her perception from this experience, she concludes that the loss of sight or hearing does not entirely hamper the prospects of a person. In her classification of senses, touch is treated as superior to the eye, while the faculty of smell is somewhat inferior to the ear. Helen feels that if she is given an option between the worlds of sight and touch, she will prefer the later. As she states, "am sure that if a fairy bade me choose between the sense of sight and that of touch, I would not part with the warm, endearing contact of human hands or the wealth of form, the mobility and fullness that press into my palms" (Optimism, 21). A certain

level of exaggeration can be traced here. However, her conclusion is valid from her peculiar experiential point of view.

In the eighth chapter, “The Five Sensed World”, she elaborates on how a visually impaired person utilizes the available senses to make a better perception of the world. As she herself reiterates, “THE poets have taught us how full of wonders is the night; and the night of blindness has its wonders, too. The only lightless dark is the night of ignorance and insensibility. We differ, blind and seeing, one from another, not in our senses, but in the use we make of them, in the imagination and courage with which we seek wisdom beyond our senses” (*Optimism*, 21).

She feels that blindness has inevitable calamities, but blind persons are not devoid of such fruitful experiences as friendship, humour, imagination and wisdom. One’s fate is rather determined by his or her inner world.

Thus, in these chapters, Helen Keller states a different dimension of her rich aesthetic experience while accentuating the divergence and convergence of her sensory world. She could create miracles in the world not only by maximizing her available sensory faculty but also synthesizing these gifts with her scholarly and intellectual pursuits. Her experiences are combined with her extra ordinary storage of information acquired through reading and communication with others. It is a wonder to think that a person deprived of sight and sound could appreciate and enjoy the world in a far superior way than a person blessed with all the senses.

Professor John M. Hull is preoccupied with the limitations created by adventitious blindness on an individual. Throughout his autobiography, *On Sight*

and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness, he tries to come to terms with this gradual but highly consequential vision loss. Even after becoming a blind person, he is more affiliated to the world of the sighted. This affiliation coupled with his unparalleled trauma creates enormous issues for him. The text is full of his anxieties, prefiguration and traumatic dreams related to this irreparable loss.

In addition to that, he also discusses some of the practical consequences of blindness on an adventitiously impaired person. These ruminations can be summarized as his contemplations on the aesthetics of blindness. In his book he dwells on the differences created by blindness on a person's perception of time and space. For example, in the section called "More time and less space", he thinks about the attitudinal difference with regards to time and space between a sighted person and a person who becomes blind. He feels that a blind person is reduced in space and expanded in time. Even though a blind person does his task meticulously and cautiously, he has abundant time at his disposal. He quotes the words of his colleague Michael that Hull's perception of time has undergone a radical change after becoming blind. While detailing this, Professor Hull feels that this difference is necessitated by the diligence, attention and assistance needed during his tasks. He summarizes this difference in the following words:

> When I had sight, I would have worked with feverish haste, correcting forty footnotes in a single morning. Now, I am happy if, with the help of a sighted reader, by the end of the morning I have corrected ten. I do not think to myself, 'Oh damn. I've only done ten.' I think, 'Good. That's ten done. Only another three mornings like this and the job will be finished.' I am so glad

> that I am able to do it at all. The simplicity, the careful planning, the long-term preparation, the deliberateness with which the blind person must live, all this means that he cannot take advantage of time by suddenly harvesting a whole lot of it. Perhaps all severe disabilities lead to a decrease in space and an increase in time (Hull, 70).

This notion can be considerably debated in this era of science and technology where enormous technological possibilities are granted to disabled persons. The financial independence removes the hamper in travelling considerably. However, here the change in perception is probably resultant from his shift from a partially seeing person to a totally blind one.

In the section titled “Sinking”, Professor Hull describes the process of an adventitiously blind person gradually losing the visual memory. He says that this loss happens in the case of those persons with whom he has daily interactions. When he meets a person whom he has not seen for several years, the person’s portrait comes to his mind. Yet he sadly recalls that he forgot the images of his first daughter Imogen and his second wife Marilyn. However just like the lovers in Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, He consoles himself that in his imagination, Marilyn will be always young.

In the chapter, “Facial Vision”, he depicts how a person develops a sense of echo location or facial vision gradually after losing his sight. This particular awareness helps him realize the objects and obstructions in his path. He indicates an increase in the intensity of this perception with the passage of time. However, this

compensatory gift has a bearing on time and space. He says that this is not activated when he is guided by someone else or when he is in a very busy location.

In this chapter, he also discusses another crucial matter, a blind person consciously or unconsciously using the visual metaphors like *seen, met* and so on. This situation is summarized in the following words:

> The whole structure of our ordinary, everyday con- versation presupposes a sighted world. This can be easily noticed if you compare conversations on the radio with those on the television. So when the sighted person draws attention to a little oddity in the use of a visual metaphor by a blind person, beneath this lies a subtle shift in the whole character of communication between sighted and blind people. There is a language of blindness (Hull, 26).

However, he does not prolong this discussion while stating the features or specialties of such a language. Thus, his concept of the language of blindness becomes rather obscure.

In the section called “Rain”, he describes in detail raining as an acoustic experience for a blind person. He is able to differentiate between the sounds of rain falling on different surfaces. He also senses the gushing of water through the road. He identifies the minute difference in the sound, when rain falls on a particular object or surface. As he himself puts it:

> The sound of the rain is different and shapes out the curvature for me. Still further to the right, I hear the rain sounding upon the fence which divides our

> property from that next door. In front, the contours of the path and the steps are marked out, right down to the garden gate. Here the rain is striking the concrete, here it is splashing into the shallow pools which have already formed. Here and there is a light cascade as it drips from step to step. The sound on the path is quite different from the sound of the rain drumming into the lawn on the right, and this is different again from the blanketed, heavy, sodden feel of the large bush on the left. Further out, the sounds are less detailed (Hull, 26, 27).

Here he explains how a blind person uses his available senses to explore and appreciate the world in a more beautiful and meaningful manner. He reveals that beauty does not exist with the experience of sight alone, but other senses also have their own dimensions of beauty.

In the section, “Food and Sex”, he states that hunger and sexuality are stimulated by seeing the desired object. He feels that the aroma of the food or the perfume used by a woman are not reasonable substitutes in this respect. He records the confusions and disorientations faced by him while taking food from a restaurant. In the case of both food and sexuality, sight acts as a foundation to arouse other senses. This problem with eating is partially related to the western habit and manner of eating with fork or knife. The difficulty is further accentuated by the fact that earlier he used to depend completely on sight for eating. Experts in this field feel that this confusion in eating can be solved with sufficient training and practice. Usually clock style is preferred as an easy technique to supply food items to blind persons. Different items are placed on those spaces pertaining to different numbers

of a tactile clock. Here twelve comes right in the front. A proper orientation in this method considerably alleviates the difficulties in eating. If Hull had got sufficient training in this matter, his anxieties in this respect could have been avoided to a great extent. While contemplating on the sexual orientation of an adventitiously blind person, he states, “It must take a long time for a man who loses sight in adult life to transfer the cues of sexual arousal from the visual to the other senses. There must be many men in that position who wonder whether they will ever again be capable of genuine sexual excitement. This dissociation of desire from image is a very curious and unsettling thing (Hull, 44).

Again, this association and hasty generalization can be products of the fear and distress created by his impairment. The psychiatrist Louis S. Cholden elaborates on this issue in his work, *A Psychiatrist Works with Blindness*. He describes the development of such an attitude in an adventitiously impaired person thus:

> Psychoanalytic investigation has given evidence of the close unconscious interrelationships between the eyes, vision and sexual activities. This deep connection often causes irrational and exaggerated responses on the part of the patient to the loss of sight. While the ophthalmologist cannot attempt to solve these problems with the patient, he should be aware of the possibility of such exaggerated reactions and, when it seems necessary, refer such patients to the psychiatrist. The patient who has recently become blind will see complete destruction of his social and family life before him” (Cholden, 18-19).

The successful and highly eventful family life unfolded by Mr. Hull during the course of this text gives the impression that he has overcome this trauma for a greater extent during the course of his journey in life.

Being an adventitiously blind person, Professor Hull has enormous difficulty in adjusting himself with his new situation. Naturally, his attitude towards the contemporary reality is highly bleak and pessimistic. For example, in the section "Beyond Light and Darkness", he compares the relative values of sight sound and hearing for a sighted person and blind one. He further places it in the background of the relationship between the two. While stating his conversation with his son Thomas about blindness, Mr. Hull focuses on the scope of sight as a point of reciprocity in communication. He denotes an active relationship between *to see* and *to be seen*. Thus, *not be seen* stands for invisibility. He further points that an adventitiously blind person has time and again to be conscious of his visibility or the fact that he is watched by others. The same difficulty is not there in the case of hearing. A hearing-impaired person need not have the same kind of consciousness or botheration all the time. Because the organs of speech and hearing are different and do not guarantee the same kind of reciprocity.

If Helen Keller glorifies touch, John M. Hull dwells on the limitations of tactile sensibility while comparing it with the experience of sight. As he states:

> Touch is reciprocal under normal conditions. If I can feel you, you can normally feel me feeling you. If I cannot feel you, it is probable that you cannot feel me. The difference between touch and sight is that the reciprocity of sight can be turned off so easily. There are ways of turning off the

> reciprocity of mutual touch. I could feel you while you were asleep, or I could hold a lock of your hair without you becoming aware of it. You might have had a dab of anesthetic and your skin might be dulled. In the case of sight, however, you only have to close your eyes. The closing of the eyes is a normal, indeed, a moment-by-moment action, whereas the shutting off of the sense of touch is not so simple. The implications of this reciprocity of sight for the relationships between the blind and the sighted are extensive (Hull, 51-52).

He further elaborates on how a blind person is objectified by his sighted counterparts in communication. Somebody can be asked to drop a blind person on a room or lift. This patronizing communication goes on while completely obliterating the presence of the blind person. Similarly, a blind person can be simply passed off while moving. Since he does not see, he can be easily neglected without the inconvenience of having noticed it. He reveals the observation of a fellow interviewer that the interviewee did not glance in to the face of Professor Hull for a single instance during the interview. However, Mr. Hull was not aware of it. He connects this feeling of having become invisible to the loss of the body image. In a highly pessimistic and melancholic mood, he summarizes this experiential lack thus; “This is what the archetype of blindness indicates, the loss of consciousness, the descent into sleep, the sense of nothingness, of becoming nothing. To be seen is to exist. This gives insight into the longing of the beloved sighted to be seen by the beloved blind. It is the longing to exist in the lover's sight, the desire to be perceived by him” (Hull, 63).

In this instance also it is obvious that these are but temporary fixations derived from his frustrations developed due to adventitious blindness. In his article titled "Adjustment, Losses and Positive Attitude: Dealing with Vision Impairment and Blindness", Brendan Tedric quotes D. Tuttle and N. Tuttle while listing different stages related to the adjustment with the vision loss. As he puts it:

> The seven phases of adjustment to blindness according to Tuttle and Tuttle (1996) are: (1) Trauma, Physical or Social, (2) Shock and Denial, (3) Mourning and Withdrawal, (4) Succumbing and Depression, (5) Reassessment and Reaffirmation, (6) Coping and Mobilization, and (7) Self-Acceptance and Self-Esteem. As one goes through each phase/stage, there is no set timeframe in terms of how long a client/consumer will stay in one particular phase/stage. Also, one cannot overlook the importance of supportive family members and friends (Tedric, *Vision Impairment and Blindness*).

A sign of progress can be discerned in the attitude of Professor Hull to blindness throughout the text. In the initial parts of the text, he has a collection of dreams. Most of these dreams are connected with different kinds of dislocations, absence of communication, loss of the beloved and so on. Being a professor of theology, Mr. Hull himself interprets most of these dreams connecting them with his experience of blindness. All these dreams reflect on the intensity of the frustrations and isolations that he suffers due to blindness. All such dreams are very elaborately described in the texts. Either he is ship-wrecked or isolated from the company. He is thrown in an ice-storm or crushed by waves. He himself understands these dreams as

semblance of his active and dynamic life during his sighted days. Here is an example from the section “Beyond Light and Darkness”:

> Last night I had a nightmare so vivid that it woke me up. I dreamt that Elizabeth, who will be two on 23 February, was not in her cot. Instead it was full of flowers, beautiful flowers. They were in a formal arrangement, like wreaths on a grave-stone. I went to Marilyn and said, ‘where’s Lizzie?'
>
> Marilyn said, 'She's dead.'
>
> I was appalled, and broke down in tears, crying out, 'What happened? I didn't know. Tell me!'
>
> Marilyn was very calm. She said, 'It's no good making a fuss. She’s buried.'
>
> I was furious. I grabbed her by the shoulders, and shook her fiercely, shouting out, 'What do you mean? How dare you! Is she not only dead but buried, and I not even told?'
>
> Marilyn pointed out of the window. There was a grassy plot, like a cathedral close or a cloister. Over this a slow procession was moving on foot. 'There they go,' Marilyn said. 'There's the funeral procession.' So I woke up.
>
> This dream was very visual. The colours were brilliant, people’s clothes, the green of the grass and the bright colours of the flowers. There was no trace of blindness. Who is running my children's lives? How would I even know? Did the dreamer get the names wrong? Was it, perhaps, not Lizzie and Marilyn but other people whom I have also lost? Was it Imogen who was

> dead, lost first through divorce and distance and lost again through the isolating effect of blindness? The many faces of loss are terrifying (Hull, 49-50).

This dream typically registers his anxieties related to the loss of visual memory, his lagging in communication due to the absence of the capacity of sight, the frustration due to his inability to visualize his beloved persons and the feeling of estrangement he fears in his relationship with his family. There is a progressive evolution in his dreams likewise which moves from frustration to clarity or from chaos to order and realization. For example, he describes a rather positive dream in the section "The Gift":

> The most memorable dream took the form of a serial. It was one of those unusual experiences where one wakes up several times, while the dream seems to continue in a series of episodes, in a number of snatches of sleep. It was a sea dream, and the central part, the only section I can remember vividly, showed our party navigating a ship through a wild ocean. We were on the bridge, which was glassed over. Heavy seas were breaking upon this glass roof. The waters were crashing down upon a sort of skylight. We were afraid that the ship would be swamped should this skylight window break. It was shivering and shaking with the great masses of water pounding down upon it. Several of us were stretching up our arms to hold the frame steady in case it should collapse inwards with the force of the water. It did not break and we came successfully through the storm and into port (Hull, 183-184).

It seems that he comes to terms with the reality of blindness and rather accepts it in a positive manner. In the same section he further compares multiple dimensions of the visual and tactile sensibilities. While quoting Merleau-Ponty, he compares the experiences of sight and touch. When visual space is presented at the same time; tactile space is presented bit by bit. In other words, a sighted person casually glances the object at first for a reasonable picture. There after scans it for understanding its subtle nuances and particularities. Whereas a blind person touches an object bit by bit and then touches the same object to have a reasonable perception regarding its shape, structure and texture. Mr. Hull records this as an example for the limitation of tactile sensibility. Never the less some critics and philosophers grant a much more solid authority to the experience of touch.

Mark Paterson, for example, in his book, *The Senses of Touch: Haptics Affects and Technologies*, offers a more receptive and accommodating position regarding the scope of tactile sensibility. While tracing the history of tactile sensibility in the western world he writes; “Like a child wriggling on the floor and encountering objects, tactile sensation is the aggregate of motion and touch; a visual field becomes three-dimensional and the learning of depth perception occurs thereby” (Paterson, 52). Here touch is given a more comprehensive and full-fledged existence. But even Professor Hull grants a much more reliable position to the experience of touch in the later part of the book.

In the section titled “Touch is Beautiful”, he depicts the real knowledge and the pleasure of touch. He recalls the touching of a peculiar stone at the house of a friend. This five-inches high stone was squat and roughly beautiful. He enjoyed its

weight. He touched a carved wood from Africa from the same sport. He summarizes this novel experience in the following words; “am developing the art of gazing with my hands. I like to hold and re-hold and go on holding a beautiful object, absorbing every aspect of it” (Hull, 153). Here he admires and appreciates the scope and novelty of touch. This glorification of tactile sensibility reaches its peak when he describes the marble altar at Iona Abbey. This happens in the section “Touching the rock”. He explores the parts of the abbey bit by bit on multiple days. Finally, he recognizes the altar as a huge and single marble block. After a tiring but systematic effort, he is able to grasp the length and depth of this stone. He understands that its front is carved with hard, cold letters. In spite of being bold, he is not able to read them. The top is as smooth as silk. After measuring it with his body, he grasps an average idea about the length and proportion of the stone. The polished surface is marked with a collection of long and irregular indentations. His amazement of this marble monument is described in a very philosophical manner; “Here was the work of people, grinding this thing, smoothing it to an almost greasy, slightly dusty finish which went slippery when I licked it. Here were these abrasions, something more primitive, the naked heart of the rock” (Hull, 196). He experiences a sublimity and spiritual ecstasy while tactually exploring the altar and places it in the backdrop of an evolution of humanity.

Like Helen Keller, Professor Hull also narrates his experiences in a language filled with multisensory explorations, philosophical musings and emotional exuberance. At times, he becomes highly philosophical to describe the emotional extremity of his situations. In the section “To accept or Not to Accept”, he records

the panic and chaos created by blindness in his life in a very pessimistic mood. As he puts it:

> Recent experiences of panic make me think that, although I am reluctant to admit it, blindness is, for me, a kind of religious crisis. I do not have the calm and trustful acquiescence which is supposed to be the experience of those who lead the life of faith. This childlike acceptance and obedience is felt most deeply, so I have heard religious people say and have experienced myself in the past, during times of sharpest adversity. If I were to accept this thing, if I were to acquiesce, then I would die. It would be as if my ability to fight back, my will to resist were broken. On the other hand, not to acquiesce, not to accept, seems futile. What I am refusing to accept is a fact. This then is the dilemma. I am in the presence of an unacceptable reality (Hull, 45).

Even though the description is very bleak and negative in tone, its spiritual undertone and association with different dilemmas are able to generate the poignancy and pressures envisaged in the situation. However, this tone is not unique in the narration. There are occasions where he takes a more positive or optimistic standpoint. He enjoys the Scandinavian trip fully and makes a lot of positive inferences from the trip. His explorations of the ship and finding ways to navigate it without external assistance clearly indicate the boosting in his confidence. Throughout the trip, he makes use of all available opportunities to perceive his surroundings in a better manner than to mourn over his losses as he does in the

initial part of the text. His exploration of a fifteenth century bell in a very adventurous fashion is another predominant example for it.

Professor Hull goes through an extra ordinary emotional terrain while confronting the reality of blindness. The memory of his active visual life and the repeated comparisons of it with the present inadequacies often lead him to very melancholic and morbid moods. A reconciliation with the situation only happens in the final phase of the text where he dwells on the possibilities rather than brooding over the losses. A culmination of this remarkable shift in tone can be discerned during his judgment on blindness in the postscript. Here he traces an evolution in his meaning of blindness from chaos to order or from confusion to clarity. He states:

> There is no direct path. There is a long detour, a stripping off, a laying bare, a circuitous track by means of which we discover that in losing everything, not everything is lost, that in abandonment, not everything is abandoned, that in losing we find and in dying we live. Here we come to a curious feature of this inversion, this recoil of consciousness upon itself. Whereas the intention of the surface consciousness is individualizing, its reality is social. The intention of the deeper consciousness is social and economic but it is experienced as a spirituality which integrates one with all (Hull, 233).

Here he has not only reconciled with blindness but also found his own ways of adapting and circumspecting it.

Georgina Kleege, in her autobiography, *Sight Unseen* presents an aesthetics of blindness in her own perspective. Being a person with a very fragmented and marginal sight, her perception of the world is also very unique. With her blend of

personal, fictional, factual and theoretical observations, she presents a very peculiar narrative where her experiences are combined with her enquiries, academic pursuits, and her musings on her blindness and her thoughts on the social reception of blindness. She begins the book with a confession that writing *Sight Unseen* made her Blind. By this she means that she understood the actual amount of her vision and she could accept the condition of blindness emotionally. She also recognized the pros and cons of such a condition. The limit of her vision is described through a collection of richly evocative passages. She says:

> As I wrote this book and forced myself to compare my view of the world with what I imagine a normal eye sees, what I learned astounded me. I was shocked, for instance, to discover that a sighted person sitting in a lawn chair can look down and see individual blades of grass, weeds, and other plants, perhaps even crawling and hovering insects, while all I would see is an expanse of green. It might seem that this discovery would lead to sadness - what else have I been missing all these years? In fact, it has inspired a kind of perplexed wonder - what do sighted people do with all this visual detail? (Kleege, 3).

She realized the marginality and narrowness of her vision while understanding through reading and researches the prospects and nuances of sight.

In the first chapter, “Call It Blindness”, she explains her particular condition of legal blindness. The title echoes the beginning of Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* with the statement “Call me Ishmael”. An in-depth understanding of her condition of blindness is necessary to unfold her own textual aesthetics and perception of the

world. This further decides the sensual hierarchy of her world where in spite of its marginality; sight has its own relevance.

She narrates her first experience as a teacher. She explained to the students her own condition of blindness and its impact for them. This happened twenty-five years after she was legally declared as a blind. She explains her own condition while quoting the terminological inconsistency related to it. She feels that the word Blind causes all the problems. As she puts it:

> To most people blindness means total, absolute darkness, a complete absence of any visual experience. Though only about 10 percent of the legally blind have this degree of impairment, people think the word should be reserved to designate this minority. For the rest of us, with our varying degrees of sight, a modifier becomes necessary. We're encouraged to indicate that we're not quite "that bad." Better to speak of a visual impairment, a sight deficit, low vision. Better still to accentuate the positive and call it "partially sighted." Sometimes I use these other terms, but I find them no more precise or pleasing. The word "impairment" implies impermanence, an encumbrance that could disappear, but my condition has no cure or treatment. The term "low vision" reminds me too much of "short eyes," a prison term for child molesters. And anyway, I crave the simplicity of a single, unmodified adjective. Blind (Kleege, 6).

Here she feels that the term blindness has no reasonable substitute and no other expression such as visually impaired, low vision etc. express the issue in a realistic manner.

While analysing the different metaphorical implications of blindness, David Bolt, in his book, *The Met Narrative of Blindness; A Rereading of Twentieth-century Anglophone Writings* identifies an epistemological power accentuated in association with the experience of sight. While summarizing the politics of such metaphors, he states:

> These metaphors also form a basis for the antithetical impression--namely, the capacity and normality of sight. Thus, the word blind and its variants effectively ground the ubiquitous seeing-knowing metaphor. To this end, blindness is used as a vehicle, the tenor of the meaning being the lack of knowledge. That is to say, the seeing-knowing metaphor is profound because embedded in its foundation is the idea that not seeing is synonymous with not knowing (Bolt, 20).

In this context sight is used as a source of epistemological power and agency.

Kleege's condition of macular degeneration was recognized after many tests and the doctors did not suggest any remedy for it. In spite of giving her additional training in Braille or other assistive devices, she was discouraged from using the word 'blind,' and was placed in the front row of the class. A meticulous memory, counting the stops in the bus and shrewdly listening to the dialogues of others were some of the strategies that she used to overcome her troubles. She explains the negative associations with the word blindness such as darkness, dependence, destitution or despair. She quotes some of the negative and stereotypical ways in which the word blind is used. Most of such expressions are more figurative than literal. They include blind faith, blind devotion, blind luck, blind lust, blind trust,

blind chance, blind rage, blind alley, blind curve, and blind-nail and so on. In the remaining part of the chapter, she discusses the social, psychological and literal dimensions of blindness which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

In the section, “Blind Phenomenology”, she discusses some of the issues related to the use of her available sight and her own method of artistic appreciation or perception of the visual arts including paintings and sculptures. In the chapter, “The Mind’s Eye”, she describes her experience during the 1992 Matisse exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art where a fellow viewer told her that she was staying too close to the painting. She explains the reason for viewing the painting so closely. She says:

> When I look at a painting from a sighted person’s distance, macular degeneration, my form of blindness, obscures or distorts the center of the canvas. My peripheral vision is unaffected, so the edges of the canvas are more or less visible. To get a general sense of the overall composition, I scan the painting systematically, moving my oversized blind spot around it, allowing different regions to emerge into my peripheral vision. My brain slowly identifies the forms and assembles the picture bit by bit. In effect, my mind sketches an outline, or a map: "To the left, there's a table with a basket of fruit. To the right, there's a window with a view of the sea." To add detail to this rough sketch growing in my brain, I must get very close to the painting, as close as museum guards allow, even closer when they look away (Kleege, 56).

This example clearly states that despite having a very peripheral and marginal vision, she makes maximum utilization of her available vision to make a better perception of the world. She feels that for a sighted person, sight offers instantaneous access to the reality. As the central region of her retina The Macula no longer functions, she has to look repeatedly and perhaps on multiple occasions to get an average idea of a visually designed object. Since the blind spot is situated in the centre of her eyes, their dimensions vary in accordance with the perceived object. This vivid agility of her vision is described in detail:

> When I look at my hand from arm's length, it vanishes. When I bring it close to my face, only the fingertips are gone. To see the picture on the cover of the book I bring it close to my eyes. With the book an inch from my face the blind spot is only about the size of a silver dollar. I can see enough of the picture to identify the book.
>
> I cannot perceive a straight line, because wherever I aim my eye, the line appears severed. The line that designates the edge of an object bows, wobbles, or oscillates from side to side. The more straight lines in the object, the more distortion. A bookcase with its uprights and shelves full of books is a haze of motion. The color of the shelves bounces up and down, bleeding into the color of the books, which vibrate from side to side. A filmy veil seems to hang over it, blurring the spines of books into a smudgy, variegated haze. I look down. A sheer, white-violet fog hangs over my computer keyboard, slashed here and there with streaks of yellow. My fingers pierce the fog as I type, sinking in up to the first knuckle (Kleege, 61).

These examples show how she perceives objects of different sizes with her marginal and peripheral eyesight. The rest of this chapter discusses her peculiar perception with abundant and diverse instances.

In the next chapter called “Here's Looking at You”, she narrates her difficulties in managing eye contact with others. Quoting the example of a rape victim killing her torturer while looking at his eyes, she explains her inability to see different emotional variations in the eyes of her counterparts. Faking eye contact was successful in some contexts. However, some persons could easily identify the difference. For example, when she was a dancer at the Martha Graham School, her dance teachers pointed to her gaze wavering or falling short of the target. She tried to manage the situation through muscular control and constant practice in front of her friends. Even though she had experienced eye contact up to the eleventh year, she did not have any recollection of it. She, however, grasps the importance of eye contact through her verbal interaction with the friends. This revelation that she did not have any recollection of eye contact is another example for the erasure of visual memory described by Professor John M. Hull.

In the next chapter “A Portrait of the Artist by his Blind Daughter”, she discusses the question of hand eye coordination. She describes her father’s attempt to make her draw a cup while visualizing it. It was a failure due to her lack of vision and her blurring eyesight. She tried to touch the object with the left hand while drawing it with the right hand. This also was a failure. Even though she understood the difficulty in transacting this tactile experience into a visual fold, she could not communicate the same to her father. She tried to draw the same with charcoal and

then with her own finger. Even this was a failure. She was on the verge of tears. Here she reveals some of the very delicate aesthetic issues while combining the tactile and visual experiences. First of all, eye-hand coordination is impossible for a person with very marginal eyesight. She also identifies the impossibility of transferring the tactile experience in to a visual result. It is specifically this experiential lacuna that creates the communication gap between herself and her father. Mark Paterson in the book *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* states that the connection between eye and hand is relative. In the chapter "Seeing with the Hands, Touching with the Eyes," he discusses this question in the backdrop of the Molyneux debate about the conversion of the tactile experience into the visual reality when a blind person gains sight in the later part of his or her life. Several philosophers and intellectuals such as John Lock, Berkeley, Voltaire, Condillac and Diderot got involved in this debate over centuries. While explaining the spatial character of tactile perceptions, Paterson writes:

> In inter-modal perception there are no actual equivalences between sensory data, say between hand and eye. Through associations of sensations and perceptual experience, however, a single, coherent perceptual content can occur so that familiarity with the look and feel of an object will make its subsequent recognition, through whichever sense modality, easier (4).

This conclusion clearly states that hand eye coordination is subjective. This further acknowledges the lacuna in hand-eye coordination suffered by Kleege due to her poor eyesight.

In the section “Blind Reading: Voice Texture Identity”, she discusses some more subtle issues related to the matter of her perception. For example, in the chapter titled “Voices in my head”, she discusses her prospects of reading in the absence of reasonable eyesight. She says that her lack of visual acuity and her inability to perceive fine details made her legally blind and the impact of such a condition is most consequentially felt in the area of reading. She states the new interest of sighted people in the audio books. This reading of audio books is much more than a pastime activity for her. She emphasizes the inner voice in reading oneself which is lacking in the case of audio books. Absence of this inner voice is substituted by the vocal performativity resulting from the aural capabilities of the reader. She assesses her success as a writer while listening to her own books in the audio tapes. As she puts it:

> Listening to a tape of my work in progress I hear flaws - unintentional repetitions, awkward constructions, clumsy phrasing, and graceless syntax. Did that last sentence have one too many beats? Does that parenthetical phrase disrupt the rhythm? I also listen for larger, more global aspects. Do I dwell too long on a certain section or scene? Does the pace bog down in the middle? Is the ending too abrupt? When the voices of my readers are in sync, or at least in harmony with the voices in my head, I feel that I have succeeded. If not, I revise (Kleege, 105).

Here, she reviews her own performance as a writer using the strategy of audio books. She also dwells on some of the vocal errors which may unconsciously creep in audio books such as Hardness of the voice on ears, Slur sounds or

mispronunciations, quirky cadence on unnecessary spaces, inserting high emotions in unwanted portions and so on. She further states the irrationality in associating the vocal shifts of the reader with his or her countenances or changes in complexion. For example, she states how she falsely complemented a thin man about his weight loss. That man was always thin but she could not recognize it because of his fat voice. Thus, she feels that voices are deceiving at times. From her roommate who used to read for her the novels of Henry James, she came to know that loud reading promotes easy comprehension. Thus, in this chapter, she discusses some of the sonorous aspects associated with the process of reading and listening to audio books.

In the next chapter "Up Close, In Touch", she further illustrates some of the issues related to the exercise of reading print and then explains in depth the process of reading and writing Braille. She describes in detail the muscular pain while reading with the aid of a magnifier glass. She manages this pain through muscular stretching and some optical exercises. She depicts how she confronted and conquered this pain. A sighted person can scan with the eyes fifteen or sixteen characters or letters at a time. But Kleege can only simultaneously read three or four characters owing to her peripheral vision. Her tendency for double vision further results in the misreading of letters. An A could be confused with an O, a C, a B or an E. Due to the constant fickleness and instability of the text; she is often played by uncertainty in reading.

Learning Braille was a very significant development for her. She had initial troubles in differentiating the shapes of various Braille alphabets in accordance with

the variation in numbers. She describes the principle of Braille in a few simple and direct sentences:

> Like most of the truly important inventions in human history, the braille code is elegantly simple. The braille cell is made up of six raised dots, arranged like the six in dominos, two vertical columns of three. All the letters of the alphabet, plus special symbols for certain common words, consist of from one to all six of these dots. Each character is the right size to fit even a child's fingertip, so the reader moves the finger smoothly from left to right. The braille alphabet is easy to memorize, and it's hard to mistake one letter for another (Kleege, 121).

She learns a new dimension of touch while learning and practicing Braille. She felt a stable contact with the text through Braille reading. Or, in other words, she felt the pleasure of the text for the first time after reading Braille documents. The potential of visual guesswork available for a sighted reader was tactually guaranteed to her in the process of reading Braille. Learning different grades of Braille contractions considerably lightened her use of Braille. She says that the visual intuition in reading is substituted tactually for a Braille reader. In the Braille reading, she is liberated from the claustrophobia which she experienced in the case of visual reading due to her marginal sight. She recalls her difficulties in learning after the diagnosis of macular degeneration and feels that learning Braille would have considerably eased her difficulties. She also states the antipathy towards Braille among the blind persons. She concludes the book while describing her journey to the

memorial museum of Louyis Braille at Coupvray. While summarizing her experience as a blind person, she says:

> In learning to read braille, in visiting Braille's birthplace and seeking inspiration from his life, I announce my blindness without apology. When I read braille in public then comment on the color of the carpet, or when I carry a white cane into an art gallery, some may denounce me as a fraud or traitor. Others, I hope, will revise their image of blindness. And it's about time. That image is older than Oedipus and could use a new coat of paint. This new image of blindness is blander and more mundane, a mere matter of seeking practical solutions to everyday inconveniences. It will force us to abandon the old clichés that equate blindness with ignorant despair and sight with virtuous wisdom (Kleege, 139).

She finishes her dwellings on blindness in a very optimistic note.

Georgina Kleege was torn between the worlds of the blind and the sighted. Even when she made maximum use of her available sight, she clearly understood its limitations. Her success depended on the finding of alternative methods to solve these dilemmas. She also very systematically moved from a visual world to the multisensory world. Her appreciation of life was much enhanced by her fruitful utilization of the faculties of hearing and touch. *Sight Unseen* records her cautious but deliberate movement from the world of the sighted to the world of the blind. She accepts her blindness completely after visiting Louyis Braille Museum and learning Braille. Her unique experiences between the worlds of the blind and the sighted

create her own singular perception of the world and the particular aesthetics resulting from such a perception.

Stephen Kuusisto, in his autobiography, *Planet of the Blind* and the collection of autobiographical essays called *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear* describes his eventful journey as a blind person. Kuusisto's tragedy sprang from the conscious denial of his visual impairment by his parents. The book *Planet of the Blind: A Memoir* mostly discusses the practical issues related to blindness. However, the intensity of the trauma is expressed in a language which is highly sensual, emotionally charged and at times philosophical.

Kuusisto supplies a kaleidoscopic perspective on blindness in the text. In the prologue, he describes his unique experience of blindness:

> BLINDNESS IS OFTEN perceived by the sighted as an either/or condition: one sees or does not see. But often a blind person experiences a series of veils: I stare at the world through smeared and broken windowpanes. Ahead of me the shapes and colors suggest the sails of Tristan's ship or an elephant's ear floating in air, though in reality it is a middle-aged man in a London Fog raincoat that billows behind him in the April wind. He is like the great dead Greeks in Homer's descriptions of the underworld. In the heliographic distortions of sunlight or dusk, everyone I meet is crossing Charon's river. People shimmer like beehives (Kuusisto 2).

These highly metaphorical sentences are clear cut examples for the fragmented visual experience of Kuusisto which was insufficient for him to perform

any meaningful tasks in life. As described earlier, being born three months prematurely, his condition of retinopathy of prematurity was further accentuated by the excess of oxygen in the incubator. He did not lose his sight completely. But the remaining tiny residue of vision was useless in all practical contexts. The expression Blind was completely relegated by his parents and was treated as equal to the condition of cancer. The trauma suffered by Kuusisto due to this deliberate rejection of blindness by his parents is described in detail later. However, the language of the text is embellished with highly metaphoric expressions and several rich allusions. There are multiple references to a host of well-known poets and texts. He expresses his trauma in a highly provoking language.

A poignant example of this description is his imagination of *The Planet of the Blind*. He sees it as a multisensory paradise, an ideal space with easy passage, flexible relations and highly imaginative surroundings. As he puts it:

> I invoke the planet at three A.M.: On the planet of the blind, no one needs to be cured. Blind - ness is another form of music, like the solo clarinet in the mind of Bartok. On the planet of the blind, the citizens live in the susurrus of cricket wings twinkling in inner space.
>
> You can hear the stars on the windless nights of June. On the planet of the blind, people talk about what they do not see, like Wallace Stevens, who freely chased tigers in red weather. Here, mistaken identities are not the stuff of farce. Instead, unvexed, the mistaken discover new and friendly adjacent arms to touch.

On this particular planet, the greyhounds get to snooze at last in the tall grass.

The sighted are beloved visitors, their fears of blindness as - suaged with fragrant reeds. On the planet of the blind, everyone is free to touch faces, paintings, gardens--even the priests who have come here to retire.

There is no hunger in the belly or in the eyes. And the furniture is always soft. Chairs and tables are never in the way.

On the planet of the blind, the winds of will are fresh as a Norwegian summer. And the sky is always between moonshine and morning star.

God is edible.

On the planet of the blind self-contempt is a museum (Kuusisto, 147-148).

This contemplation of an ideal space for the blind springs from the intense desperation and traumas that he suffered in his daily life. Kuusisto's description of this ideal space not only reflects on the limitations and traumas associated with blindness but also dwells on some of the positive but imaginary remedies for the situation. These passages further echo the highly creative flavour of Kuusisto transcending his physical limitations. The phantasmal world depicted in the planet with its emphasis on extra visual features brings out the multisensory paradigm fancied by Kuusisto for the salvation of the visually impaired.

Stephen Kuusisto's narration revolves around the losses and injuries that he

has to suffer due to the denial of his visual impairment. His lonely childhood, his souring adolescence and his frequent obstructions in his personal, social and academic life are the net effects of such a denial. He finally finds salvation with a guide dog called Corky. Apart from the selection of a highly figurative and metaphorical language, Kuusisto does not discuss any significant matter related to the aesthetics or perception of the blind. All the major topics discussed in the book are in one or another way related to the practical consequences of blindness. One of the major problems which hamper his prospects in life is his highly blurring vision which does not supply any reliable information. His deliberate abstaining from communicating this with anybody including his most intimate friends increases the mental stress and resultant trauma that he suffers. Kuusisto's discussion of the practical aspects of blindness will be dealt in the next chapter. Here it suffices to say that his life lost its momentum and pleasures due to the denial of his impairment and he experienced its fruits and positive results when he emotionally and physically accepted his actual condition. Proper guidance coupled with his hard work alleviated his troubles for a great extent.

Another major dimension of his blindness is presented in his autobiographical ruminations called *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear*. Through a collection of autobiographical essays or experiential meditations, he tries to communicate with the reader a multisensory paradigm with his emphasis on the art of listening. Since this text was publish many years after Planet of the Blind, one sees a more mature evaluation of blindness here. The traumatic perception of blindness in the former is replaced by a more aesthetic and sonorous assessment of

it. With his immense patience and tolerance, he enjoys the music of life while listening to its diverse pitches, codes and patterns. Rather than summarizing the whole text, some aspects relevant to the present study are analyzed.

In the preface to the book, Kuusisto dwells on the context of writing *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear*. It was after finding Corky the guide dog and considerably expanding his traveling prospects that he thought of writing a lyrical memoir like this. The book with the preface, 29 chapters and the epilogue discuss the multidimensional schemes of Kuusisto's art of listening. Occasionally, the other sensory potentials such as touch, smell and taste are also invoked. However, his primary focus rests on the pleasure of listening.

Kuusisto feels that veteran blind people are blessed with the skill of sightseeing by ear. He elaborates on its scope in the following passages:

> Alone in unfamiliar hotel lobbies, we survey our surroundings and hear in the ambient curves of architecture a hundred oddities. We hear the movements of strangers; hear their laughter; hear pennies dropped in the Hilton's fountain; the bristles of a shoeshine brush; the wings of a pigeon that has made its way indoors. The blind hear all this while they're locating the chiming bells of the elevators.
>
> Blindness often leads to compensatory listening (if one has the fortune of a hearing life). (Kuusisto, 15 -16).

This is but one of the examples of the art of listening which is elaborated in the text. The first section of this memoir discusses his childhood. It is rather a

revision of the bleak and traumatic version of the same presented in Planet of the Blind. Here there are finer nuances of blindness. Through his rich listening experiences, his deficiencies are converted to a host of possibilities. Part two of the text revolves around his adult journeys, mostly with his guide dogs Corky and Vidal. Some of the chapters are written in the form of auditory postcards addressing his contemporaries. Kuusisto also reveals that he is presently employed as a faculty in the Ohio State University. His marriage to Connie Rudloff, who was the administrator and trainer of dogs at Guiding Eyes for 20 years, is also revealed. Her assistance in his travel by ear is also recounted. He plans for a Marathon in which Connie will be his companion.

In the first chapter called “Harbor Songs”, he narrates his listening to a collection of old songs from a harbor in Finland. He is accompanied by his father. He feels a terrible darkness in those songs of sadness sung by the forest women who survived multiple calamities. He expands his listening horizon through such diverse sounds as polyphony of hungry birds, mysterious chimes of the Russian Orthodox Church and reindeer bells. In the age of four, he understands that the intricacies of listening are inexhaustible. He concludes this chapter with the description of his expansion of the auditory universe.

In the second chapter titled “Horse”, he depicts his first lonely contact with a horse. While his parents are sleeping, he goes out to listen and imitate the breathing sound of a horse in the wood. He feels as if the horse gurgles like water in the back of a boat. He imitates the sound of the horse and is desirous of touching it. The experience is summarized as follows, “Judging by his breathing, his slow release of

air, that sound of a concertina, judging by this I was nearly beside him. And so I reached out and there was the great wet fruit of his nose, the velvet bone of his enormous face. And we stood there together for a little while, all alive and all alone". (Kuusisto, 26).

Here he enjoys the subtle nuances of nature and experiences the pleasure of having direct contact with it. Such self-explorations have immense significance in the perception of the world by a visually impaired person. In the next two chapters, "The Birds and Ice", these natural explorations are continued. He goes alone in to the Pines behind his house and listens to the movement and sound of ice. The breaking of ice is felt like the jingling of the silver coins. When ice falls on his hair, he is captivated by the smell of fresh snow. He sees a wire fence and he plays with it like a harp. If plucked it with a finger, it sounds like a dark piano string. His mother's metal drums for storing water are used for his plays while putting marbles inside them or tapping them with his fingers. Apart from the hearing sensations, the focus is also enhanced here to the faculty of smelling and touching. Thus, his childhood which is presented as very monotonous in Planet of the Blind is described in a more positive manner here.

In the next few chapters, he describes his preoccupation with music, instruments, singers, and radio jockeys. In the fifth one called Victrola, he recalls his finding of a Victrola in the attic of his grandmother's house. He operates the record successfully and learns the technique of rotating its needle. With this he begins his lifelong companionship with music. The next chapter "House Music" narrates his grandmother's skill to identify different cars from the sound of their engines. She

acquired this skill since her husband was a car mechanic. Grandmother also introduces him to the world of radios. The first sound that he listens in the radio is that of Arthur Godfrey. He also explores the mechanism and the parts of a grandfather clock installed in his grandmother's house. In the next chapter, Tchaikovsky, he recalls his father's dramatic readings to him after his eye surgery. From the hospital, he listens to the lively ripples of music created by the Crickets. He listens to the sounds of lions and other animals in a circus. Since his eyes are bandaged, he has to be content with their sounds. He listens to the music of Tchaikovsky in the bedroom of his parents. Soon he is taken to a symphony orchestra. He starts weeping due to the impact of the music on his mind. This chapter continues his vivid journeys in the world of music and singers. In the next chapter, his passion for the music of Caruso is described.

The 12th chapter, "The sound of my Mother's Body" describes the extra ordinary circumstance in which Blind Kuusisto is expected to act as a witness. His mother has an accident while crossing a supermarket. The automatic door fails and the full weight of the door strikes on her elbow. She falls against a window with a terrible crack. The sonorous impact of the accident is put in this way:

> I was just a few steps ahead of her and I heard the sequenced sounds of the door and elbow and then her torso hitting the plate glass. I was fascinated by radio sound effects and knew that the noise of her body hitting the window sounded exactly like a dropped bag of apples. Then there was a gasp--her gasp, different from any cry I'd ever heard. When the mallet strikes nerves just right, we are all strangers and all simultaneously familiar (Kuusisto, 65).

A lawyer intervenes and Kuusisto is the only witness to the event. Being visually impaired, his statements could be contradicted. In the conversation with the lawyer, his activities in a day are compared to a requiem. To convey the force of his expressions, the passages are quoted in full here:

> You can think of a whole day as a kind of musical pattern. Do you know the parts of a requiem?"
>
> The lawyer didn't know. "There's the opening, in memoria aeterna--it sets the mood. Then there's the Dies Irae and the Tuba mirum and the Judex ergo …" I told him about the sound my mother's body made when it hit the window. I told him about the creation of sound effects in a radio studio. I said that with your eyes closed you could confuse one noise with another unless you really knew the character of a sound. I told him that a snipe rising from the grass sounds different from a pheasant. I was flat out happy, talking about the wilderness of noises and the hours in a day. (Kuusisto, 66-67).

This becomes an intense example for his faculty of listening. His mother who often keeps a deliberate silence regarding his blindness appreciates him by saying that, “He's got better ears than Leonard Bernstein and a memory for detail that would impress Houdini” (Kuusisto, 66). Even though the matter was settled out of court, this incident further increases the self-esteem of Kuusisto.

In the 14th chapter called “Paradise Lost”, he describes two vivid experiences of listening to Milton’s Paradise Lost. He listens to the text recited by Mr. Mercer, the substitute musical teacher in his school. Though most of the students in the

school intensely hate the reading of this particular teacher, Kuusisto is captivated by the text. He tries to picturize Milton in his blind state thinking and writing about the disobedience of our great forefathers. He then listens to a record of the same text for the blind from the Library of Congress. However, the machine doesn't give him the same pleasure. A young girl replaces Mr. Mercer as the new music teacher. She asks everybody to bring his or her own favourite record to the class for further discussion. In his turn, Kuusisto brings the record of Paradise Lost. After playing it, he narrates Milton's blindness and subsequent helplessness during the composition of Paradise Lost. This chapter describes his affiliation with Milton due to his spiritual significance and his importance for a blind person. With this chapter, the first part of the narrative describing his childhood comes to an end. The chapters in this section in one way or another presents the attempts of a lonely blind child to find his own places and meanings in the world. These intensive searches are done while resorting to the extra visual faculties with an emphasis on the art of listening.

The next section is titled "Walking by Ear". This section mostly consists of his adult journeys and his auditory postcards addressed to some of his contemporaries. The first chapter in this section, the 14th one titled Dog-Man: The Action Figure describes his pleasures and adventures while traveling with his guide dog Corky. He states how Corky heroically saved him from a car accident. People were congratulating Corky for her brave deed to save her master. But he feels that heroism is a group activity rather than an individual one. In the next chapter, "The Invention of the Cell Phone", he contemplates on the break of privacy after the introduction of cell phones. He records several odd conversations he listened during

the course of his journey. They were from the interior realms of the speakers and least meant for others. However, the question of privacy was over after these instruments. The 16th chapter is an auditory post card addressed to Georgina Kleege, who is discussed in the present study. Kuusisto begins by stating his listening to the conversation of two students from New York about Jazz music. Suddenly he is reminded of Oscar Peterson and Ella Fitzgerald, the renowned pianist and singer. He recognizes that the wind in this area has three distinct auditory characteristics. This effect of listening to the sound of the wind is very humorously put by Kuusisto:

> The big wind kills traffic. The whole world sounds like flags in a hurricane. The wind rips through spaces between brown-stones and that wind is surely a god, as the Greeks well knew.
>
> Under the big wind is a funny effect--one might call it the durational absentmindedness of wind--for whole moments the wind doesn't exactly stop, but it shifts direction, and you can hear everything in the city with absolute clarity. Along with the trucks you hear the bicycle deliverymen--you hear the chains of their bikes and the gritty noise of gears (Kuusisto, 99).

Here his curious experience of listening to the sound of wind is recorded. This experience brings out his intense capacity for listening even to the finer nuances of nature.

In the next chapter titled “The Tenor of Ocean City”, Brooklyn, his visit to a domestic museum in honour of the famous musician, Enrico Caruso is depicted. The museum is owned by a man named Aldo Mancusi. He visits the place with his friend

Joe. He is allowed to touch several objects including a pair of shoes worn by Caruso. Most of the objects are covered by glasses. However, the proprietor is very keen on making him touch maximum objects possible. He also listens to several kinds of records there. Signore Mancusi introduces Kuusisto to a life mask of Caruso's face. This is one of the only available two masks of the same kind in the world. He feels with his hand the plaster curve of the forehead and the sockets of the eyes. Kuusisto in this chapter fuses the auditory sensation with the tactile one.

The next chapter called “Blue Lagoon” records his trip to Iceland to hear Cuban music. The Cuban musician fled to Iceland after the revolution of Fidel Castro. He listens to the exceptional piano performance of Ruben Gonzalez, the exuberant singing of Ibrahim Ferrer and the sexy-seductive songs of Omara Portuondo. Thus, he tastes the delicacy of Cuban music. In the 21st chapter, “Letter from Venice”, he describes his journey to Venice along with his wife Connie and his guide dog Corky. He aimlessly roams through the city of Venice with Corky while allowing his wife to pursue her own course. He tries to create meaning out of the noisy confusions in the city. The people are highly empathetic to him and appreciate Corky. They go to the Church of St. Mark's to see the mosaics. He passionately listens to his wife’s description of the strands of gold finer than hair which are woven through the marble floor. While exploring the mosaic, he understands that the tesserae of the mosaic are smaller than chipped diamonds or the microscopic slices of platinum inside Rolex watches. Thus, his auditory and tactile explorations are continued in this journey as well. The rest of the chapters continue with the vivid dimensions of his auditory, tactile and olfactory probes.

Kuusisto's perception of blindness in *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear* radically differs from that of *Planet of the Blind* which is to be discussed at great length in the coming chapter. His extra visual skills in the form of his intense auditory, tactile and olfactory faculties are described with a host of examples from his childhood and adult days. He enjoys the life in a more challenging and fruitful manner during these quite unpredictable enquiries in the realms of sound, smell and touch.

Through these ramblings, he presents the scope a blind person to create a sensuous hierarchy out of chaos. Kuusisto records his intense fascination for listening in his sensory universe. The dark side of blindness presented in *Planet of the Blind*, which is to be elaborated in the next chapter, is replaced by a more vibrant and kinaesthetic search for the enjoyment of life. His capacity to shift between active participation and conscious detachment is a mesmerizing one.

Tom Sullivan, in his autobiography, *If You Could See What I Hear,* also approaches the question of blindness from a purely practical perspective. Sullivan who was an advocate of inclusion selected a very normal language to describe his very adventurous journey as a visually impaired person. Sullivan presents the book as a motivational text. This purpose is clearly indicated in the preface itself:

> am blind. But the message I hope to convey in this book is that the joy of living life to the full has far outweighed the inconvenience of my physical handicap. I trust my story will encourage the reader to strive for his personal goals, whatever the obstacles, and will provide some inspiration by example. It has not been easy for me, a skeptic,

> to advance this optimistic prospect. That I have is due to a great number of people (Sullivan, 1).

These dialogues clearly state his motivational intentions.

Like Kuusisto, Sullivan also had a premature birth. He lost his sight due to the supply of excess of oxygen in the incubator. The medical condition is called Retrolental-Fibroplasia. He had his education from Perkins' Institute, the best school for the visually impaired in America. He had a lot of adventurous experiences including his participation in the sports events, his attempts in skydiving, and his eventful musical career and so on. Since Sullivan was a congenitally blind person, he had no form of visual memories. Even though he was a born blind person, he was a strong exponent of the principle of inclusion. Naturally except occasional deviations, he selected a very general language to communicate his vibrant career. Sullivan's father was also emotionally hesitant to accept his blindness. But he being a totally blind person, his father had no option but give his son maximum chances to overcome the impairment. His father specifically did that. He garnered all his affection on his blind son and boosted his confidence in all available methods. The arrival of another woman in his father's life created a permanent gap between his parents. His mother was ready to compromise for the sake of her son. This along with many other ups and downs marked the life of Sullivan.

In the section, "Summers of Content", Sullivan describes the hierarchy of his sensual universe. He recalls his mother's teaching and introducing the names and texture of flowers to him. He says:

> The first flower I knew by name was the geranium, which grows prolifically at Scituate. I was puzzled, I remember, because its leaves had the touch of velvet, yet its smell was acrid, ugly. It seemed to me that something that felt so attractive to my fingertips should have a pleasant smell.
>
> My love of flowers, shrubs, trees was first generated in quiet summer evenings in Scituate when Mom took me to a neighbor's garden. Color, of course, meant nothing to me, and means nothing still. Speak of red or green or yellow to a person who has never seen and imagination screeches to a halt. But flowers that smell, flowers silk-soft as a rose's petal, these enter the joy of those who have no sight (Sullivan 29).

This exploration of the sensuous universe is continued in the final chapter of the book titled *Wood Burnings and Whispers*. As Sullivan sits in his living room while his wife Patty rests her head on his back, she asks him about the meaning of the title, *If You Could See, What I Hear*. He had used this expression to his little daughter while recollecting the drowning of her in a swimming pool and her miraculous returning to life. While explaining the expression, he states that the title means his universe of four senses having the capacities of touch, smell, hearing and tasting. He feels that his world of four senses is superior to the five sensed world of many sighted persons. He does not diminish the value of sight but admits that he has been able to super sensitize the other faculties in the absence of sight. Despite seeing the smile of a person, he is able to distinguish the genuineness or hypocrisy of that particular smile. While explaining the impact of her smell on him in the early morning, he discusses the importance of the olfactory sensation. To her question

about the faculty of distinguishing different smells of various people, he states that animals have this gift. He also informs that this gift of the other four senses can be developed by any sighted person with proper training. He further describes the hierarchy of his tactile universe:

> I told her how the feel of concrete and steel, for instance, gave me a sense of strength but they also spelled out brutality and aggression. Wood, on the other hand--a walnut table top or baseball bat-- aroused in me a feeling of well-being, of man's activity and craftsmanship. I told her how I responded to nature's imperfections and unexpectedness.
>
> My hand brushed a pine cone on the hearth and I invited Patty to feel its spikes and depressions, each subtly different from its neighbours. She asked about flowers and I reflected how they made me think not merely of petals and scent but of the seed and the thrust of the blade through soil. (Sullivan, 178).

These passages obviously reveal the importance of touch and smell in Sullivan's sensual world. Similarly, Sullivan explains the concept of facial vision as a strategy for the mobility of the visually impaired. Sullivan's own exploration of the possibility of facial vision is described in the section "Dawning and Darkness":

> When a blind person moves, he feels he is a participant in the action about him.
>
> Unconsciously I was developing the peculiar attribute of facial vision--a kind of "radar" some blind people acquire. What this amounts to is

> a reflection of sound waves off the facial muscles. It is the same sense that is developed to a higher degree by bats and porpoises. When anyone moves, he cuts through air and sends out waves the way that a stone dropped into a pond sends out ripples. The different degree and intensity of the rebounding air hitting the face can tell the blind person not only that there is an object a short distance away but the rough dimensions of the object too (Sullivan, 10).

This facial vision had much significance in the later life of Sullivan. It almost corresponds to the concept of echolocation described by Professor John M. Hull. Apart from these observations, most of his ruminations are about different folds of the practical aspects of blindness. However, Sullivan had an extra ordinary personal, social and professional life in comparison with his visually impaired contemporaries. The practical nuances of his life will be discussed in the next chapter.

Ved Mehta also describes his experience as a blind person using a very common language. Mehta records his remarkable journey as a blind person through his work *Face to Face: An Autobiography*. Mehta lost his sight due to Meningitis, when he was three years old. He did not cherish any visual memory. So, he can be considered as a congenitally blind person. However, his selection of the title 'Face to Face' itself presupposes a visual discourse. He has taken this title from the book of Corinthian in the Bible. His observations on the limitations of visual impairment are described through some beautifully crafted passages. He very figuratively

depicts the limitations of visual impairment on his sensibility and perception of the world:

> If my age and the length of the sickness deprived me of the treasured memories of sight, they also reduced things which are valued so much in the sighted world to nothing more than mere words, empty of meaning. I started living in a universe where it was not the flood of sunshine streaming through the nursery window or the colors of the rainbow, a sunset or a full moon that mattered, but the feel of the sun against the skin, the slow drizzling sound of the spattering rain, the feel of the air just before the coming of the quiet night, the smell of the stubble grass on a warm morning. It was a universe where at first -- but only at first -- I made my way fumbling and faltering.
>
> It was good that I lost my sight when I did, because having no memories of seeing, there was nothing to look back to, nothing to miss (Mehta, 3 – 4).

These passages clearly reveal the aesthetic and sensual orientation of a person who was born blind. Even though the referred matters are highly practical, they are described in a highly poetic manner with his focus on the multisensory experiences.

Ved Mehta belonged to the upper strata of the society. His father was a medical officer in the British Indian service. There were no reasonable facilities for the education of the blind in India. He got his primary education from Dadar School for the Blind in Bombay, a school for the blind at Lahore, an institution for the

rehabilitation of war veterans at Dehra Dun and finally from Arkansa School for the Blind in America. His struggles to finish his education in India and abroad are described in the text. He did not accept the visual impairment emotionally. For example, he was reluctant to use a white cane during his stay in America. He was mostly using his facial vision for his traveling, as Sullivan did. This at times created troubles for him. He was relatively successful in this utilization of the facial vision. His adventurous activities during his childhood made it easy for him to develop his facial vision in a reliable manner. Berthold Lowenfeld calls Facial vision as an obstacle sense. He admits that this particular sense is not fully explained. The autobiography of Mehta, however, certifies that he used this skill very effectively. Except this occasional ramblings, Mehta's contemplation on blindness and his depiction of the same are mainly related to the practical realms of blindness. He had a very dynamic career with several international recognitions. His discussion of the practical realms of blindness and further his fulfillment as a writer will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Sally Hobart Alexander, in her autobiographies, *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness* and *On my own: The Journey Continues* records the events leading to the loss of her sight and the aftermath of her blindness. The first part describes the events and causes leading to her blindness. The second part is the story of her survival after several struggles and hindrances on her way. She attends a rehabilitation programme and gains confidence to go forward as a blind person in life. She started to suffer from a retinal disorder when she was twenty-four. She completely lost her sight within two years. Her blurring vision and its first

recognition is summarized in the prologue to the book *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness*. As she writes:

> After swimming forty or fifty feet, I whirl onto my back, stick my leg in the air, and point my toes. What a water ballet star! v viii
>
> Then I just float and gaze at the sky, letting the current tow me to shore. Puffs of whipped cream clouds are moving in, threatening the perfect blue. And something else ... a tiny black line the size of an eyelash. It wiggles up, then down, like the line on an Etch-A-Sketch. That's funny. I reach a foot to the bottom, stand on tiptoe, and brush my finger lightly over my eyelashes. The line jumps to the top of the water. It coils and recoils like a snake. I swat at my bangs. But it isn't a stray hair, either. I walk out, flop to the sand, and remove the contact lens. After wetting it with my tongue, I start to reinsert it but see the same line. I frown, flip the lens back into my eye, and peer at the surf. Strange. The line is gone now. What could it have been (Alexander, 4).

This is the beginning of a catastrophe which results in the loss of her eyesight and her dramatic reconciliation with the situation. She is forced to drop off her affair with her lover Tom, due to his inability to accept the tragedy fully. She enrolls for a training programme for adventitiously blind persons at Pittsburgh and gets a lot of exposure in the practical techniques and strategies related to the rehabilitation of the persons who become blind in different stages of life. The book records the loss of her sight and the method of her overcoming the trauma.

This book also discusses mostly the practical aspects of blindness. The topics are more related to the loss of sight and different tips to adjust with the situation. However, there is occasional probing into some very delicate aspects related to the matter of perception. For example, she discusses the question of visualization and dreaming of adventitiously blind persons. In the course, visualization is taught as a way of memorizing for the adventitiously blind persons:

> You have the ability to remember what things look like," the teacher said. “What colors look like.”
>
> I closed my eyes and pictured red, then blue, then yellow. I imagined a kaleidoscope of all three.
>
> "Those who are born blind cannot do this," she went on. "You can picture intersections, and that will help in mobility. You can visualize buildings, which will help in memorizing layouts. Visualization is your edge. You haven't trained your hearing as well as the congenitally blind, but by visualizing, you can orient yourself faster and more accurately (Alexander, 56).

Here visualization is suggested as a better strategy for the orientation of the person who loses sight in the later part of their life. The question of dreaming is also discussed. The question discussed is whether a person who loses sight will dream in pictures. The teacher in the book suggests that they will adjust with their new situation but the deep inner psyche will take a lot of time to give up the sighted

existence. So, an adventitiously blind person may dream in pictures for ten or fifteen years.

The next book, *On My Own: The Journey Continues*, records further consequences of her blindness. She begins the book when she was working as a rehabilitation professional. The book covers her educational career, her relation with different males, and her marriage with Professor Bob, the diminishing in the power of her right ear and its solutions and finally the Glaucoma in her right eye. This book discusses many delicate and interior questions related to blindness. Despite the highly trying moments in her life, she concludes the book in an optimistic note. Since much of the considerations in this book are also related to the practical matters related to blindness, its detailed discussion is reserved for the next chapter. Apart from these rare theoretical diversions, most of her thoughts revolve around the practical matters related to the consequences of adventitious blindness and their practical remedies. These remedies again will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

To conclude, among the selected authors Helen Keller, Georgina Kleege, Stephen Kuusisto and Professor John M. Hull discuss relevant aspects related to the aesthetics and perception of blindness. Helen Keller is a totally blind person by birth. Professor Hull is an adventitiously blind person. Georgina Kleege is legally blind. Stephen Kuusisto is also legally blind. Naturally their discussion of the aesthetics is related to their subjective experience of blindness. Their language is decided by their perception of the world and blindness. Helen Keller maximizes her available senses of touch, smell and taste to make a better perception of the world

and become successful to a great extent in her trial. She achieves remarkable things with her available abilities. Her extra ordinary storage of information gained through her reading and communication considerably enlarged her universe. Georgina Kleege moves from a visual realm to a multisensory one. Her realization of the scope of touch and hearing in the form of Braille and audio cassettes not only expands her horizons but also reduces her difficulties considerably. Professor Hull's perception is further augmented by his growing realization of blindness. It moves from a severe trauma to a practical realization and to a more spiritual solace. Stephen Kuusisto presents a rich dimension of his aesthetic investigation on blindness in *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear*. His intense fascination with the art of listening provides an alternative platform through which the limitations of blindness can be transcended for a great extent. His perception of blindness in this book radically alters from his other book, *Planet of the Blind*. Tom Sullivan, Ved Mehta, and Sally Hobart Alexander concentrate more on the practical aspects of blindness. There are rare digressions dwelling on the theoretical issues. But they are necessitated by certain practical questions. In spite of the differences in their nature and degree of impairment, their focus is on the consequences of blindness on an individual's growth and the practical solutions to it. Thus, in a nutshell, a person's response to blindness is decided by various factors such as the nature of impairment, the degree of blindness, the available options for survival and the socio-cultural factors which influence his or her surroundings. The selection of the language is further decided by the experiential terrain through which each author moves.

Chapter 4

In the Innermost Corridor: The Personal Life of the Authors and their Prospects of Fulfillment

Visual impairment has serious bearing on the personal and social life of an individual. This impact is considerably augmented by the specific aspects related to the impairment such as its nature, options for adjustment, socio-cultural background and the support from one's family and society. Each of these aspects has much significance while analyzing the life of a visually impaired person. It is in such a context that, the discussion of the personal life of the selected authors while emphasizing their fulfillment becomes relevant.

This chapter gives importance to the following aspects related to the practical and personal dimensions of visual impairment. The degree and nature of different authors' blindness are compared with one another with special emphasis on their immediate reaction to the impairment. The strategies and methods adopted by various authors to survive their traumas and their attempts to register their own social, cultural and political space are also analysed. The role of social and familial support in the rehabilitation of these authors are studied further with focus on the evolution of their blindness and the practical remedies accepted to overcome the hurdles. In such a comparison, their more intimate aspects such as marriage, family life, sexual life and professional situations are studied as well. Finally, their degrees of fulfillment in the circumspection of the hurdles in their path created by blindness are also studied.

Unlike the previous chapter, the analysis is done while categorizing the authors on the basis of their blindness as congenital, adventitious and legal. The focus is on the practical aspects of blindness. The emphasis must be given to the strategies of different authors in handling their impairment and their impact on their social, cultural and professional success. A proper rehabilitation, exposure to different assistive devices and one's adaptation to the present circumstances are crucial factors in deciding these prospects of survival. The attitude of the particular author is also very important in such a scenario. These are some vital components in further determining the fulfillment of a blind person in his or her private and public life. In such an analysis, the focus must be on the more concrete and practical realities of blindness than its abstract aspects.

As mentioned earlier, Ved Mehta, Helen Keller and Tom Sullivan were congenitally impaired persons. Despite the similarity in the nature of their disability, one can discern remarkable differences in their attitude to blindness and to the world at large. These differences are necessitated by the particular social and cultural background through which these authors moved. The distinct trainings received by a particular author also have a serious impact on his or her profile. The gravity in this difference can be understood while analyzing the early life of the selected authors in detail.

Helen Keller was born in Tuscumbia, a village in northwestern Alabama on 27th June 1880. Her father Arthur Keller served the confederate army during the civil war. Later he owned a large cotton plantation. He also owned a weekly newspaper. Her mother Kate Keller was a house wife. As mentioned earlier, she

became ill when she was 19 months old. Even though the fever subsided soon, Helen lost her sight, hearing and subsequently the ability to speak. Her childhood was rather miserable due to this unexpected catastrophe. It was the arrival of Mrs. Annie Sullivan that changed the life of Helen.

Due to this loss of her sight and hearing, Helen had a sort of vacuum in her life. She was screaming loudly but the lack of hearing of her own sounds and the desperation that grew out of it made the situation all the more severe. As described earlier, Helen's natural but unconscious reaction to her blindness was her maximization of the ability of touch. She describes some of the concrete strategies in the second chapter of *The Story of My Life*:

> My hands felt every object and observed every motion, and in this way, I learned to know many things. Soon I felt the need of some communication with others and began to make crude signs. A shake of the head meant "No" and a nod, "Yes," a pull meant "Come" and a push, "Go." Was it bread that I wanted? Then I would imitate the acts of cutting the slices and buttering them. If I wanted my mother to make ice-cream for dinner I made the sign for working the freezer and shivered, indicating cold. My mother, moreover, succeeded in making me understand a good deal. I always knew when she wished me to bring her something, and I would run upstairs or anywhere else she indicated. Indeed, I owe to her loving wisdom all that was bright and good in my long night (Keller, 5).

It is amazing to think that, Helen performed these tasks when she was only two years old. She might have responded to the situation instinctively. The

impression given here is that, even a multi-disabled infant has her own method of transcending her limitations, though she may not be aware of the gravity of her actions. She further describes the time when she recognized her differences from others:

> I had noticed that my mother and my friends did not use signs as I did when they wanted anything done, but talked with their mouths. Sometimes I stood between two persons who were conversing and touched their lips. I could not understand, and was vexed. I moved my lips and gesticulated frantically without result. This made me so angry at times that I kicked and screamed until I was exhausted.
>
> I think I knew when I was naughty, for I knew that it hurt Ella, my nurse, to kick her, and when my fit of temper was over I had a feeling akin to regret. But I cannot remember any instance in which this feeling prevented me from repeating the naughtiness when I failed to get what I wanted (Keller, 5).

This naughtiness must be clearly attributed to her desperation due to the absence of fruitful communication. She tried to substitute her lacks through a collection of deliberate and mischievous pranks. She made several adventurous deeds with Martha Washington, the daughter of their cook. Once her own apron caught fire while she was trying to dry it. She describes this experience and her other naughty pranks in her book, *The Story of My Life*:

> Many incidents of those early years are fixed in my memory, isolated, but clear and distinct, making the sense of that silent, aimless, dayless life all the more intense.
>
> One day I happened to spill water on my apron, and I spread it out to dry before the fire which was flickering on the sitting-room hearth. The apron did not dry quickly enough to suit me, so I drew nearer and threw it right over the hot ashes. The fire leaped into life; the flames encircled me so that in a moment my clothes were blazing. I made a terrified noise that brought Viny, my old nurse, to the rescue. Throwing a blanket over me, she almost suffocated me, but she put out the fire. Except for my hands and hair, I was not badly burned (Keller, 7).

Helen employed several pranks of this sort to satiate the innate curiosities and mischievousness of a little child. Once she locked her mother in a room with the key and sat near the room. Since the servants were in other quarters of the home, her mother's pounding on the Dore was heard by no one. Helen laughed continuously while her mother was in great distress. She enjoyed the vibrations when her mother knocked rapidly on the door. These pranks convinced her parents that she must be educated and trained in the possible ways.

This naughtiness continued even after the arrival of Annie Sullivan. Sullivan had to strive constantly to reform Helen. For example, Helen used to pick the items of her own choice from the plates of every one during the course of dining. Her parents were unable to make her change her habit. Sullivan decided to tame Helen and to reform her. One day Helen decided to take sausage from the plate of Sullivan

during the breakfast. Sullivan resisted and blocked Helen. Even though her parents pleaded to allow this for the time being, she was not ready as she wanted to reform the former. Helen started screaming and kicking constantly. Her parents left the place being unable to witness this scene. Soon after, Sullivan locked the Dore. It was after persistent efforts and force that Sullivan could convince Helen the indecency in her behavior. However, this continuous trial reaped fruits slowly but steadily.

As mentioned earlier, it was her mother's reading of Charles Dickens's *American Notes* which changed Helen's life for the best. Her mother's understanding of Laura Bridgman and Samuel Gridding Howe and her mother's writing to Michael Animus at Perkins institute already are mentioned. Anne Sullivan herself was a partially blind person. It was after constant efforts that she acquired some sort of stability in her sight. However, it was her destiny to create miracles in the world while educating a deaf blind girl. Their story of maximizing Helen's available three senses and the methods of manual alphabets and Braille learning were also described in detail in the previous chapter. Its practical impact must be summarized in order to assess the magnitude and rarity of Helen's achievements.

Sullivan adopted her own ingenious strategies to teach Helen. Wherever possible, she resorted to provide natural experiences to Helen regarding all possible situations and contexts. For example, after visiting Perkins institute, Helen was taken to sea by Sullivan at Cape Cod. This novel but breathtaking experience is also described by Keller. She states:

> No sooner had I been helped into my bathing-suit than I sprang out upon the warm sand and without thought of fear plunged into the cool water. I felt the great billows rock and sink. The buoyant motion of the water filled me with an exquisite, quivering joy. Suddenly my ecstasy gave place to terror; for my foot struck against a rock and the next instant there was a rush of water over my head. I thrust out my hands to grasp some support, I clutched at the water and at the seaweed which the waves tossed in my face. But all my frantic efforts were in vain. The waves seemed to be playing a game with me, and tossed me from one to another in their wild frolic. It was fearful! The good, firm earth had slipped from my feet, and everything seemed shut out from this strange, all-enveloping element--life, air, warmth and love. At last, however, the sea, as if weary of its new toy, threw me back on the shore, and in another instant I was clasped in my teacher's arms. Oh, the comfort of the long, tender embrace! As soon as I had recovered from my panic sufficiently to say anything, I demanded: Who put salt in the water? (Keller, 23).

This incident brings the key to the strategy through which Sullivan made Helen learn new things combining experience and thinking. She channeled Helen's energy into the process of learning and thus reformed her character. Sullivan taught the abstract concepts such as thinking and loving while connecting them with nature and natural surroundings. Thus, her teachings were more or less organic.

Apart from Braille and Manual alphabet, Helen also received training in speech therapy. This art was taught to her by Miss Sarah Fuller, principal of the Horace Mann School. Helen achieved remarkable success in this new venture

gradually. She spoke in several meetings and received loud applause for the same. She also visited several forests and waterfalls in the course of her journey. The list of her contacts included such eminent persons as Alexander Graham Bell, Mark Twain, Franklin Roosevelt and so on. She visited several nations and collected funds for the empowerment of the disabled in those countries. She also attempted several theatrical performances along with Sullivan. These were done in order to collect money for their daily routines.

Helen was not simply content with the problems of the disabled. She had her own opinion in the larger questions of the world. She was an ardent socialist and openly declared her opinions wherever needed. She expressed her view point in the issues such as American presidential elections, labour strikes and so on. A best example for the same is her supporting of Wisconsin Senator and U.S. presidential candidate Robert La Follette, AFB. During the election of 1924, she declared her allegiance to him through an open letter. She became the colonel of the campaign in New York City. She was, however, chided and criticized by the public for this intervention. Her frustrations are depicted in Kim E. Nielsen's book titled *Helen Keller*. Neilsen describes Helen's experience in these words: "The frustration she felt was very real. Her detractors and political opponents succeeded in doing what her blindness and deafness had not. They robbed her of her political voice, denying her the full expression of citizenship" (Nielsen, 89).

Being a disabled person, Helen was not granted the authority to comment on the social matters by the public. Even though this dissuaded her temporarily, she regained her composure in the later stage.

Another most painful incident in Helen's life happened with regard to a plagiarism controversy. Helen wrote a short story titled "The Frost King" during the autumn of 1892. This was sent as a token of love to Mr. Michael Animus, the director of Perkins Institute for his birthday. Since Helen received much of her information with the help of others, she could not distinguish the boundary between her own imagination and the ones she acquired. The process of writing this story is noted in *The Story of My Life*. She says:

> I wrote the story when I was at home, the autumn after I had learned to speak. We had stayed up at Fern Quarry later than usual. While we were there, Miss Sullivan had described to me the beauties of the late foliage, and it seems that her descriptions revived the memory of a story, which must have been read to me, and which I must have unconsciously retained. I thought then that I was "making up a story," as children say, and I eagerly sat down to write it before the ideas should slip from me (Keller, 34).

She changed the title from "Autumn Leaves" to "The Frost King" in accordance with the suggestion of her teacher. Being highly delighted, Mr. Animus published it in one of the Perkins Institution reports. However, the story seemed to contain some elements from another story called "The Frost Fairies" by Miss Margaret T. Canby. Since both stories contained several similarities in words and language, Helen was rebuked with the charge of plagiarism.

It was after so much trouble that, Sullivan made Helen understand the concept. This enormously shocked her. After the initial support, Mr. Animus became angry and decided to try Helen in this matter. A few teachers in Perkins

questioned Helen while asking Sullivan to leave the room. Helen became heavily grief stricken after the trial. As she records:

> As I lay in my bed that night, I wept as I hope few children have wept. I felt so cold, I imagined I should die before morning, and the thought comforted me. I think if this sorrow had come to me when I was older, it would have broken my spirit beyond repairing. But the angel of forgetfulness has gathered up and carried away much of the misery and all the bitterness of those sad days (Keller, 34).

After constant enquiries, it was found that the story was read to her by Mrs. Sophia C. Hopkins who owned a copy of the same. Sullivan and those who were close to her understood that the plagiarism was unconscious. However, she was heavily rebuked and chastised by Animus and his circle. It is astounding to think that a well-trained expert in the field of blindness like Mr. Animus failed to understand the complexities of the situation and could not appreciate an act of great zeal from a multi-disabled child.

Helen also had a short-lived infatuation with Peter Fagan, the secretary of Mr. John Macy, the fiancé and later husband of Miss Sullivan. This short affair happened during 1916. When Sullivan and Macy got married, it was Fagan who helped Helen. This affair is discussed in *Midstream: My Later Life* even though she hides the name of Fagan in the text. Her immediate sensation and pleasure of blossoming love is described in a few beautiful passages; “His love was a bright sun that shone upon my helplessness and isolation. The sweetness of being loved enchanted me, and I yielded to an imperious longing to be a part of a man's life. For

a brief space I danced in and out of the gates of Heaven, wrapped up in a web of bright imaginings…" (Midstream, 211).

Helen was keen on communicating this news to her mother and teacher. But Fagan insisted on postponing it till a favourable opportunity arrives. Mrs. Sullivan was then physically very fragile, so Fagan wanted Helen to wait until she gains her composure. She further describes the particularities of this short-lived affair:

> I had happy hours with him. We walked in the autumn splendor of the woods, and he read to me a great deal. But the secrecy which circumstances appeared to impose upon us made me suffer. The thought of not sharing my happiness with my mother and her who had been all things to me for thirty years seemed abject, and little by little it destroyed the joy of being loved. (Midstream, 211-212).

Mr. Fagan, however, had applied for a marriage license without the knowledge of anybody. This adventurous decision spoiled everything. When the news of this marriage license was published in the papers, her family and friends came to know the matter. They squashed the affair as marriage and child bearing were not suitable options for a deaf-blind woman in their opinion. Mr. Fagan disappeared from her life forever. Helen became despondent for a while after this incident. She was criticized for this affair by her mother, brother and teacher. Had it been materialized, what would have been the result is a curious question.

The diversity and comprehensiveness of Helen's career and activism was so much that three or four volumes wouldn't be sufficient to describe it. She was an

extra-ordinary genius not only of her own age but throughout history. As Leslie Garret puts in his Biography of her called *Helen Keller*:

> Helen Keller remains a symbol of the human spirit's ability to overcome limitations. While they were saying among themselves it cannot be done, it was done. Helen had written influential articles about racial equality, child labor, and unfair work practices. Helen had met kings, emperors, and presidents. She was as comfortable with the world's wealthiest people as she was with the poorest. And now, after a lifetime of effort and optimism, she was one of the best-known and most respected women in the world.
>
> Through it all, Helen had one wish: She wanted the world to accept her as no different from someone who could see and hear. She had worked hard to show the world not only that she could do anything, but that other disabled people could, too. She knew she had achieved her purpose. (Garret 5, 6).

Ved Mehta lost his sight as a result of Meningitis, when he was three and half. Naturally he didn't possess any trace of visual memory. He had to calibrate his world with his available four senses. However, he tried to live the life of a sighted person transcending and overcoming his visual impairment. His major problem sprang from his emotional rejection of blindness. The very title of one of his autobiographies, *Face to Face: An Autobiography* can be treated as a testimony to this attitude. The title presupposes the feeling and perception of a sighted person. But his social and economic position helped him a lot to overcome his barriers. Mehta's father was a medical officer in British Government Service. Even though he

tried to offer the best avenues possible for his child, situation in undivided India was not so much favourable for the blind.

Mehta had his elementary education from Dadar School for the Blind in Bombay. It was then one of the very limited options for the blind persons in India. Due to the influential position of Mehta's father, R. M. Haider, the principal of the school was ready to admit him to school. He recalls this incident in *Face to Face*: *An Autobiography*:

> On February 15, 1939, when I was almost five, my mother and father took me to Karnal station. There I was to board a train for the first time, accompanied by one of my father's friends, who was going on to Bombay. When the whistle blew, my father said to me, "Now you are a man." Then he clasped my hands, and drawing the palms together within his own, he murmured the Hindu blessing, "Namaste" (Mehta, 13).

He was received by a cousin of his father called Prakash. His short physique and ill health created frequent problems for him. The facilities in the school were very meager; Mehta was given certain privileges including his food with Dr. Haidar's family. Being very short in physique and being the youngest, he was often bullied and insulted by the bigger boys. He learnt everything available in the school except chair caning. He made rapid progress in Arithmetics, Braille and so on. Even though he was recommended by Dr. Haidar for Perkins Institute in America, the best school for the blind then, Dr. Farrell, director of Perkins Institute rejected the proposal as Mehta was very young and inexperienced.

Mehta was again restricted to his idle and uneventful domestic life. However, he participated in all adventurous activities of his cousins including kite fighting, hide and seek and so on. He secretly repaired the old bicycle used by a servant in his home and practiced it despite occasional injuries and crashes. One day he followed his sisters without their notice when they were going to the convent school at Rawalpindi. His sisters only came to know the matter when they saw him waiting for them during the evening. This adventurous affair brings the key to Mehta's attitude to life. He was ready to take risks for becoming successful. Since there weren't many avenues for the blind in India, his father was advised to give him training in music. His father induced him to become a composer in Bollywood. He was relatively successful in this venture but was not interested in pursuing the career.

Mehta got his second phase of education from Emerson Institute for the Blind, Lahore. The only rewarding fruit of his learning in this school was his association with the principal, Mr. Khanna, who taught him history and guided him for a better education. The partition troubles in the city disturbed and almost blocked his education. Meanwhile, Mehta became a member of R. S. S, a Hindu militant organization involved in the partition struggle. The troubles in Rawalpindi and the escape of Mehta along with his brothers, sisters and cousins are described in the text.

After settling in India, he was also admitted to St. Dunstan's Hostel for the war-blinded in Dehra Dun. The admission was secured through his father's contact with Lady Mountbatten. There weren't much to learn for him except typewriting. However, this gift of typewriting had a profound impact on his future career. Being

very young, he was prevented from mingling with the war veterans. He had to struggle a lot to continue his staying there. He tried to apply for every known blind school in America. Even though he was offered a chance to have an interview with one Mr. Baldwin, a representative of a large American corporation, his poor performance in Braille reading spoiled the opportunity of a western educational scholarship. He wrote in Braille to all the blind schools in the U.S.A. In his despair, he even typed a letter to then prime minister Pundit Nehru, explaining his situation and seeking his recommendation for an American school. He also met Nehru in Delhi before leaving to Arkansas School for the Blind. His father was willing to accompany him to America but an unexpected governmental urgency prevented him so he had to go by himself in a plane.

He had his secondary education at Arkansas School for the Blind and later he studied at Pomona College, California. His aversion to white cane and depending on his facial vision for traveling has already been described in the previous chapter. He finished higher studies at Oxford and settled down in the U. S. A. He became an internationally acclaimed writer with several fiction and nonfiction books and three autobiographies.

Another significant dimension of Mehta's life is elaborately explored in his autobiographical book called *All for Love*. In this book he describes his futile attempt to find a meaningful relationship with four ladies. He became attached with four women, three western ladies and an Indian girl. Although he had physical fulfillment with all, none of them developed into a fruitful marital relationship. In his despair, he went to a psycho analyst. Since the actual identities of all the persons

are deliberately disguised, a detailed reference to their names and discussion of the incidents are not attempted. However, his blindness was a very crucial factor in deciding the nature of his relationships with women. Even though they surrendered themselves physically to him, they were not ready to accept him as a life partner. His psycho analyst could diagnose the trouble and tried to inform the matter to him. Mehta records the progress of this process in *All for Love:*

> IN SUBSEQUENT SESSIONS, Bak expressed the opinion that I undervalued the importance of sight in life, in that I imagined that, although I couldn't see, I could do everything that a seeing person could. He traced the source of this attitude directly to my mother's belief that my sight would be restored, and to her corresponding denial that I would be permanently blind. He said that, while this attitude had been a creative force in my life and writing, it was preventing me from making a lasting connection with a woman--a woman who would commit herself to me, who would stay with me "for better or for worse," and who would fully accept that I was permanently blind, and not tilt against my destiny (Love, 339, 340).

This emotional conflict with blindness was the real threat that Mehta had to overcome to become successful in his personal and professional life. After the unexpected death of his doctor, Mehta realizes that his dependence was a stumbling block in his relationship with women. He also understood his extreme dependency and vulnerability in the presence of the psycho analyst. His inferences from these love relationships and subsequent psycho analyses are summarized at the end of the book:

> Indeed, I came away from my sessions with Bak (and his successor) feeling that my analysis was akin to the nightmares of Faust, the trials of Ulysses, and the Stations of the Cross. Throughout, I felt that when it worked, it had more to do with art, myth, faith, and, above all, Bak's personality than with science. No doubt, Bak would have said that my skepticism itself needed to be analyzed.
>
> Whatever the pros and cons of analysis, it was thanks to Bak that I learned that I must face the fact of my blindness squarely and never shrink from discussing it with anyone I wanted to be close to. Although this knowledge could not protect me from future heartbreaks in my quest to love and to be loved, it put me on a realistic course toward my goal of marriage and family (Love, 344).

Mehta also recognized some practical lessons which became highly influential in deciding his future course. He continues:

> There were other insights I gained along the way: love that causes one to lose one's sense of self is destructive; passionate love without mutual regard does not lead to happiness; I should wait and think before I allowed myself to be swept away by any woman who took an interest in me; while there was a lot that I needed, there was also a lot that I could give; I should try to overcome my belief that life without family was futile and instead accept that the life of the mind and the satisfaction of writing books could, in themselves, be fulfilling. (Love, 344).

This recognition would inevitably lead him to become a successful writer. He also could establish a productive relationship with the fifth woman Linn, who became his wife and companion during the subsequent years of his life.

Ved Mehta had a very eventful career with several ups and downs. However, he was not a part of the established blind community in India or America. This dissociation might have sprung up from his preoccupation with the condition of blindness. But due to his social, economic and professional advantages, he was a highly renowned and admired figure in the world.

As pointed out earlier, Tom Sullivan lost his sight soon after his birth due to the condition called retrolental-fibroplasia. Too much of Oxygen in the incubator completely took his vision. Like Mehta and Keller, Sullivan also did not possess any trace of visual memory. However, he was also destined like Mehta to lead the life similar to a sighted transcending his limitations. Sullivan had a very extra ordinary career due to his unusual confidence, training and circumstances. In spite of the early shock, his parents devoted their maximum energy and time for his comfort and welfare.

An early instance of Sullivan's confidence can be identified from an unusual boxing competition that he had with a bullying boy. There was a boy called Eddy Mullins who often insulted Sullivan calling him "The Blindey". The fight between the two was seen by his father and in a very adventurous mood, his father advertised a boxing match between Sullivan and Eddy. Only later did Sullivan come to know that, he had even made several bets on behalf of his son. It was his father himself who taught Sullivan different kinds of punches and defensive strategies.

Eddy had also insulted and verbally abused Tommy during a cricket match, where Sullivan's bowls were smashed by the former. Sullivan understood that, Eddy stood between him and his prospects in the world. His father presented him the gloves used by the famous boxer Archie Moore. He also coached him regarding different kinds of punches and movements in the ring. He finally was successful in teaching Tommy the special kind of punch by which he could beat his opponent. The whole episode is described in his autobiographical book titled *Adventures in Darkness: Memoirs of an Eleven-Year-Old Blind Boy*.

Tom was heavily punched and beaten up by Eddy in the first two rounds. However, his most special punch in the third round knocked Eddy to the ground and he could not raise till counting up to ten. Sullivan's lack of sight was very fruitfully utilized by his opponent in the first two rounds. In the third round, he decided to talk to Eddy so as to locate the shifting positions of the former. He consciously irritated Eddy and made him loose his temper. It was during this chance that he implemented the special punch mentioned above. Sullivan was declared the winner by the referee, his father's friend and the famous boxer Tussy Russell.

Due to excessive bleeding and injuries, Sullivan's father was planning to ask the referee to stop the match after two rounds. However, his mother despite her disagreement with the very prospect of a boxing match between a blind boy and a sighted one pleaded to continue the fight as it was crucial in establishing the confidence of Sullivan in his life. Sullivan shares his happiness after this sport in *Adventures in Darkness*:

> FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS, I FELT LIKE TED WILLIAMS. I was a celebrity, a neighborhood star, and for a little while, every kid in town wanted to know, hang out, or be seen with Tommy "The Cyclops" Sullivan.
>
> The phenomenon was amazing. Our house was a three-ring circus of little boys coming and going. I actually began to tire of having so many new friends at the same time. But like all celebrities, the new fans began to go away when there wasn't another big event to get excited about.
>
> Billy and I went back to doing all the things that had made the summer of 1959 the greatest experience of my life. The difference was that sometimes other kids shared our games. (Darkness, 65).

Even though the ecstasy of this was temporary, this set the tone of Sullivan's life and considerably boosted his adventurous spirit to take risks and to reap the fruits of such adventures. This spirit continued throughout his life. He even had a friendly match with Tussey Russell. As luck would have it, he defeated the boxing champion with the same kind of the special punch. The episode is recorded in *If You Could See What I Hear*. A friend of his father called Tom McDonagh, and then head of the Internal Revenue Department for the state taught him the arts of rowing and fishing. Once when they lost their way due to heavy fog, it was Sullivan's navigational skills that saved them.

When Sullivan was five, he was taken to Perkins Institute, the best available Blind School in America. He did not feel comfortable with the educational system in the special school. He was always yearning for an inclusive environment. This

contempt for the special schools continued throughout his life. A detailed discussion of special education, integrated education and the inclusive system is attempted in this chapter while discussing the life of Stephen Kuusisto. Sullivan describes the moment after the departure of his parents from Perkins as the loneliest moment in his life. His friendship with other boys and weekly trips to his home lessened his troubles. He had a wide range of adventures at Perkins along with other boys. He was also introduced to several sports including baseball and swimming.

The entry of another woman into his father's life created further troubles in his life. However, his mother decided to suffer the agony for his sake. His father even tried to shoot him once being heavily drunk. The catastrophe was somehow averted in the final moment.

Sullivan studied at Perkins for twelve years. He continued his education at Providence College of Catholic University and further at Harvard University. He also participated in several sports events with colourful results.

Sullivan was introduced in to the world of girls when he was at Perkins. As a part of the institution's social orientation programme, a group of boys and girls were invited from a neighboring school. He performed his dance with a girl called Sally who introduced him to the world of sex. In his 12^{th} year at Perkins, he developed a bond with a junior teacher called Hope Francillon. Her peculiar brand of perfume and nice behavior captivated his attention. However, their relationship was secretly observed by the other teachers. Some of them even listened to their telephone calls over an extension phone. Sullivan was called to the office of Dr. Solomon Wise, the Dean of Perkins. He was warned about the affair. Later Miss Cillon was fired from

her job. Tom and Cillon engaged in a violent love making and a nurturing relationship which eventually had a tragic end. All these incidents are depicted in *If You Could See What I Hear*.

Sullivan became a musician and keyboard player. He started to perform as part of a music band. It was in one such performance that he met his future wife, Patricia. Sullivan's obsession with girls created some havocs in their relationship. However, through her persistent efforts, she could convince him the sincerity and genuineness of her love.

During a mood of turmoil, Sullivan attempted his third sky diving in order to ease his frustrations. This was when there was some conflict between himself and Patricia-Patty, due to his extreme indulgence with girls. Despite the warning of the duty pilot about the unsteady wind, he decided to pursue the course. Unfortunately, they forgot to check the transceiver's batteries. His paratrooper friend, Jack Lucas was also present during this mission. As he could not listen to the signals from the pilot, he lost the balance and crashed on a tree top. A collarbone and ribs were seriously injured. He recovered from the accident and reconciled with Patty. With his musical talent, he won the admiration of Patty's family circle and thus married her. This was another instance of Sullivan's spirit which never got lowered in adversities.

Sullivan begins the book, *If You Could See What I Hear* by describing one of the most trying moments in his life. It is quite coincidental that this trouble happened in one of the most precious moments in his life. Patty had gone to purchase grocery from the market and Sullivan was practicing swimming with their

three-year-old daughter Bly. Due to continuous ringing of his telephone, Sullivan was forced to attend the call over an extension line. He asked Bly to sit quiet. The call was from Whitehouse. The secretary of the President informed him the time for his requested appointment with the President during the following Sunday. When he was throbbing with ecstasy, Bly's sound became inaudible. It was after one or two moments that he understood that Bly had fallen into the pool. With much trouble, he located her. Snatching her out of the pool and expelling water from her chest, he breathed continuously into her mouth. She began to breathe again and a highly traumatic situation was averted as a result of his timely intervention. This was one of the most terrible moments in his life.

Sullivan took the most crucial decision in his life due to the persuasion of Patty. Prior to their marriage, Tommy was offered an annual salary of thirty-five thousand dollars by a stock broker and millionaire called Tom Robertson. He was the brother of James Robertson, the roommate of Tom at Providence College. He asked Sullivan to work as the PR agent for his corporation. He was highly impressed by the socializing skill of Sullivan. Despite the hugeness and rarity of such an offer, Patty asked him to refuse the offer and to continue the musical career. He describes the significance of this decision in *If You Could See, What I Hear*:

> When I eventually arrived in Tucson, only three days before the wedding, I was four-fifths persuaded that an assured income of thirty-five thousand dollars a year was more attractive than the bottom rung of a musical career.
>
> Once more it was Patty who held me to my course. It may have been at the same traffic light where we had stopped before that she said, "Anyone

> can wear a business suit and there are thousands who can earn thirty-five thousand dollars a year doing PR work. But only you have the talents of Tommy Sullivan."
>
> The light changed and we moved forward. "Music's a helluva chancy deal," I said. A moment and she said very firmly, "I'm ready to be a waitress in any club where you promise to sing." (The time was to come when she would have to make good that promise (Sullivan, 144).

They had to struggle a lot to establish his career. They came across extreme financial constrains in the course of their marital life. There were times when their income prospects became very marginal. His artistic pride got vanished and was ready to perform in any club for a minimal sum of twenty dollars per day. Patty had to drop him to the club and later at One o'clock, she used to pick him back to their meager apartment at Boston. Bly accompanied them throughout these journeys. Saving the expenses for Petrol, they got only 15 dollars. Patty had to find the cheapest market for purchasing groceries. She even tried to work as a part-time waitress in a restaurant. However, Sullivan at present is an internationally acclaimed singer and composer, having a host of highly celebrated albums to his credit.

Another major conflict in his life happened with regard to Patty's suggestion for him to become a motivational speaker for the blind community. The Braille Institute had invited him for a motivational lecture to the blind students. He was initially unwilling and had to undergo a serious mental conflict in this matter. When he was brooding over this subject in the beach accompanied by his guide dog Heidi,

Patty had secretly followed him and was observing him. In his return journey, a car accident was averted by Heidi while risking its own life. This selfless act from an animal reminded him to motivate the other deprived members in the blind community.

Sullivan was a champion of the inclusive model of education and was against the special school system. In spite of being a student in the best American blind school, his antipathy to the special school continued throughout his life. In *If You Could See What I Hear*, he shares his observations about the integration of the blind children into the mainstream society. In the section titled "Reaction and Reality", he records his main ideas of integration and inclusion. These ideas are put in the form of a speech that he rehearses to perform in the Braille Institute. He feels that the blind schools fail in demonstrating to the blind children the actual and real life. So, the blind children often withdraw themselves into their own cocoon. He has to be taught several practical things as labeling one's clothes, selection of the colour combination in dress and so on. Sullivan feels that, helping a blind child must comprise of teaching him the courtesies such as turning his face towards the addressee, dressing well, brushing the hair, mixing with sighted children not as a freak or someone to be pitied but as an ordinary person with feelings, hopes and talents.

Like Ved Mehta, Sullivan was also not a member of the established blind community in America. His highly renowned career and social circle from the upper strata of the society could have been responsible for such an attitude. The absence of such a community feeling or sense of solidarity did not have any profound impact on

his career. However, his association with the blind fraternity would have been highly beneficial for the community. With his extra ordinary career, Sullivan is treated as an influential figure in 20th century American artistic world.

Professor John M. Hull and Sally Hobart Alexander became adventitiously impaired in their life. They lost their sight in very crucial points of their life. Their attitudes to blindness were decided by the particular terrain in which they moved. The differences were further necessitated by their vocational, educational and gender differences. The problems faced by Mr. Hull were more of an aesthetic or existential nature. His mastery in philosophy and theology had a major impact on his thinking on blindness. His job as a professor and its practical demands also influenced his thinking. His gradual loss of sight was also very significant in deciding his perspective.

Sally Hobart Alexander however lost her sight rather rapidly and comparatively in a short span of time. Her adjustment problems were of different sorts. She had to equip herself practically to meet her new situation. Since her loss of vision was immediate, its emotional, physical and practical impacts were very strong and consequential. Sally had a quicker process of recovery than that of Professor Hull. His contemplative nature would have been a major factor in this gradual but more spiritual adjustment with his situation. Professor John Martin Hull who is otherwise known as John M. Hull lost his sight due to a sort of progressive retinal detachment. Since he became totally blind within a long span of 38 years, his experience of the loss of sight was highly eventful. After 1980, the year in which he

was officially registered as a blind person, his problems became very complex and traumatic.

The book *Touching the Rock* later enlarged and reprinted as *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness* records his meditations on blindness between 1983 and 1986. In the revision, he added two more chapters written after 1986. It contains his description of the experiences related to blindness and his contemplations on the complexity and gravity of the situation. The content of this book includes the cassette diaries maintained by him during this time. He understands that the movement from the world of sight to that of blindness is very profound and highly consequential. Since the changes in his life are very drastic and highly demanding, most of his observations are very pessimistic and melancholic in temperament. He finds a gradual reconciliation with the situation resulting in a spiritual solace and a philosophical realization.

Much of the thoughts of Mr. Hull are highly existential and self-reflective. They have already been elaborated in the previous chapter. The major incidents of his life are briefly mentioned here in order to assess the progress of his situation and the fulfillment in his life. Since his movement from being a sighted person to that of a blind one demands a great amount of tolerance and adjustment with the reality, his perspective is rather dismal and bleak. The realization and the resultant shift happen very slowly but fruitfully.

In the introduction to *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness*, Professor Hull describes the major events in his life. He was born on 22 April 1935 in Corryong, a town in north-eastern Victoria, Australia. His father was a

Methodist minister. His mother was a school teacher. A few days after the birth of Mr. Hull, his skin erupted in sores. This condition continuously disturbed him during the first half of his life. However, its association with the congenital cataract and its consequences were only recognized later.

His childhood was highly traumatic due to continuous sores in the body and the pain and difficulties related to it. The severity of his eczema forced his parents to admit him in the children's ward of Prince Henry's Hospital in Melbourne. He missed a year in the school due to his poor health and had to compensate it through a correspondence course. It was in his 13th year that he remarked that the morning was misty. His mother understood his ophthalmic troubles and took him to an eye specialist. However, he was declared a totally blind person only after 38 years. Cataract was recognized and he lost the sight of the left eye. His second eye also started to deteriorate. The surgery had to be delayed for several weeks due to a nasty skin infection on his face and neck. The lenses were pierced through a needle operation so as to make the cataract dissolve. Only later did the medical science recognize the consequence of such an operation in the form of detachment of the retina because of the vitreous jelly tending to move forward. He used to enjoy sight with the aid of glasses. Soon after, there appeared dark patches in his eyes due to the detachment of his retina. His attempts to explain its progression to a collection of ophthalmologists were only partially successful. The black disk appeared in his left eye when he was 17. The same thing reappeared in his right eye as well. Repeated occurrences of the same thing were only to be rectified with surgeries. His right eye became clear after the third surgery and he finished his degree.

He also secured a diploma in teacher's training specializing in religious education and became a teacher in Boys' Grammar School in Melbourne. Later he went to England for further studies. He obtained a degree in theology from Cheshunt College of Cambridge University. Depending on his excellent right eye, he traveled through the whole of England and even France and Switzerland on a motor scooter. His problems in the left eye and poor night vision however created occasional hazards.

His studies in theology convinced him that he cannot conscientiously become a minister and thus he decided to continue his teaching job in England. He married a fellow student from Cheshunt College and they moved to southern London. He became a lecturer of theology in West hill College of Education in Birmingham. He then became a lecturer of the same subject in Birmingham University. His old problem of dark patches reappeared after two years of joining in the university. It was after frequent phone calls that the eye specialist was ready to examine him and the immediate surgery was the result. The sight of his right eye was temporarily restored but the problem persisted further.

Another operation was performed by a colleague of the previous Doctor. But the eye was battered and scarred. He confronted a decade of failing vision from 1970 onwards. His first daughter Imogen Mary was born in 1973. In the spring of 1979, he got a divorce from his first wife after more than two years of informal separation. This was chiefly due to her inability to accept his condition of blindness and subsequent troubles.

His research was in the final stage but the reading of Greek and Aramaic was a problem. He read with the aid of magnifying glasses while increasing their intensity frequently. On 1st November 1979, he married his second wife, Marilyn. In the next year, they had their first child Thomas and Mr. Hull registered himself as a blind person. He had to deal with his new situation with the piling up of a host of difficulties. He had three more children in the second marriage and slowly reconciled with the new reality of blindness.

He published several books related to theology and blindness. He was also promoted as the Dean of the faculty in Birmingham University. He lectured on theology and related disciplines in several countries on multiple occasions. He had a busy career and a very eventful life. But he had to pay his price for such a productive and enjoyable life. The major problem revolved around the management of his blindness and his adjustment with the new situation. The acceptance of blindness and the subsequent spiritual realization are recorded in the book. His biographical details are very elaborately discussed here due to their gravity and significance for the present study.

In the foreword to *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness*, he shares some of his major observations on blindness and the resolutions developed for solving the troubles. He states:

> Blindness does not in principle lead to the fragmentation of life. The lives of blind people are more or less as integrated as the lives of sighted people. It is true that we tend to think of sighted people as having something which blind people lack, and in that sense blindness is considered to be a deficiency.

> Certainly, when sight is lost it is almost always experienced as a terrible deprivation, and the loss is inevitably followed by a period of grieving. The change from living as a sighted person to living as a blind person is profound. Nevertheless, the life of a person who is blind is experienced as a whole (Hull, xi).

He says that losing the sight is not like losing a limb. A blind person may not be always aware of something missing. However, the reintegrated structure of the life of a blind person may be smaller than his previous one. This condition is described with a very powerful simile. The life of a blind person is not like a cake which has had a slice cut out of it. Rather, it is like a smaller cake. In other words, the life of a blind person is not a continuation of his sighted life. It is a new life with limited avenues and chances. However, this description may be a product of his sudden inhibitions related to his physical condition.

He further describes different stages in his interpretation of blindness:

> First I believed that blindness was when you couldn't see because something had gone wrong with your eyes. Then I understood that blindness was a deprivation of knowledge for which alternative sources and kinds of knowledge would compensate. Gradually I came to see that blindness is a whole-body condition. It is not simply that your eyes have ceased to function; your whole body undergoes a profound transformation in its relationship to the world. Finally, I came to believe that blindness is a world-creating condition (Hull, xii, xiii).

The relation between the blind people and the sighted ones is described as an interaction between the Little World and the Big World. He feels that the new world of blindness also creates a new consciousness. At first, this is perceived as a fall out of consciousness. But later he recognizes that it is altogether a new consciousness. He understands blindness from different positions such as natural, theological Phenomenological and philosophical. The culmination of his perception comes in the dedication of the book to God. He says, “I offer this book in gratitude and worship to the One who is the God of blindness, and who beyond blindness and sight is the God of all worlds”. (Hull, xiii).

Professor Hull’s meditations in the book mostly consists of his immediate fears, preoccupations, his sudden jubilations, his disturbing dreams, creeping anxieties, his expanding revelations and his powerful realizations related to blindness. He understands blindness as an inevitable reality and makes peace with the condition. Moreover, he experiences a sort of metaphysical solace in his interaction with blindness. It is very important that Professor Hull had several personal and academic successes after becoming blind. His predicament on blindness did not any way hamper his prospects in life. His subjective analysis of blindness has already been described in the previous chapter. Now it suffices to conclude that Professor John M. Hull slowly and steadily came to terms with the reality of blindness and reaped the fruits of such a transformation. His autobiography is a powerful testimony to it.

Sally Hobart Alexander was born in 1943 in Owensboro, Kentucky. She had her education from Becknell University. While she was teaching third grade

students in California, her vision started to deteriorate due to the breaking of the blood vessels in her retina. As described in the previous chapter, she had her first experience of vision loss, when she was on a beach. She felt a black line in her lens. The difficulty increased slowly and steadily creating several physical, emotional and social problems for her. The whole situation is described in *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness*. The book depicts her vision loss and its immediate consequences. The first part comprises of her vision troubles, subsequent treatment, its impact on her relationships and her final realization of her condition. The second part elaborates on her training and rehabilitation program and its outcome.

Her initial feeling of the black line was that it could be connected with the contact lens used. When the trouble got repeated, she consulted an optometrist who declared her case as an infection. She was advised not to clean her contact lens using mouth and to clean it in a solution. When she was in a friendly gathering after two months, she saw something like the jumping of a spider over her body. Later she understood that the black line was appearing in her eye. She lost the vision of the right eye in the next morning. The new doctor identified her case as a retinal hemorrhage. He also found some additional vessels in her eyes which were quite mysterious for him. Since there was blood in her right eye due to the breaking of a few vessels, she was admitted to Jules Stein Eye Institute for further diagnosis and examination. As per the instruction of her new ophthalmologist, Dr Petit, her eyes were bandaged so as to get the blood reabsorbed into her eye. She was given a call bell so that she can ring it for any assistance. She concludes the chapter with the following remarks:

> Seconds later the curtain dropped on my sight. The phantom that had been lurking in the wings, blindness, came center stage. And as that shadow passed over my eyes, another closed over my mind. I lay in the dark without thinking, just feeling very alone (Alexander, 11).

This imagery is noteworthy for her strong visual sentiment. However, this contemplation presupposes her shift from the world of the sighted to that of the blind. Even though the reality grabs her only later, a clear indication and the fear of her impending blindness is reflected in these statements.

Her boyfriend Tom rarely visited her at the hospital. However, her friend Brian made regular visits to help and console her in such a critical situation. She was discharged after twenty-two days when her right eye got cleared. They couldn't find anything significant except the hemorrhage. She experienced the symptoms of the retinal disorder in the left eye during a traffic jam after two months. Doctor Petit recommended a photocoagulation using the laser beam to seal off some of those new blood vessels in the eyes. Even though the treatment was successful that time, the trouble recurred frequently resulting in her hospitalization. Her anxiety about impending blindness was answered negatively by all specialists. It was her ophthalmologist from the childhood Dr. Taggart who revealed the most unpleasant news of her upcoming blindness. Her question about learning the Braille was answered in affirmative.

One of her immediate problems was to confess the truth of her inevitable blindness to her lover Tom. She revealed this most unpleasant news to him over phone. After a few casual consolatory expressions and apprehensions, he hung up.

This marked a possible rift in their relationship which eventually resulted in the breakdown. This final separation only came after much troubles and frustrations for her. He was torn between his concern for her and his inability to adjust with her blindness. On many a critical situation, he deliberately avoided her. She, however, was deeply feeling his absence. In confusion, he even proposed to her and the wedding date was fixed for the following summer. Meanwhile, her Hemorrhages increased creating a condition of double vision in both of her eyes.

She was going to examine the bridal clothes for her brother's prospective bride, suddenly she felt like having a pool of ink on her left eye. Dr. Taggart confirmed the condition as a case of retinal detachment. She couldn't participate in the marital ceremony, but the retina was reattached by Dr. Campbell from New York. She was given a talking book machine by the nurse which helped her listen to audio books. As her vision was highly blurring, she started learning Braille and engaged in listening to audio books. Her relationship with Tom lost its dynamism once again. It was an accident in the kitchen that induced her to attend a training programme in Greater Pittsburg Guild for the Blind. She decided to visit Tom for reconciliation before joining the course. She was having a lot of anxieties with regard to her management of her blindness, Tom's management of the same, her identification of the previously known people and so on.

Her puzzles increased when she understood that she was secretly followed by Tom while she visited a friend and the near-bye beach. The authorities of her previous school were ambiguous about her chances in teaching. The gap between Sally and Tom widened further when he was apathetic while her pair of sun-glasses

was shoplifted by a boastful person called Jack. Tom's indifference created a feeling of being deserted in her. His promise of future steadfastness resulted in their skiing trip together. However, when he became annoyed at her accidental pulling of a chair onto the floor, she understood that their relationship won't work out and he will never be able to accept her blindness in a realistic manner. This part of the book comes to an end when she decides to break up with Tom and to join for the rehabilitation course at Pennsylvania. These things are included in detail here in order to describe the catastrophe of her impending blindness and the post-visual impairment trauma. The section is concluded with a note of hope and optimism.

Part two depicts her training programme in detail. The prologue is very bleak in tone and spirit. She describes her movement from the familiar surroundings to the training institute like the coming of a Pygmy from Congo to the outer world. This comparison reflects on her limitation in perception and her fear of the new surroundings. However, the experience of blindness is underscored here. She studies the most important things for a blind person such as sighted-guide technique, the use of white cane, Braille, cooking and managing the kitchen, dressing and makeup, visualization and so on. She also establishes a rapport with the other inmates there and recognizes the value of solidarity among blind people. She finds that blindness creates some conditions which cannot be peeped through a sighted person. In her first contact with the blind in the institute, she feels that she belongs neither to the world of the sighted nor to that of the blind. But gradually she admits the reality of blindness. She shares all her traumas and frustrations with Mrs. Feldstein, the counsellor and gets practical advice to tackle the reality of blindness. Since she

depends too much on her remaining little vision, Mrs. Zimmerman, the mobility instructor gives her a pair of sunglasses so that she will be forced to rely on her extra visual skills during her mobility training.

Learning of mobility is very difficult for her, but she acquires some skills after much triumph. She is also taught such delicate matters related to the personality as verbal and nonverbal communication, facing the counterpart in communication, importance of facial gestures and so on. She has her anxieties regarding her professional prospects in the future. Finally, she decides to go to a college for graduation after attaining financial security. For that she plans to become an instructor in the same institute after the completion of her course. She leaves the institute as an individual confident to face the world. Her training in the practical aspects of life benefits her immensely.

Tom tries to create confusion through a phone call and the promise of future steadfastness. However, she is not ready for an experiment anymore. In the final chapter of the book, her father introduces her to a tree in the wooden picnic area of a beach. The tree which was strong during his childhood got bent in a storm. Rather than falling down to the ground, it became stronger and the most interesting among the trees there. This optimistic message is aimed at boosting her confidence to face the stark reality of blindness. Thus, the book is concluded in a very positive note.

The second book, *On My Own: The Journey Continues*, describes her attempts to establish herself in her new condition of blindness, her hurdles and her overcoming of them. In this book, she progresses from a state of loneliness to that of interdependence and reasonably high self-esteem. However, she has to suffer a lot

before reaching such a state of happiness and confidence. The text mainly consists of her practical strategies to handle the new reality of blindness and her failures and successes in it.

She begins the book by describing the first day that she has to stay alone in her apartment at Pittsburg. She joins as an instructor at Greater Pittsburg Guild for the Blind. Her father and mother left the place after making her sufficiently familiar with the apartment. For the first time, she is forced to confront the new reality of blindness. She suspects the arrival of an intruder to her room. Since she is fully blind except having a tiny bit of sight out of the lower corner of her left eye, the thought of a murderer chills her body. Some very small noises from outside even frighten her. She fears that someone is hiding in the room to attack her. It is after continuous effort that she is able to manage this condition of loneliness and insecurity. Finally, she is able to convince herself that there is no intruder. Only when the sun comes during the next day through her apartment window, she is able to grasp the futility and stupidity of her own imagination. The condition described here is the insecurity and loneliness created by blindness in an individual. In his book, *On Blindness and Blind People*, Berthold Lowenfeld describes some of the major consequences of sudden blindness:

> Sudden blindness comes as a shock in which the individual not only experiences the loss of his most important sense but also reacts to blindness with all the preconceived ideas about it which are prevalent in the public. Helplessness, tragedy, economic insecurity, inability to function as a man or woman, fear of darkness, all these supposed concomitants of blindness are

> experienced by him with the full force of identification. This shock causes withdrawal, extreme apathy, and suicidal ideas (Lowenfeld, 84).

In the case of Sally, it is two years since she became blind, but she confronts the reality of blindness alone for the first time. So, her trainings may help to overcome her troubles only after a few days. The trauma and frustrations caused by her loneliness are very acute and disturbing. Even though she has got enough training to overcome these immediate troubles, to acquire those skills through practice is another very important step. Her first troublesome day is but one of the beginnings in such an elaborate process.

Her previous mobility instructor Miss Zimmerman helps her to get acquainted with the surroundings and to locate the familiar spaces such as the bus stop, the grocery store and so on. In *On My Own: The Journey Continues*, she records her new sensation while getting enrolled as an instructor at Greater Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind. She says:

> As I caught a blurry glimpse of the floor at the Greater Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind, I remembered my first dreadful day here five months before. The rainy weather had matched my internal misery, and I'd dragged myself inside as if heading to the gallows. Now I entered happily, with the warm sun on my back. Trainee to teacher. The reversal made me giddy, giddy at the elasticity of human beings. The weak became strong. I hoped I could handle the new role. At least this place was familiar, unlike my apartment building (Alexander, 14).

These passages highlight her remarkable shift from a state of fear and dependence to that of independence and confidence. The importance of these passages becomes very significant in the wake of her comparison with a Pigmy from Congo before five months.

She faces several troubles in her new surroundings. She teaches Braille, Personality Development and Visualization to the new inmates. However, the problems increase when Mrs. Becher, her former teacher of Braille expresses her displeasure and disagreement over Sally's methodology of teaching Braille. Mrs. Becher compels her to teach Braille with a rigorous and systematic curriculum. Sally is more focused on enhancing the Braille skill learning of the students for their empirical needs. This results in Mrs. Becher's scolding and warning of Sally. She mentions the matter to Dr. Foyer, the director of the institute. Even though he is able to understand Sally's arguments in this respect, he is helpless in the presence of a very senior teacher like Mrs. Becher. Finally, Sally is forced to leave the institution for further studies. She gets a double blow when Dr. Foyer is not ready to forward the report prepared by Sally regarding the progress of her student Leon to the vocational rehabilitation centre. He dismisses the report on institutional grounds. This confirms her decision to leave the institution.

She enters the university of Pittsburg signing up for four English courses. She manages the problem of reading with the aid of some of her available friends and audio cassettes. Sally loses the tiny bit of sight in her left eye when she is in the guild. She even does not feel the perception of light thereafter. It is with much troubles and sustained efforts that she manages the situation. But she gets a double

blow when she feels a reduction in the power of her right ear temporarily. Initially it is judged by the doctors as a mild loss. They feel that she will have problems in listening to very mild sounds in the crowded surroundings. She is given histamine shots to cure the trouble. The increasing of the hearing problem further troubles her.

Since hearing is the chief source of information and perception for a blind person, she understands that any diminution in hearing may inflict serious casualties in her life. However, the hearing power stabilizes itself after two or three troubles. She is selected as a child therapist in a mental health centre at Pittsburg. She is asked to counsel the young blind children. She performs very well in the interview. While she is taken out from the interview room by Mr. Charlie, the head of the mental health centre, she feels intense pain on her right eye. The condition is diagnosed as Glaucoma. She is advised to remove the eyeball if the problem persists. Her doctor from childhood Dr. Taggart once more becomes her savior. He dilates the eye with atropine drops. He says that this drop will be enough since the eye is already blind. Thus, she is miraculously saved from another catastrophe.

Another major challenge faced by Sally is regarding the establishment of a fruitful relationship with a male. She becomes very skeptical and dizzy after her breakup with Tom. However, she makes fresh attempts in this matter as well. She embarks upon her journey with her companionship to Arnie, a third-year graduate of law from the University of Pittsburg. At first, she feels that his composure perfectly suits to that of her. In the final instance, their relationship is spoiled by his recognition of her indifference towards his attractive and masculine physic. He is unable to understand the relative value of the physic in the preference of blind for a

mate. She develops an intimacy with Chuck Tedeshi, her fellow instructor in the guild. They are able to mingle so well that she expects a positive relationship. Her extreme dependence on him creates a sense of detachment from her part and further prospects are avoided.

She starts another short date with a nice man called Adam. He was a friend of one of her classmates. She describes his physic as the trunk of a tree. He is admired for his gentleness and openness. Even though their intimacy is very brief, it is very significant for her on several respects. This significance is recorded in *On My Own: The Journey Continues*:

> Adam was an open, sweet guy with the voice and manner of a machine gun. Totally monogamous. We dated very briefly, but he would remain special. He'd identified what I was missing in relationships. He reminded me what I was holding out for, and he paved the way for another full-blooded man, who came along three months later (Alexander, 146).

It is Adam who makes her aware of her strengths and weaknesses in this matter. He is able to have a realistic understanding of her situation. After three months, she finds Bob, the Jewish professor who later becomes her husband. He is with her in both fortunes and adversities. His steadfastness and genuine concerns attract her. They are happily married at the end of the book. When her right eye is dilated with a drop, he rushes to the sport instantly. Thus, Sally finally finds the man of her choice.

She also faces several external obstacles due to her blindness. For example, she is invited for a party by her friend Ted. When he abruptly leaves her in the midst of the party for some chores of his own, she is at a loss to manage the situation. This is but one of the complexities that she had to adjust with due to her adventitious blindness.

Sally Hobart Alexander becomes blind within a period of two years. Since the tragedy was least expected, she has enormous troubles in coming to terms with the new reality of blindness. A systematic training and sufficient and timely assistance from multiple sources considerably lighten her tasks. Time and again, she is disturbed by her visual and hearing troubles. However, the catastrophes are averted with effective medical interventions. To find out a nice life partner is another challenge. She attains it in the form of Professor Bob after many struggles. Her association with a highly enlightened community of blind further alleviates the troubles. She recognizes the value of solidarity between the members of the blind fraternity. Now Sally is recognized as a highly renowned writer in America.

Apart from her autobiographies, she also wrote several books for children while fictionalizing visual impairment as well in such texts. Thus, Sally Hobart Alexander through her autobiographies *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness* and *On My Own: The Journey Continues*, record her journey to conquer the adventitious blindness with courage, resilience and optimism. She becomes an inspiring model in tackling the adventitious blindness with determination, practical skills and optimism. With her practical management of blindness and sufficient training to overcome her barriers, she attains fulfillment in her personal, social and professional life.

Stephen Kuusisto and Georgina Kleege were identified as legally blind people in their childhood itself. Their tragedies were aggravated by the conscious denial of visual impairment by their parents. Instead of sufficiently equipping their children with skills to face this harsh reality, they tried to bring them up as sighted individuals. The differences in the degrees of this rejection decided their prospects in life. Stephen Kuusisto had to suffer from more intense troubles due to this conscious rejection of the physical reality. Several sources of guidance and support were very deliberately rejected by his parents. This created enormous psychological, physical and social consequences in his life. His inability to share his actual situation with his friends further deepened his troubles.

Georgina Kleege also experienced the same fate but with lesser impact. Her activist standpoint opened more possible horizons for her to overcome the troubles. Kuusisto's more introverted and contemplative nature obstructed the prospects in his life. Kleege was ready to explore new avenues in life for success. Kuusisto comes out of his crisis only after a highly disturbing period of his life. Thus, in spite of the similarity in the physical condition of both the authors, their rehabilitation and further prospects were decided by a host of internal and external factors. Georgina Kleege was keen on using her available sight in a very effective manner. So, she tried to utilize the fragmented visual experiences in her favour. However, Kuusisto was always lamenting about his limitations without having any possible remedies to come out of this trauma. The gateway to his success came only very late after much struggles.

Stephen Kuusisto was born in Exeter, New Hampshire in March 1955. He was born three months premature with an identical twin brother who died after one day. As mentioned previously, Kuusisto became blind due to the condition called retinopathy of prematurity. In this condition, the retinas do not develop during the third trimester of pregnancy. Excess of oxygen in the incubator further damaged his eyes. However, he did not fully loose his vision. Since his retinas were permanently scarred, His vision became partial and fragmented. He was torn between the worlds of the blind and the sighted. These and other experiences in his life are elaborately discussed in his autobiography, *Planet of the Blind* and the collection of lyrical memoirs titled *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear*.

Kuusisto begins *Planet of the Blind* while describing his journey through a railway station along with his guide dog, Corky, the yellow Labrador. The title of the book, *Planet of the Blind* is taken from W. H. Auden's *Horae Canonicae*. He later reads a poem with the same title by Wallace Stevens. Kuusisto elaborates on his peculiar condition of blindness. As described above, his retinas were scarred, Nystagmus became an additional complication. His eyes darted uncontrollably and often felt like jumping in his head. Such darting eyes made it impossible for him to focus his vision. Being born with strabismus, or crossed eyes, he could never gain muscle control in his eyes. The corrective operations only provided temporary solutions.

Kuusisto had the visual acuity of 20/200 in his left eye, the minimal requirement for legal blindness in America. With this limited vision, he could distinguish very dark and large print on a paper while holding it very close to his

eye. Later even this was made impossible by inoperable cataracts. His right eye however was almost dysfunctional. His condition is elaborated in the book, *Planet of the Blind*:

> From the beginning my right eye couldn't read and would hop like a starling in a hedge, recording glimpses of color at the tip of my nose.
>
> The sensorium of the blind who possess some marginal vision is by turns magical and disturbing. There is nothing in front of you, nothing behind. Now there is a shadow in the shape of a man who has appeared from the mist. How lovely and terrible this is! It's a mad, holy vision, the repeated appearance and disappearance of the physical world. (Kuusisto, 6 7).

These passages very aptly describe the condition of legal blindness where the person is torn between the worlds of the sighted and the blind. Jill Sardegna in the second edition of *The Encyclopedia of Blindness and Vision Impairment* describes some of the options for a legally blind person to survive:

> Legally blind people should not necessarily be considered totally blind. The term includes a wide range of visual abilities, since two individuals with 20/200 visual acuity or 20 degree visual fields may have vastly different vision levels. Over 75 percent of legally blind individuals have some remaining vision. These people are often able to utilize their remaining vision to work, read, travel and continue their daily routine by using adaptive devices or by developing accommodating body or head movements (Sardegna, 38).

Unfortunately, Kuusisto was given neither the training nor the adaptive devises to survive such a fragmented visual condition.

Kuusisto says that many persons with minimal sight including him are photophobic. So, wherever he went, he had to wear the darkest possible sunglasses to reduce the pain of daylight. He often felt being ashamed of his blindness. His sister Carol's reading of the possibility of guide dogs to assist blind people created new hopes in him, but the suggestion was denied outright by his parents. His adventurous cycle rides without proper visual direction resulted in several accidents. His mother wanted to admit him in a general school. But the authorities were rather reluctant to admit a blind student in a general school. It was after 30 years that the inclusive system of education was permitted in America. Blind people were sent to special schools. The help of a social counselor in this matter was also rejected by his parents.

The education of the visually impaired in the primary sector is divided into three. They are special school system, integrated education and inclusive education. People with acute impairment are sent to special schools to prepare them for social and educational integration. There they are given a plus curriculum taking into account the nature of impairment. This includes educational aids, orientation in personality development, training in orientation and mobility, and training in life skills, dressing body poster and makeup and introduction to accessible tools. In the case of integrated education, disabled students are taught in general class rooms while having the service of a teacher trained in the management of disabled children. He has to intervene before, between and after the classroom for the strengthening of

the learning environment of the disabled children. If necessary, special classrooms and required accessible tools are also arranged.

In inclusive education, teachers are given proper training to handle the children with special needs in the classroom. There is no separation here. Wherever needed, the teachers must supply the additional resources or aids for the disabled children. Such a learning environment must be arranged in accordance with the Universal Design of Learning developed by international conventions on education of the disabled. However, neither integrated education nor inclusive system is strictly followed in the schools of our time. Most of the schools follow a poor amalgam of both. During the time of Kuusisto, inclusive system was most prevalent and he was poorly accommodated in a general class room. Due to his unusual physic for his age, he was often prevented from mingling with his peers.

He terms his kaleidoscopic visual experience as a bitter-sweet one. He could see but not fruitful enough for any practical enterprise. Even his father's attempt to buy an insurance policy in his name was impossible as blind people were denied this facility owing to the risk of accidents due to blindness. He had a very miserable and lonely childhood. Multiple surgeries to correct his strabismus became a major trouble. His primary school days became highly catastrophic due to the absence of proper assistance from specialist teachers, absence of training in mobility and orientation and lack of any support from teachers or friends. He was completely avoided by other children even in the playground. He resorted to imaginary games.

His class teacher, Mrs. Edinger was the first black teacher of the region. So, she took enormous pains to make him read with additional effort while trusting his

photographic memory. He started to wear the glasses fitted with telescopes from the third grade onwards and the insults of his classmates increased further. His mother arranged typing lessons for him regularly. He treated audio books from the Library of Congress as his chief sources of pleasure and comfort. The extremity of his loneliness made him masturbate to his tea shirt in an attic. He was yearning for female connections but his large physique made him ugly in the eyes of girls. His inability to focus his vision became a hindrance in advances to girls.

Kuusisto traces the history of blind people such as the Blind men of Israel and ancient blind sorcerers. He imagines himself to be a sorcerer in his private room. The combined experiments in science classes became disasters for him due to their visual nature. His companion in the experiment had to do most of the practical works. From a condition of overweight, he starts to shrink physically and is thrown in to a state of anorexia. He has to be treated for his recovery. Thus, his school days are highly traumatic for him on multiple accounts. Absence of systematic help from any sources and his incapability to share his actual visual situation with anyone including his parents made his childhood a pool of endless misfortunes. Kuusisto could have been much happier in a special school. The issue of his interpersonal communication could also be effectively managed in a special school environment. The present researcher's own experience in a special school from 1990 to 1997 remains a powerful testimony to this.

Kuusisto had his higher studies from Geneva and New York. His selection of these places while accentuating his difficulties as a legally blind person is described in a highly metaphorical way in the book:

> I BELIEVE THAT in every blind person's imagination there are landscapes. The world is gray and marine blue, then a clump of brown shingled houses stands revealed by rays of sun, appearing now as bison--shaggy and still. These are the places learned by rote, their multiple effects of color made stranger by fast-moving clouds. The unknown is worse, an epic terrain that, in the mind's eye, could prevent a blind person from leaving home. Since I know the miniature world of Geneva, New York, I decide to attend college there. On campus, though, there are sudden skateboards. I wish for a magic necklace to ward them away. The quadrangle is a world of predatory watching, and so I begin affecting a scowl. I look serious, as if my corpuscles have turned into hot pearls. I'm the angriest-looking boy on earth (Kuusisto, 62).

Here is an intense description of the practical difficulties in befriending and managing the campus by himself. The only possible service given to him on the campus was the allotment of a room in the ground floor considering the risk for him to escape in case of a fire. The unreadable print in books, the dark dormitory room and the inaccessible library books were some of his chief troubles in the college and the hostel. He selected literature for graduation. Since the prevalent methodology was new criticism focusing on the close reading of the text, he could somehow manage the situation.

His fear of blindness is manifest in several of the highly disturbing passages in the autobiography. The fact that he could not come to terms with this reality even after twenty years or more is rather astounding:

> MOVE IN a solitude fueled by secrecy. Lord, let me never be seen with the white cane. Let me roll through the heavy oceans like the beluga whale, filled with dark seeds, always coursing forward. Let no one find me out! This is my lacerating tune. Leaning over my private page, I shake with effort. Weakness and lack of affect are the synonyms for the word blind. In Roget's Thesaurus one finds also: ignorant, oblivious, obtuse, unaware, blocked, concealed, obstructed, hidden, illiterate, backward, crude, uneducated, and worst of all, unversed (Kuusisto, 64).

These passages clearly reveal the extent to which Kuusisto fears blindness as a malady rather than accepting it emotionally and physically. He had a big number of unintended accidents on the campus such as going to the bathroom for women, tapping on the wrong cars and so on. Even though white cane was felt a necessity to overcome these troubles, he had to wait for another eighteen years for any practical solution. He gets a Shakespeare reader in the form of Ramona, a classics major fellow student. In her presence, his habitual shyness before women seems to fall away. He is able to converse with his female classmates fluently. He feels these conversations between men and women like warm soap dissolving in a bath. Soon he develops a relationship with a rebellious Irish girl in the university called Bettina. In one of their meetings, he finds her putting plenty of carrots in the salad during dinner. She says that eating a lot of carrots will improve his vision. He retorts that his vision is spoiled by frequent masturbation. She promises that he doesn’t have to do it anymore. With the help of that altogether irreverent young woman with long, thrilling, unkempt red hair, his sexual frustrations are relieved. He experiences the pleasures of female love. But even here, his difficulty in revealing his actual state of

blindness creates a lot of hurdles in his practical life. Soon he goes on a picnic to Athens with a group of college students including Bettina.

However, the trip was also disastrous for him since the actual extend of his visual difficulty was known to nobody in the group. As a means to reduce his distress, he becomes a heavy drinker resulting in enormous physical and mental exhaustion.

Kuusisto was selected as a participant in the workshop for writers conducted by the University of Iowa. Guided by his father, he applies for the governmental assistance for the disabled. In Iowa, he meets his first blind adviser, Mr. Barry, the blind man carrying a folding white cane. Barry is described as the second angel in his life after Mrs. Edinger who taught him in the primary school. He is introduced to such accessible aids as a pocket tape recorder with a foot pedal, books in magnified print, talking book records, a closed-circuit television with a high-resolution camera and so on. The camera will scan the text and TV will reproduce them in magnified form.

In spite of these additional remedies, his poetry workshop is highly troublesome due to the microcosmic activity of reading the poem keenly in its procedure. A poet named Terence, a fellow participant is ready to read for him. However, Terence's oddities in taste and prejudices regarding the selected texts to be read, spoils the entire activity. Kuusisto's request for additional time to finish the assignment was rejected by professor Gambrel on practical grounds. Kuusisto had a very bizarre incident in his life while being in the university. After drinking heavily, he, along with two of his fellow students, was about to commit suicide by jumping from the bridge into the river. Luckily, one of them named Hal started to run and all

of them chased him. Since the river-walks were very strong, Kuusisto didn't fall despite his heavy speed in running. Thus, he was miraculously saved from a possible catastrophe.

A man whom Kuusisto met in the following morning said that his uncle was blind and further advised him to take a guide dog for travelling. Later he was informed that the university had purchased the first Kurzweil reading machine which will read the printed texts in audio format. Walking to the library along with Barry, the social worker, Kuusisto also realized the importance of white cane in the world of a blind person. Seeing the cane of Barry, a campus security personal offered any possible assistance to them. He, for the first time, recognized the positive power of white cane. Within months of his graduation from Iowa, Kuusisto was awarded a Fulbright grand to Finland. Lack of fluency in the Finnish language and lack of proper assistance created troubles for him even in Finland. His father's friend who was expected to help him became an absolute failure in the task. His friendship with another American student named Karma also became short lived due to his reluctance in revealing his blindness and related helplessness to her. After the completion of Fulbright fellowship, he enrolls for PhD in the University of North Carolina. While reading a book in his apartment, a razor-sharp bookmark flipped out, slicing his reading left eye. His eyes were bandaged from the near-bye hospital for the healing of the wound. With his eyes were being bandaged, Kuusisto felt completely helpless for the first time in his life. With the aid of the nurse, he phoned to the university office for the disabled student services and got immediate help. It was after this unexpected accident that he was forced to face the real tragedy related to blindness. His life almost reached a dark alley. The frustrations were put through the passage below in *Planet of the Blind*:

> My blindness was turning into a subject, and in a sense, I was its object. By means of an accident, I was denied my mastery of a disability that I'd grown to believe I could always govern. As a child recovering from eye surgery, I pretended to be a pirate, but this new injury hurts too much for fantasy. Even standing or sitting up can make the pulse throb. What's worse is that the eye keeps tearing open. During the months ahead the pain will put me back in bed day after day until I realize I have to leave. My studies are impossible, and the eye is going to take a long time to properly heal. Where can I possibly go? (Kuusisto, 130).

He had to stop his studies at North Carolina and join as an adjunct professor of creative writing at Hobart and William Smith College where he had finished his under graduation. He had another fall because of a miscalculation of steps from his apartment. Soon he became jobless due to the campus cutbacks. It was in such a fragile situation that Kuusisto was forced to address his visual impairment seriously and to adopt practical remedies to overcome his troubles.

Kuusisto was relatively safe with the folding white cane. But he had unexpected hazards in the form of trash can and other waste items casually thrown by people in the street. Mike Dillon, a senior orientation and mobility specialist showed him a long, folding white cane with a rubber handle like a golf club. Soon he realized that white cane was not such an effective tool to tackle the extra ordinary complications in the traffic. He desired something more powerful to solve this issue. Mike’s revelation about the possibility of guide dogs became Kuusisto’s door to salvation. Herein is how Mike describes the mechanism of travelling with a guide dog:

> It's known as intelligent disobedience," Mike tells me. "The dog judges whether your decision to cross a street is safe before the two of you proceed. They watch out for everything that might hurt you. Curbs, stairs, skateboards, holes in the pavement. A first-rate guide dog is a beautiful companion. (Kuusisto, 150).

The advantages of traveling with guide dogs are described further:

> They pull you back if a car runs the light. They take evasive action. They watch out for low overhangs. These dogs are rather amazing.
>
> How come all blind people don't have dogs? "Having a dog takes stamina. The dog is on a regular schedule of feeding and care. Also, you have to train with the dog. (Kuusisto, 150).

The technique of operating a guide dog is very soundly explained here. Kuusisto received the training in operating a guide dog from Guiding Eyes for the Blind. For the first time, he met other blind companions from different parts of the world. Through their interactions and exchange of life events, the solidarity and empathy between blind people was understood. This new realization gave him a new confidence and a mission to go forward with in life. Kuusisto is given a dog called Corky, a female yellow Labrador retriever. He became successful in handling Corky and a safe and prosperous journey ahead was ensured. During 1995, he was appointed as a trainer at Guiding Eyes to counsel blind students. Corky was selected to train new guide dogs.

Thus, with the aid of Corky, he found his vocation in life. He found that blindness was not something to be feared and evaded from but it was to be accepted

and tackled practically. A collection of available techniques, accessible devises and concrete plans considerably lightened these tasks. Kuusisto later acted as the director of Guiding Eyes for the Blind. As has already been pointed out, he was appointed professor of Disability Studies in Ohio State University. He was happily married to Connie Rudolf, who was trainer in Guiding Eyes for 25 years. She acts as a highly supportive companion throughout his ventures. He has written a collection of texts related to visual impairment.

Kuusisto's tragedy sprang solely from the rejection of his blindness by his parents. Though highly educated, his father did not have enough sense to address his son's blindness in a realistic manner. The net result was an incomparable pool of miseries to his child throughout his life. The final salvation came only after suffering intense trauma and wasting a highly enjoyable part of his life. However, Kuusisto concludes the book in a very optimistic fashion, looking forward to the future. The other and more dynamic side of blindness explored in *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear* has already been analyzed at length in the previous chapter. While combining the experiences of Kuusisto in these two books, one gets the feeling that he had attained fulfillment in life while exploring an alternative path to overcome blindness. This positive outlook on his part, however, was possible only after paying a heavy price.

Georgina Kleege was born in 1956 in Chicago, Illinois. She was diagnosed legally blind with macular degeneration at the age of 11. The doctors did not suggest any remedy to overcome this condition. This created enormous difficulties in her personal life and career. Subsequent troubles and her survival through the finding of alternative options are described in her collection of autobiographical essays called *Sight Unseen*. Her aesthetics and perception of blindness shared in the book has

already been analyzed in the previous chapter. Some of her practical observations on blindness and its management are described here.

Klleege discusses her condition of being torn between the worlds of the sighted and the blind in the introduction to *Sight Unseen*:

> The language I speak, the literature I read, the art I value, the history I learned in school, the architecture I inhabit, the appliances and conveyances I employ were all created by and for sighted people. I find it easy to imagine what it's like to be sighted. I had to write this book to learn what it means to be blind (Kleege, 3).

These passages highlight the problems of a visually impaired person while living in a world developed for the sighted. Even though she identified herself with the world of the sighted, she could only enjoy marginal benefits from such a world. Her exploration of alternative possibilities only led to her salvation in this respect. When a blind person experiences the world conditioned for the sighted, there are several barriers related to personal, social, educational, professional and other walks of life. Since a lion's portion of the information is circulated through the visual media, their transmission into an accessible platform is a major challenge. It is in such a context that the term 'Accessibility' acquires enormous significance. Adaptation, modification, duplication and substitution are some of the strategies used in order to ensure this conversion of the visual information i to other channels. Did Kleege precisely reap the fruits of such strategies when she became familiar with the world of the blind?

Kleege feels that every person's perception of blindness is unique and so is her case. However, some general insights can come from her writing on blindness. In the first chapter titled "Call it Blindness", she records in detail her own kind of legal blindness, which has already been described in the previous chapters. She states that her compulsion to reveal her blindness in public happened after she became a teacher. Her previous job as a fund-raising campaigner could be managed for a great extent with memory. But the teaching profession demanded her revelation of blindness due to the heterogeneous tasks related to it. In social circles, she seldom announced her blindness. Faking eye contact, recognizing people through voice and relying on friends were some of her practical strategies to manage the situation. However, the need for reading and other such tasks created problems for her. Her disclosure of blindness in most compelled situation created highly sensitive reactions from the listeners.

She recalls the experience of a fellow participant in a party becoming tearful while she identifies herself as a blind writer. She feels that this new revelation from her part could have created a reductive view of her in the listener. She consciously avoided the term 'blind' due to her fear of the stigma and stereotyping associated with the expression.

Her visual degeneration was diagnosed when she was eleven. Even though the problem had started two years prior to it, nobody understood the gravity of the situation. Since her sight loss increased within a period of two years, she was unaware of the depth of the problem. She started to read the texts while keeping them very close to the eyes. The doctors failed to dictate clear signs of retinal damage. They felt that she was faking. Her parents and teachers were asked to nag

her into holding the book away from her face. When she frequently failed to obey their demands, the intensity of the problem was realized and additional tests were performed.

As described earlier, her condition was identified as macular degeneration with no cure or prospects of any improvement in the future. The doctor didn't suggest any special training or assistance to minimize the troubles. Her trauma of the situation is put in the following way:

> I was confused and scared, but also disappointed not to receive the glasses I expected him to prescribe. I left with no glasses, no advice, no explanations - nothing but the words - macular - degeneration, which I did not understand, and, more significantly, the word blind, which I understood only too well. But I did not use the word. I was not blind. Blind people saw nothing, only darkness (Kleege, 8).

Like Kuusisto, her troubles could also have considerably been alleviated by sufficient assistance such as magnification aids, adaptation of her sight and other strategies. But there was nobody to guide her. Her reading about Helen Keller generated hopes of learning Braille, but nobody did bother about it. She did not ask for special favours in the classroom and thus become a spectacle of herself. She tried to read the blackboard while focusing on the hand movement of the teacher. Memorizing passages was an option to circumspect the task of reading aloud in the class. She tried to recognize the visual dialogues of other persons from the tone of their utterance. She counted streets in travelling and buttons in elevators. She depicts the common notion that behind the success of every blind person, there is a sighted

one. Milton had his daughters and Helen Keller had Annie Sullivan to help her. Whereas the blind beggar in his loneliness is always avoided by others.

She depicts some other literary and practical dimensions of blindness. Eyes are prominent symbols in love poetry. Women give too much importance to decorating their eyes. Adventitiously blind women often report anxieties about their sexuality, because eyes are considered as the gateways in sex. However, some others feel that the blind women are more desirable due to the intensification of other senses since they are deprived of eyesight. She feels that the loss of sight is more traumatic to men due to the uneven importance of male gaze in love making. This obsession with the visual element in sex has already been discussed in the previous chapter while describing the case of Professor John. M. Hull. Oedipus's blinding is often equated with castration. The common premonition is that masturbation will lead to blindness. The sexuality of the blind is often perceived to be something eccentric. Sighted males fear that marrying a blind woman will generate utter dependence in her. Klleege records in detail her sharing of the household chores with her husband Nick.

She then describes the abnormality often associated with blindness. When blind persons perform the most common things such as cooking, finding the switchboard and so on, they are highly praised. She recollects the extra-ordinary praises showered by a doctor when she gave her first novel to him. At first, she was carried away by his manner of appreciation which helped her transcend blindness temporarily. But soon she became aware of the politics behind such an appreciation. He was treating her achievements as something extra ordinary for a blind person. The question of normalcy becomes significant here. In his essay titled "Constructing

Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century," published in the second edition of *Disability Studies Reader*, Lennard J. Davis discusses the emergence of the concept of Normalcy in the western world.

He traces the evolution of this notion with its emphasis on the project of eugenics. As a black person is considered abnormal by a white one, so is the case with the perception of a disabled person by an able bodied one. Davis traces the evolution of such a consciousness of normality through eugenics, novels and other literary artifacts. While analyzing the representation of a collection of disabled characters in the novels of such authors as Gustave Flaubert, Joseph Conrad and others, he comes to the following conclusion:

> What I have tried to show here is that the very term that permeates our contemporary life--the normal--is a configuration that arises in a particular historical moment. It is part of a notion of progress, of industrialization, and of ideological consolidation of the power of the bourgeoisie. The implications of the hegemony of normalcy are profound and extend into the very heart of cultural production (Davis, 32).

Thus, normalcy is a politically designed project to subordinate and alienate the marginalized people such as the disabled. Kleege brings forth several examples of this marginalization in her book. She feels that the sighted never expect a blind person to live up to their standard. When a blind person's achievements are described as exceptional or overcompensating, a diminished expectation of the life without sight is implied. Blind people are either treated as super humans or sub humans while denying the normal human status to them.

She then depicts the association of blindness with darkness. Due to this fear, people are hesitant to assist blind people in daily situations. These prejudices are not limited to the blind alone, but all disabled people suffer from such discriminations in one or other way. She describes the difficulty faced by an orthopedically handicapped woman in going to the toilet during a plain journey. Kleege had to assist her to go to the toilet and unbutton her cloths. No assistance was offered by the airhostess or other staff. She concludes this chapter making a statement on the implications, in comparison, of the expression 'the blind'. A tall person is considered as abnormal in a community of Pigmies. The treatment of a disabled person in a society developed by the able-bodied ones for their accomplishments is developed in the same political line.

In the second chapter titled "Blind Nightmares" and the third one, 'In Oedipus' Shadow', Kleege discusses the question of the representation of disabled in literature, films and other visual spectacles. She is forced to sit very close to the screen while viewing a film. Science fiction and other horror films create a lot of problems due to their extra ordinary visual ambience. In the following portions of this chapter, she unravels the politics of the representation of the blind characters in films. A detailed analysis of this topic is beyond the scope of this study. However, it suffices to say that blind persons are either nullified or glorified in such films or texts while denying them the normal human status. All the paradigms of representing the blind characters tune to this binary in one or other way. In the third chapter, this critical analysis is expanded to the horizon of literature. Ato Quayson's book, *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* and Kenneth Journigan's speech 'Is Literature against us?' discuss these questions in great detail. They develop their own typologies regarding the representation of

disability and blindness respectively in literature. A very precise study of the kind is beyond the scope of the present study. As David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder describe in their essay, Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor, the disabled or blind figures are often treated as Narrative Prosthesis to fulfill the fictional or filmic necessities of protagonists or some other characters. With this description, the first part of the text comes to an end. Here she explains her own kind of blindness and then explores the social, cultural and political aspects related to blindness.

The other major questions discussed by Kleege in the book have already been dealt with in the previous chapter. With a perfect blend of fact and fiction, she records some of the significant theoretical and practical nuances of blindness. They include her learning of Braille, her use of audio books, her practice of walking with white cane and so on. Kleege explored deliberate options to solve the troubles created by her blindness. Her success depended on her readiness to utilize these alternative means and thus reduce the difficulties.

Thus, to conclude, the present researcher in this chapter has tried to study the fulfillment of different authors concerned, while analyzing their attitude to blindness. The inference from such a study is that apart from the degree of blindness suffered by a particular author, a host of internal and external factors decide his or her fulfillment in life. This question of fulfillment is assessed while taking stock of the major incidents connected with blindness in the life of the selected authors. The reception of blindness by a particular author, social and familial support, one's capacity for adaptation, the kind of rehabilitation received and above all the emotional acceptance of blindness are crucial components in deciding the degree of

fulfillment. Those authors like Helen Keller, Georgina Kleege and Sally Hobart Alexander who accept their physical reality in a practical manner enjoy greater degrees of success in life.

Tom Sullivan and Ved Mehta have problems in accepting their blindness emotionally. They want to transgress the physical reality and to live like sighted persons. However, owing to the social and familial advantages, the possible casualties in their life are minimized. Professor John M. Hull and Stephen Kuusisto had a gradual reconciliation with the reality of blindness due to multiple factors. When Professor Hull generated a spiritual solace to overcome the trauma, Kuusisto solved his riddles through diverse practical strategies. The community consciousness, membership or affiliation with the established fraternities of the Blind and solidarity between blind people are other major ingredients in determining the fulfillment of the authors concerned. Thus, in a nutshell, visual impairment in a person can generate a variety of responses owing to a host of subjective and objective factors.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Visual impairment is a physical reality. However, in literature and other art forms, it is manifested as a multifaceted experience with several social, cultural, psychological, emotional and other dimensions. In the representational sphere, it often develops into far-fetched levels with its emphasis on political, psychological or symbolic realms.

The key question analyzed in the present study is, whether the representation of blindness in the autobiographies of the visually impaired writers resemble the stereotypical patterns or do they construct their own creative models with their focus on extra visual features or multisensory experiences. The answer to this question is not a homogeneous one. It depends on a host of subjective and objective factors. The task of carrying out this humble study has imparted invaluable new insights to the researcher regarding the self-expressions of the visually impaired writers. This study was also interrupted by several theoretical and practical challenges. The researcher tried to solve these hurdles using the available ingenious strategies or possibilities. Those serious challenges and major findings of the study are summarized here.

A major problem faced by the researcher during the course of this study was the scarcity of secondary resources. The areas of aesthetics and creativity have seldom been analyzed from a textual angle connecting them with the condition of blindness. As discussed in the first chapter, a few available theoretical studies on

these areas focus on such extra textual realms as haptics, tactile adaptations, mental imagery and so on. So, the current research practice of outright applications of some established theoretical principles to the selected texts couldn't be implemented in the present study. This difficulty arose due to lack of such theoretical studies connecting blindness, aesthetics or creativity. So textual analysis was the preferred method for the current study.

The realities of blindness and related consequences experienced by different writers were discussed while accentuating such factors as the kind and degree of impairment, the time of its occurrence, the treatment of blindness by different authors, their subjective contemplations on the experiences of blindness and the strategies of survival. The subtle differences in the management of these aspects were studied with illustrations from the selected texts. The areas of aesthetics, creativity and perception of blindness by different authors were given prominence in such an analysis. This analysis was supplemented with available theoretical or practical investigations on visual impairment. Observations on blindness from relevant articles and books were quoted or cited while discussing the representation of blindness in the selected texts. A theoretical analysis of the new discipline called Disability Studies was followed by a conceptual and historical explanation of visual impairment. Thus, the present study was done in the backdrop of those investigations on blindness from multiple perspectives.

Since the preferred method is textual analysis, several long passages from the primary texts have been quoted in this study. This is slightly different from the contemporary research practice where many such quotes are paraphrased. As the

areas like Aesthetics, creativity and perception are directly linked to the textual content, the matters are paraphrased wherever it is possible. In other places, some elaborate passages have been quoted in full from the selected autobiographies in order to validate and substantiate the arguments of the researcher involving any degree of abstractness. Such subtle areas as aesthetics or creativity could be best exemplified or analyzed with direct textual quotes. The delicate differences in the representation of blindness by different authors have been analyzed while comparing and contrasting similar passages in the selected texts. For such comparative evaluations, lengthy quotations of several aesthetically and creatively simulating passages were inevitable. These are some of the major theoretical or practical constrains the researcher had to cope with during the progress of this study. The researcher feels that these liberties could very well be conceded and endorsed considering the nature and uniqueness of the current research topic.

Major Findings

While discussing the connection between blindness and creativity, the researcher feels that the degree of impairment and the time of its occurrence are key determinants of the language of the selected texts. A comparative reading of the selected texts convinced the researcher that the linguistic orientation of a particular author is influenced by the nature of his or her blindness, the course of its progress and the social, familial or other supports received to overcome the barriers created by the impairment. Helen Keller, Professor John M. Hull and Stephen Kuusisto have used a very distinguished and unique language to depict their own experiences of blindness. They also share their own observations regarding the blind person’s use

of a highly visually dominant language in the contemporary world. Subtle differences can even be noted in the respective use of language by each of these writers.

Helen Keller has used a very sophisticated, descriptive and referential language to describe her experiences of blindness and deafness. How far these constructions are the products of her own imagination, or are they the innate reflections on the large amount of information and vocabulary acquired by her versatile reading, is a complex question. Helen's own explanation for this matter and the several textual evidence signifying her own variety of language have already been discussed in the study. Her similes and metaphors are mostly multisensory in nature transgressing the primary logic. There are abundant examples for this highly polished and referential style in her books including *The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays*.

Professor John M. Hull has written his text in an intensely emotional and morbid style. His traumas related to blindness are depicted in a highly metaphorical, sensual and slightly philosophical manner. His passages have an inductive nature, beginning with his personal experiences and culminating in his own commentary of the situation. An evolution, however, can be noticed with regard to his style of narration and presentation of blindness. From a mood of complaining, it evolves to a state of complacency and then to a sort of philosophical or spiritual consolation. Thus, the tests and triumphs related to blindness in his personal life become a blessing in the textual realm. They provide a special poignancy and emotional depth to his writings.

Stephen Kuusisto likewise describes blindness with a highly metaphorical, referential, philosophical and deeply emotional style. His style can be treated as a combination of the narrative patterns of Helen Keller and Professor John M. Hull. He combines the philosophical and emotional undertone of Professor Hull and the highly polished and referential style of Helen Keller. He depicts blindness in a very unusual manner with his hyper-textual inclinations and his emphasis on the multisensory solutions for blindness. He depicts his preoccupation with the art of intense listening in his lyrical memoir titled *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear*. Thus, blindness becomes a boon in his textual realm as well.

Tom Sullivan, Sally Hobart Alexander and Ved Mehta compose their autobiographies in a very general or common language with their emphasis on the practical aspects related to blindness. There are slight variations in their style. However, their subject matter and the narrative strategies are almost similar. Apart from occasional digressions, they comment on the nature and causes of their impairment, their survival of the situation and the socio-cultural consequences of the impairment. The tone of their texts is mostly motivational and they use a very normal language for these descriptions.

Georgina Kleege becomes a perfect blend of the two distinct styles discussed. She subtly shifts between her subjective contemplations and factual narrations in accordance with the demand of the situation. She approaches blindness from both a critical and creative angle. Thus, her style becomes a fruitful amalgam of the more subjective and objective analysis of blindness.

Regarding the areas of aesthetics and perception of blindness, Helen Keller, Professor John M. Hull, Georgina Kleege and to a certain extent Stephen Kuusisto offer their own unique perception off blindness. Their descriptions are highly multisensory and subjective in nature.

Helen Keller explains her interaction with a number of objects and situations in her autobiographical essay collection titled *The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays*. She examines the importance of the gifts of touch, smell and taste in her sensory universe. She attaches great value to the faculty of touch in her empirical world and declares in a very adventurous fashion that if she is given a choice between the worlds of sight and touch, she will not be able to part with the great luxury of touch. The multisensory nature of her texts and the mechanism of her language learning are also analyzed with testimonies or critical remarks from the experts in this field.

Professor John M. Hull likewise expresses his experiential realms of blindness with an emphasis on the multisensory realities and contemplations on his very delicate occurrences in life. Dreams become an important medium in expressing his perception of blindness. These dreams evolve from a highly traumatic mood to a more philosophical realizations and finally to a spiritual solace. Most of his ruminations on blindness are highly cynical and dismal in temperament. But gradually he recognizes a spiritual dimension for his experience of blindness. Some of the conclusions derived from his subjective dreams and empirical descriptions are rather flimsy or vague. But the lyrical manner in which they are described and an undertone of pathos make pondering them fruitful and rewarding. The culmination

of his multisensory realization happens when he solitarily explores the single marble rock in the desolate church. Thus, blindness is perceived by Professor Hull in a very unique manner with his own aesthetic and philosophical proportions. Relevant examples for these ruminations of blindness are cited from his book. Wherever needed, such observations have been scrutinized on the basis of the scientific, psychological and empirical studies on visual impairment.

Georgina Kleege, in her autobiography also analyzes her own condition of blindness in a very distinct manner. She moves from an optical to a multisensory world as a solution for her maladies. Her description of the subtle nuances of the audio books and her contemplations on the patterns of braille notations are concrete examples for it. She also describes her own highly special situations such as her appreciation of a painting with a very fragmented and minute vision, her minimal and distinct capabilities of reading normal print and her management of such delicate and optical matters like eye contact. But these visual ruminations slowly and steadily move to her exploration of other senses such as sound and hearing. She also critically analyzes the representation of the visually impaired in literature, films and other art forms.

Stephen Kuusisto provides his own dimension of the aesthetics of blindness in his lyrical memoir called *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear*. He depicts his intense fascination with the art of listening here. He experiments with a new mode of narration called Auditory Post cards in some parts of this text. Even though his primary focus is on the subtle dimensions of the skill of listening, he explores the scope of the other senses of touch, smell and taste in the course of his descriptions.

Tom Sullivan, Sally Hobart Alexander and Ved Mehta give importance to the practical consequences of blindness in their respective autobiographies. There are brief discussions of the more subjective questions such as Sally Hobart Alexander's initial reaction to her impairment, Tom Sullivan's observations on the faculty of smell and Ved Mehta's poignant description of the situation after losing his sight. Ved Mehta and Sullivan discuss such peculiar experiences for the visually impaired such as facial vision, mobility and personality development. All these three authors adopt a strictly historical perspective in their texts with an emphasis on the practical dimensions of blindness. Their texts don't offer any special responses or linguistic and aesthetic patterns regarding the representation of blindness. Thus, as in the case of the language of the selected texts, the intensity of blindness and subsequent experiences become a major yardstick in forming the aesthetic responses of the selected authors.

In the fourth chapter, the fulfillment of each author is assessed while taking stock of the major incidents in their life connected with visual impairment. For this analysis, the selected authors are classified on the basis of the nature of their blindness such as congenitally impaired, adventitiously impaired and legally blind. The basis of this classification has already been stated in the second chapter. The major incidents in the life of the selected authors like their birth, the time of the occurrence of their impairment, the medical and practical solutions, strategies of survival, and the kinds of education received and their professional prospects are some of the major issues discussed. The more subjective factors like marriage, family and sexuality have also been examined in the backdrop of their impairment.

Ved Mehta's *All for Love* is a unique text in this respect as it records his relationship with four women, one after another, and his quest for a meaningful love relation with each one of them. Tom Sullivan, Sally Hobart Alexander and Stephen Kuusisto also dwell on much depth regarding such highly subjective matters in their life like their initiation into the world of adolescence, their interaction with the opposite sex, their marital prospects and so on. The familial reactions to the blindness of different authors and the assistance from multiple corners to overcome the barriers are also discussed in some length. The experiences of Stephen Kuusisto and Sally Hobart Alexander are very distinct with regard to the nature of their impairment and the method of their survival. Kuusisto perhaps suffers from the most grievous troubles related to his impairment. This condition is the net result of the conscious rejection of his actual situation by his parents rather than his fragmented and minor vision. Thus, his case has been elaborated with a detailed description of the major events in his life.

The experience of Sally Hobart Alexander also is very special with regard to the type and duration of her blindness and her immediate management of the situation. Her blindness and the subsequent incidents are depicted in two books, *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness* and *On My Own: The Journey Continues*. Her case is also recorded in great detail in this chapter. In the case of all other authors, the major factors and incidents pertaining to the nature and characteristics of their blindness have been explained and compared.

Another major topic discussed in the study is the attitude of different authors towards their impairment. Ved Mehta and Tom Sullivan have some reservations in

accepting their impairment emotionally. In spite of their skepticism, their birth in the upper strata of the society and contact with the prominent persons help them become successful in life. It is also significant that neither of them was part of the established blind community in America. However, their particular social and cultural background considerably supported them to transgress their physical limitations. Among all the authors, Tom Sullivan offers a very dynamic, highly eventful and adventurous life. Professor John M. Hull and Stephen Kuusisto, however, had to suffer very acutely due to their peculiar conditions of blindness. So, their stories are composed in a very emotional and melancholic mood. This chapter focuses on the practical aspects of blindness whereas the third chapter concentrates on the more subjective and theoretical responses related to it.

Future Research Prospects

Marginalized communities such as the visually impaired have started to register their own creative space and agency in the literary world very lately. This new consciousness was the product of the new scientific and theoretical developments in the field of visually impaired and the other disabled sections and the self-confidence and awareness developed among them as a net effect of such new developments. Even now, the creative writings by the blind are very minimal in number. Autobiographies become a major area in this new and expanding stream. Naturally, the literatures of the visually impaired are not sufficiently scrutinized or subjected to critical analysis.

As mentioned earlier, most of the available studies on visual impairment are limited either to the representational or to the technical spheres of blindness. The

mainstream representation of blindness in literature, films and other art forms have critically or theoretically been studied. Several of those studies have been dealt with in the first chapter. Similarly, blindness has been studied from a historical, technical or theoretical angle. However, the creative writings by the visually impaired have been seldom analyzed from a critical or comparative angle. One major reason for this lack is the scarcity of texts or literary responses by the blind authors. The barriers for the visually impaired in textually communicating their thoughts, emotions and other subjective inclinations have been considerably minimized after the introduction of new developments in the areas of information and technology. The availability of new screen readers and other accessible devices have provided ample platforms to the visually impaired for creative expression. But this new revolution has not yet converted itself into the textual or creative realms.

As per the best understanding of the researcher, the present study is one of the pioneering attempts in the current area. Thus, there is a good deal of research gap to be filled further in this area. More inward studies related to the creative expressions of the blind are very essential. For example, the experience of blindness depicted by visually impaired writers in poetry, short story and other literary landscapes must be analyzed while accentuating the areas of aesthetics, imagery and other facets of language. A blind person's understanding of the material world and the linguistic expression of such realities also must be studied from a comparative perspective.

Another major area that deserves special attention is the appreciation of the mainstream literature by the visually impaired. Mainstream literature is highly

optical in nature and spirit. For example, our poetry is filled with umpteen visual images such as Tennyson's description of the experience as an arch in *Ulysses*. How can these predominantly visual images be fruitfully communicated to a totally blind person by birth is a complex question that needs future theoretical interrogations. This question of appreciation is not restricted to the realm of poetry. Abundant visual descriptions like the topographical descriptions in the novels of Thomas Hardy become quite baffling for the congenitally and totally blind persons like the researcher himself. The effective conversions of such overtly visual images, situations and other visual paradigms to the other sensual realms demand serious researches in the future.

The language of the visually impaired writers, a congenitally and totally blind person's learning of language, the subtle dynamics of the areas like spelling and pronunciation, the connection between sight and empirical language and the impact of blindness on the literary orientations of a blind person are some of the broad areas demanding future enquiries. The academically enlightened among the visually impaired must come forward for such grave and consequential studies while coming out of the long slumber and lethargy provided by the minimal guaranties of reservations and mere legal acceptance.

Most of the marginalized communities such as the Blacks, Dalits and sexual minorities have challenged the laxities and fallacies in their mainstream representations through a powerful realization of their creative potentials. These creative writings analyze their personal and social experiences from both an inward and outward perspective. They record their own subjective experiences in different

walks of life and seriously challenge their representations in the mainstream on multiple platforms. However, the disabled including the visually impaired have not yet amply recognized the creative and critical opportunities of this new development in their own field. The theoretical background for such a study has been provided by the new academic discipline called Disability Studies. This new awareness must be converted to the creative writing with the disabled persons' emphasis of their unique and diverse experiences of disabilities including visual impairment. The activistic consciousness emerged in the legal, civil and other more dynamic spheres must be extended to the more subjective areas like literature. Thus, a deliberate and conscious movement is needed from the side of the blind persons with regard to their self-expressions. Creative expressions from the visually impaired can become a powerful medium to register the agency of the visually impaired and to rectify the false representations about them. The researcher feels that the visually impaired community in the contemporary world will come forward with such activistic and more productive endeavors.

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Appendix I

Thesis Summary

The PhD thesis titled "Visual Impairment, Creativity and Fulfillment: Contextualizing Select Autobiographies and Memoirs" by Akbar C. discusses the representation of different facets of blindness in the selected autobiographies of the visually impaired. The researcher holds the hypothetical position that visual impairment can stimulate a wide variety of textual responses in a writer, which could be aesthetic, philosophical, psychological, emotional, political, or cultural depending on his or her degree of impairment, education, familial environment, external support, awareness, and above all the creative imagination that he or she relies on to overcome the loss and tackle the obstacles. The researcher proposes to analyze the selected autobiographies of the visually impaired, focusing on areas such as creativity, aesthetics and perception of blindness in the selected texts and fulfillment of the concerned authors in their personal life transgressing their impairment. The major texts selected for the present study are, *The Story of My Life* and *The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays* by Helen Keller, *Face to Face: An Autobiography* and *All for Love* by Ved Mehta, *If You Could See What I Hear* by Tom Sullivan, *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness* by Professor John M. Hull, *Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness* and *On my Own: The Journey Continues* by Sally Hobart Alexander, *Planet of the Blind* and *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear* by Stephen Kuusisto and *Sight Unseen* by Georgina Kleege. Rather than attempting a detailed discussion of these texts, the passages and contents relevant to the current topic have been singled out for analysis.

The whole thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter, 'The Introduction' explains the structure of the study and states its major aims and objectives. After a brief discussion of the primary texts and their authors, the available resources in the area have been scrutinized and analyzed. Textual analysis is the methodology for the current study. The selected autobiographies have been discussed on the basis of the inputs from Disability Studies and studies on visual impairment. The subjective and practical observations on blindness by different authors have been analyzed in the background of the studies and observations on visual impairment by established experts and critics.

After explaining the rationale for the topic and justifying the research gap,

the available resources have been classified and discussed. Thus, the first chapter establishes the authenticity and rarity of the research topic.

The second chapter, 'The World of Blindness and The World of Letters: Visual Impairment, Autobiographies and Creativity,' is designed as a theoretical background to the textual observations in the subsequent chapters. However, it moves from a theoretical to practical examination in the course of the study. A definition and classification of autobiographies is followed by a short survey of the background in which they become favourite mediums to explain the subjectivities of the marginalized. After giving a brief introduction to the genre of Disability Studies, Visual impairment or blindness is explained from a conceptual angle. Its magnitude and classification into diverse types have been dealt with using the available parameters. After briefly stating the social and historical evolution of the visually impaired, major writers with visual impairment such as Homer, John Milton, James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges have been discussed. In the final section of this chapter, the relationship between blindness and creativity has been examined comparing the passages depicting the experiences of blindness by the selected authors. The researcher feels that, Helen Keller, Professor John M. Hull and Stephen Kuusisto use their own distinguished and highly individualistic styles to comment on the experience of blindness. Whereas, Sally Hobart Alexander, Ved Mehta and Tom Sullivan use a general style, while accentuating the practical dimensions of blindness. Georgina Kleege subtly shifts between these subjective contemplations and practical narrations as per the demand of the situation. Thus her style becomes an amalgam of the two diverse approaches. This argument is substantiated with sufficient examples from the primary texts.

The third chapter titled 'From the Visual to the Multisensory World: The Aesthetic and Perceptive Realms of the Texts,' examines the aesthetics and perception of blindness by different authors. The sensory hierarchy of the primary texts and the subjectivities of different authors are major concerns in this chapter. Subtle differences in the perception of blindness by the authors with similar nature of impairment have been analyzed. For this study, relevant passages from the selected texts have been scrutinized.

Helen Keller's language learning is detailed with comments from experts on visual impairment. The characteristics of her language have been examined with special reference to her textual passages. Her sensory hierarchy has been discussed on the basis of *The World I Live-in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays*. Her stating of different senses such as touch, sound, smell and different forms of

vibrations have been discussed. Thus, the magnanimity and diversity of her sensory universe have been explored with relevant textual quotes.

Professor John M. Hull's peculiar perception of blindness in *Sight and Insight into the World of Blindness* has been discussed further. His recording of raining as an acoustic experience, his contemplations on food and sex for an adventitiously impaired person, his thoughts about time and space, his comparison between the faculties of touch and sight and the gradual evolution in his attitude towards blindness are some of the highlights in such a discussion. This perception reaches its peak, when he solitarily and tactually explores the marble rock in a desolate church. Thus, he gradually reconciles with the reality of blindness.

Georgina Kleege presents her own variety of the aesthetics of blindness in *Sight Unseen*. After discussing her own condition of blindness, she narrates the terminological impasse related to the word, Blind. She discusses some subtle issues such as her own appreciation of the visual arts, her failed attempt to draw the portrait of her father, her encounters with audio books and Braille, her meditations on eye contact and her moving from a visual world to a multisensory one. She concludes the book while declaring her identity as a blind person.

Stephen Kuusisto in his books, *Planet of the Blind* and *Eavesdropping-A Life by Ear* depicts the conscious hiding of his blindness by his parents and subsequent consequences. In the former book, he concentrates on the practical aspects of blindness, whereas, he dwells on its more intimate and subjective aspects in *Eavesdropping*. Here he discusses his intense fascination with the art of listening. His multiple experiments in the auditory universe also reveals his exploration of the extra-visual realms. He further shares his passion for music and musicians. Thus, he also moves from an optical to a multisensory realm as a path for his salvation. The other authors focus on the practical realities related to blindness and only occasionally deviate to the more subjective aspects.

Chapter 4 titled 'In the Innermost Corridor: The Personal life of the Authors and Their Prospects of Fulfillment' analyses the personal life of the selected authors while emphasizing their nature of blindness, strategies of survival, educational prospects, rehabilitation measures and their fulfillment in life. For this comparison, the authors are classified as Congenitally, Adventitiously and Legally blind. The major incidents in their personal and social life have been evaluated in the backdrop of their respective degrees of blindness and related consequences. Their more intimate aspects like marriage, family, sexuality and social orientations have also

been compared. The fulfillment in their personal, social and professional life has been assessed on the basis of these realities and the attitude of different authors towards their impairment. The role and assistance provided by external sources in their survival have also been analyzed. Thus, this chapter moves from a literary angle to a more social and professional one.

In the fifth and the final chapter, major findings of the research have been summarized providing further certain directions for the future researches in this area. The major challenges and hurdles faced by the researcher in the course of this study and the inherent strategies and methods adopted to overcome such obstacles have also been explained. The researcher feels that such liberties will be justified due to the particular nature and scope of the current research topic. Future directions related to the researches on the literary experiences of the visually impaired have also been discussed from the researcher's experiential point of view. This study is concluded by stating the major primary and secondary resources referred to in the study. Thus, in short, the present research discusses the presentation of blindness in the selected autobiographies of the visually impaired, combining both their subjective and mundane aspects.

Appendix II

പ്രബന്ധസംഗ്രഹം

"കാഴ്ചപരിമിതി, സർഗ്ഗാത്മകത, സാക്ഷാത്കാരം: തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ആത്മകഥകളുടെയും ഓർമ്മക്കുറിപ്പുകളുടെയും സന്ദർഭീകരണം" എന്ന ശീർഷകത്തിലുള്ള അക്ബർ സി.യുടെ ഡോക്ടറൽ പ്രബന്ധം കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുള്ളവരുടെ ജീവചരിത്രങ്ങളിൽ അന്ധതയുടെ വിവിധതലങ്ങൾ എപ്രകാരമാണ് പ്രതിനിധാനം ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നത് എന്ന് പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. കാഴ്ചപരിമിതി എഴുത്തുകാരനിൽ ഉളവാക്കുന്ന പാഠീയപ്രതികരണം ഈ പരിമിതിയില്ലാത്ത എഴുത്തുകാരുടെ പാഠനിർമ്മിതിയെ അപേക്ഷിച്ച് വ്യതിരിക്തവും വൈവിധ്യം നിറഞ്ഞതുമാണ് എന്നതാണ് ഈ ഗവേഷണത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാന പരികല്പന. ലാവണ്യപരമോ, താത്വികമോ, മനഃശാസ്ത്രപരമോ, രാഷ്ട്രീയമോ, സാംസ്കാരികമോ, വൈകാരികമോ ആയ ഇത്തരം പാഠീയപ്രതികരണങ്ങൾ എഴുത്തുകാരിലെ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ തോത്, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസനിലവാരം, കുടുംബപശ്ചാത്തലം, ബാഹ്യപിന്തുണ, ലോകാവബോധം, സർഗ്ഗശേഷി എന്നിവയെക്കൂടി ആശ്രയിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു എന്നുള്ളതും ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ പരികല്പനയാണ്.

സർഗ്ഗാത്മകത, ലാവണ്യാംശം, കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയെ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന രീതി എന്നിവയിലൂന്നി തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത കൃതികളെ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നതിലൂടെ എപ്രകാരമാണ് ഓരോ എഴുത്തുകാരും കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയെ മറികടന്ന് തങ്ങളുടെ അഭിഭാവങ്ങൾ സാക്ഷാത്കരിക്കുന്നത് എന്ന് കണ്ടെത്താൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു.

കാഴ്ചപരിമിതി ഒരു എഴുത്തുകാരന് വൈവിധ്യമാർന്ന പാഠപരമായ പ്രതികരണങ്ങൾ രൂപപ്പെടുത്താൻ സാധ്യത നൽകുന്ന ഒരു ഘടകമാണ്. ഇത്തരം പ്രതികരണങ്ങൾ സൗന്ദര്യശാസ്ത്രപരമോ, മനഃശാസ്ത്രപരമോ, രാഷ്ട്രീയമോ, സാംസ്കാരികമോ, വൈകാരികമോ, സംവാദാത്മകമോ ആകാം. എഴുത്തുകാരന്റെ പാഠപരമായ വീക്ഷണങ്ങളെ നിർണ്ണയിക്കുന്ന നിരവധി പ്രധാന ഘടകങ്ങളുണ്ടെന്ന് ഗവേഷകൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു. ഇവയിൽ എഴുത്തുകാരന്റെ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ തോത്, അതിന്റെ സ്വഭാവം, അദ്ദേഹത്തിന് ലഭിച്ച പരിശീലനം, അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ അവബോധം, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസപരമായ പശ്ചാത്തലം, ലഭ്യമായ ബാഹ്യമായ സഹായക ഘടകങ്ങൾ എന്നിവ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നു. കൂടാതെ, വ്യക്തിഗത പ്രതിബന്ധങ്ങളെ അതിജീവിക്കാൻ രചയിതാവ് സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന സർഗ്ഗാത്മകവും ഭാവനാത്മകവുമായ സമീപനങ്ങളും അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ പാഠപരമായ ആവിഷ്കാരങ്ങളെ കാര്യമായി സ്വാധീനിക്കുന്നു.

ഈ പഠനത്തിന് ആധാരമായ പ്രധാന കൃതികൾ ഇവയാണ്:

- എന്റെ ജീവിതകഥ - The Story of My Life - ഹെലൻ കെല്ലർ (Helen Keller)

- ഞാൻ ജീവിക്കുന്ന ലോകവും ശുഭാപ്തി വിശ്വാസവും - The World I Live in and Optimism: A Collection of Essays - ഹെലൻ കെല്ലർ (Helen Keller)
- മുഖാമുഖം: ഒരു ആത്മകഥ - Face to Face: An Autobiography - വേദ് മേത്ത (Ved Mehta)
- എല്ലാം പ്രണയത്തിനു വേണ്ടി - All for Love - വേദ് മേത്ത (Ved Mehta)
- ഞാൻ കേട്ടത് നിങ്ങൾ കണ്ടിരുന്നെങ്കിൽ - If You Could See What I Hear - ടോം സള്ളിവൻ (Tom Sullivan)
- കാഴ്ചയും ഉൾക്കാഴ്ചയും: അന്ധതയുടെ ലോകത്തേക്കുള്ള ഒരു യാത്ര - On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness - പ്രൊഫസർ ജോൺ എം. ഹൾ (Professor John M. Hull)
- എന്റെ അന്ധതയുടെ ലോകത്തേക്കുള്ള ഒരു തിരിഞ്ഞുനോട്ടം - Taking Hold: My Journey into Blindness - സാലി ഹോബാർട്ട് അലക്സാണ്ടർ (Sally Hobart Alexander)
- എന്റേതുമാത്രം: യാത്ര തുടരുമ്പോൾ - On my Own: The Journey Continues - സാലി ഹോബാർട്ട് അലക്സാണ്ടർ (Sally Hobart Alexander)
- അന്ധരുടെ ഗ്രഹം - Planet of the Blind - സ്റ്റീഫൻ കൂസിസ്റ്റോ (Stephen Kuusisto)
- ഒളിച്ചു കേൾവി: ശ്രവണ ജീവിതം - Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear - സ്റ്റീഫൻ കൂസിസ്റ്റോ (Stephen Kuusisto)
- കാഴ്ചകൾക്കപ്പുറം - Sight Unseen - ജോർജിന ക്ലീജ് (Georgina Kleege)

ഈ ഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളുടെ വിശദവും സമഗ്രവുമായ ചർച്ചയ്ക്ക് പകരം വിശകലനത്തിന് സ്വീകരിച്ച ഏകകങ്ങളിലൂന്നി പാഠാപഗ്രഥനം നടത്തുന്ന സമീപനമാണ് സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത്.

അധ്യായം ഒന്ന്: ആമുഖം

അഞ്ച് അധ്യായങ്ങളിലായി അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന പ്രബന്ധത്തിന്റെ ആദ്യ അധ്യായം ആമുഖമാണ്. പ്രബന്ധത്തിന്റെ ദത്തസ്രോതസ്സായി സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള ഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള പ്രാഥമിക വിവരണത്തിന് ശേഷം പഠനത്തിന്റെ പ്രധാന ഉദ്ദേശ്യലക്ഷ്യങ്ങൾ പ്രസ്താവിക്കുന്നു. തുടർന്ന് ഈ മേഖലയിലെ ഗവേഷണവിടവും പഠനസാധ്യതയും പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. ഈ മേഖലയിൽ നടന്ന പഠനങ്ങളെ വർഗ്ഗീകരിക്കുകയും വിശകലന വിധേയമാക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുകവഴി ഈ ഗവേഷണ വിഷയത്തിന്റെ അപൂർവ്വതയും സാധ്യതയും സ്ഥാപിച്ചെടുക്കുകകൂടി ചെയ്യുന്നു. പഠനത്തിന് സ്വീകരിച്ച രീതിശാസ്ത്രം വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നതും ഇതേ അധ്യായത്തിലാണ്. മുൻകാല ഗവേഷകരുടെ

നിരീക്ഷണങ്ങളുടെ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ അംഗപരിമിതീപഠനങ്ങളിൽ പൊതുവായും കാഴ്ചപരിമിതീപഠനങ്ങളിൽ പ്രത്യേകമായും സ്വീകരിച്ചുപോരുന്ന സങ്കല്പനങ്ങളെ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചാണ് ഗവേഷണത്തിന് ആസ്പദമാക്കിയ ആത്മകഥകളെ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നത്. പാഠാപഗ്രഥനമാണ് ഇതിനായി സ്വീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന മുഖ്യരീതി.

അധ്യായം രണ്ട്: ദൃശ്യന്യൂനലോകവും അക്ഷരലോകവും: കാഴ്ചപരിമിതി, ആത്മകഥകൾ, സർഗ്ഗാത്മകത

രണ്ടാം അധ്യായം തുടർ അധ്യായങ്ങളിലെ വിശകലനങ്ങൾക്കുതകുന്ന സൈദ്ധാന്തികപശ്ചാത്തലം ഒരുക്കുന്നു. എന്നാൽ കേവലം സൈദ്ധാന്തിക പരിചയത്തിൽ മാത്രമൊതുങ്ങാതെ ശാസ്ത്രീയവിശകലനത്തിനുള്ള പ്രായോഗിക മാതൃകകൾ കൂടി ഈ അധ്യായം ആരായുന്നുണ്ട്. ആത്മകഥകളെ നിർവ്വചിക്കുകയും വർഗ്ഗീകരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തതിനുശേഷം ആത്മനിഷ്ഠാനുഭവങ്ങളുടെ പ്രകാശനത്തിന് കറുത്ത വർഗ്ഗക്കാർ, ദളിതർ തുടങ്ങിയ അരികുവത്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട വിഭാഗങ്ങൾ സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന മുഖ്യ മാധ്യമമെന്ന നിലയിൽ ഈ സാഹിത്യജനുസിനുണ്ടായ വളർച്ചയും വികാസവും കൂടി ഇതിൽ വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്.

അംഗപരിമിതപഠനത്തിലൂന്നുന്ന സാഹിത്യചിന്താപദ്ധതിയെ (Disability Studies) സാമാന്യമായി വിശദീകരിക്കുവാനും കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട വിവിധ സങ്കല്പനങ്ങൾ ക്രോഡീകരിക്കുവാനും ഈ അധ്യായത്തിൽ ശ്രമിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. തോതും തീവ്രതയും വൈവിധ്യവുമനുസരിച്ച് കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയിലെ ഉൾപ്പിരിവുകൾ, ലഭ്യമായ മാനദണ്ഡങ്ങൾക്കനുസരിച്ച് പരിചയപ്പെടുത്തുന്നുമുണ്ട്. ഇതിനായി കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ സാമൂഹികവും ചരിത്രാത്മകവുമായ പരിണാമങ്ങൾ സൂക്ഷ്മമായി വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഹോമർ, ജോൺ മിൽറ്റൻ, ജെയിംസ് ജോയ്സ്, ജോർജ് ലൂയിസ് ബോർഗസ് തുടങ്ങിയവരുടെ സർഗ്ഗസൃഷ്ടികളിലെ അനന്യത മറനീക്കിക്കാണിക്കുവാനും ഈ അധ്യായത്തിൽ സാധിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയും സർഗ്ഗാത്മകതയും തമ്മിലുള്ള ബന്ധം തെളിയിക്കാൻ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതി എന്ന അവസ്ഥയും അനുഭവവും ചിത്രീകരിച്ച വിധം തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ട എഴുത്തുകാരുടെ രചനയെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കി ഈ അധ്യായാന്ത്യത്തിൽ തുലനാത്മകമായി വിശകലനം ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നു.

വൈയക്തികവും വ്യതിരിക്തവുമായ ആഖ്യാനശൈലിയിലൂടെയാണ് കാഴ്ചയില്ലാത്ത ലോകത്തിന്റെ അനുഭവങ്ങൾ ഹെലൻ കെല്ലറും, പ്രൊഫസർ ജോൺ എം. ഹള്ളും സ്റ്റീഫൻ കൂസിസ്റ്റോയും ആവിഷ്കരിച്ചതെന്ന നിരീക്ഷണത്തിലാണ് പഠനം എത്തിച്ചേരുന്നത്. അതേസമയം സാലി ഹോബാർട്ട് അലക്സാണ്ടർ, വേദ് മേത്ത, ടോം സള്ളിവൻ എന്നിവർ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ പ്രായോഗികമാനങ്ങളിലൂന്നുന്ന പൊതു ആഖ്യാനശൈലിയാണ് പിന്തുടരുന്നത്. ജോർജിന ക്ലീജാവട്ടെ സന്ദർഭാനുസരണം ഈ രണ്ട് സമീപനങ്ങളെയും ലയിപ്പിക്കുന്ന മധ്യമമാർഗ്ഗം സ്വീകരിക്കുന്നു. ഗവേഷകന്റെ ഈ വാദഗതിക്ക്

പിൻബലം നൽകുന്ന രീതിയിൽ പ്രസ്തുത ഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നുള്ള ഉദ്ധരണികളെ ചർച്ചയ്ക്ക് വിധേയമാക്കിക്കൊണ്ട് ഈ അധ്യായം ഉപസംഹരിക്കുന്നു.

അധ്യായം മൂന്ന്: ദൃശ്യലോകത്തുനിന്ന് ബഹുഇന്ദ്രിയ ലോകത്തേക്ക്: പാഠങ്ങളുടെ ലാവണ്യ-പരിപ്രേക്ഷ്യ മണ്ഡലങ്ങൾ

മൂന്നാമധ്യായം, കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയെക്കുറിച്ച് വ്യത്യസ്ത രചയിതാക്കളുടെ ലാവണ്യ-ദാർശനിക പരിപ്രേക്ഷ്യം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. വിശകലനാസ്പദമായ പാഠങ്ങളിലെ ഇന്ദ്രിയ ശ്രേണിയും രചയിതാക്കളുടെ വ്യക്ത്യുന്മുഖതയുമാണ് ഈ അധ്യായത്തിൽ അപഗ്രഥിക്കുന്നത്. ഒരേതരം ദൃശ്യക്ഷതി അനുഭവിക്കുന്നവരിലെ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള സൂക്ഷ്മമായ ധാരണാവ്യത്യാസങ്ങൾ പ്രസക്ത പാഠങ്ങളുടെ പരിശോധനയിലൂടെ ഇതിൽ വിശദമായി വിശകലനം ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. ജന്മനാ കാഴ്ചയില്ലാത്തവരായ ഹെലൻ കെല്ലർ, വേദ് മേത്ത, ടോം സള്ളിവൻ എന്നിവരുടെ സൗന്ദര്യാത്മക പരികല്പനകളിൽ വലിയ അന്തരം ഉള്ളതായി ഗവേഷകൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു.

ഹെലൻ കെല്ലറുടെ ഭാഷാസമാർജ്ജന മാതൃക കാഴ്ചപരിമിതീ വിദഗ്ധരുടെ അഭിപ്രായങ്ങളുടെ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ അപഗ്രഥിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. കെല്ലറുടെ ഭാഷാശൈലിയിലെ അനന്യസവിശേഷതകൾ അവരുടെ രചനകളെ ആസ്പദമാക്കി ഇഴപിരിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. 'ഞാൻ ജീവിക്കുന്ന ലോകവും ശുഭാപ്തി വിശ്വാസവും' (The World I Live in and Optimism) എന്ന കൃതിയെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കിയാണ് അവരുടെ ഇന്ദ്രിയശ്രേണി ചർച്ച ചെയ്തിട്ടുള്ളത്. സ്പർശനം, ശബ്ദം, ഗന്ധം, രുചി, പലതരം കമ്പനങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങിയ വ്യത്യസ്ത ഇന്ദ്രിയാനുഭവങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള അവരുടെ പ്രസ്താവനകൾ ചർച്ച ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. കെല്ലറുടെ ഇന്ദ്രിയാനുഭവപ്രപഞ്ചത്തിന്റെ വൈവിധ്യവും മാഹാത്മ്യവും പ്രസക്തമായ ഉദ്ധരണികളുടെ പാഠവിശകലനത്തിലൂടെയാണ് തെളിയിച്ചെടുക്കുന്നത്.

പ്രൊഫസർ ജോൺ എം. ഹള്ളിന്റെ 'കാഴ്ചയും ഉൾക്കാഴ്ചയും: അന്ധതയുടെ ലോകത്തേക്കുള്ള ഒരു യാത്ര' എന്ന ഗ്രന്ഥത്തിലെ അന്ധതയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിഭിന്നപരിപ്രേക്ഷ്യമാണ് തുടർന്ന് ചർച്ചചെയ്യുന്നത്. അദ്ദേഹം ശ്രവണാനുഭവമായി രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയ മഴയുടെ സ്വനഭൗതികതലം, കാഴ്ചയുടെ ലോകം അനുഭവിച്ച് പൊടുന്നനെ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതനായ ഒരാളുടെ ഭക്ഷണത്തെയും ലൈംഗികതയെയും കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിചിന്തനങ്ങൾ, സമയത്തെയും സ്ഥലത്തെയും കുറിച്ചുള്ള പര്യാലോചനകൾ, സ്പർശന-ദർശന ക്ഷമതകൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള താരതമ്യം, കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയോടുള്ള അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ മനോഭാവത്തിലെ ക്രമാനുഗതപരിണാമം എന്നിവയാണ് ഈ ഖണ്ഡത്തിൽ പ്രധാനമായി ചർച്ച ചെയ്തിട്ടുള്ളത്. കാഴ്ചനഷ്ടം എന്ന യാഥാർത്ഥ്യത്തെ അദ്ദേഹം പടിപടിയായാണ് ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്നത്. വിജനമായ ഒരു പള്ളിയിലെ വെണ്ണക്കൽപാറയെ (മാർബിൾ ശില്പം) ഏകാകിയായി സ്പർശിച്ച് ഗ്രഹിക്കുമ്പോഴാണ് കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ

വീക്ഷണത്തെളിച്ചം അതിന്റെ ഉത്തുംഗത്തിലെത്തുന്നതെന്ന് ഈ പഠനം നിരീക്ഷിക്കുന്നു.

ജോർജിന ക്ലീജ് തന്റെ 'കാഴ്ചകൾക്കപ്പുറം' (Sight Unseen) എന്ന കൃതിയിൽ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ ലാവണ്യശാസ്ത്രത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് തനത് വീക്ഷണം അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. സ്വന്തം കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ വിവിധ അവസ്ഥകൾ ചർച്ച ചെയ്ത ശേഷം, 'ബ്ലൈൻഡ്' എന്ന വാക്കിലെ സാങ്കേതികപരമായ അർത്ഥസന്ദേഹവും അനിശ്ചിതത്വവും ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടുന്നു. തനതുരീതിയിലുള്ള ദൃശ്യകലാസ്വാദനം, പിതാവിന്റെ ഛായാചിത്രം വരയ്ക്കുന്ന ഉദ്യമത്തിൽ ഏറ്റ പരാജയം, ഓഡിയോ പുസ്തകങ്ങളും ബ്രെയിലുമായുള്ള മല്ലിടൽ, കണ്ണോടുകൺബന്ധം ഉറപ്പിക്കാനായി നടത്തിയ ധ്യാനശ്രമങ്ങൾ, കാഴ്ചയുടെ ലോകത്തുനിന്ന് ബഹുഇന്ദ്രിയ ലോകത്തേക്കുള്ള ചുവടുമാറ്റം തുടങ്ങിയവ ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഒരു അന്ധയായ വ്യക്തിയായി തന്റെ സ്വത്വം പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചുകൊണ്ടാണ് അവർ തന്റെ തൂലിക ചലിപ്പിച്ചതെന്ന് ഈ ഗവേഷണം അടിവരയിടുന്നു.

സ്റ്റീഫൻ കൂസിസ്റ്റോയുടെ 'അന്ധരുടെ ഗ്രഹം', 'താഴേക്കിറക്കം: ശ്രവണ ജീവിതം' എന്നീ ഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളിൽ, കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയെ മാതാപിതാക്കൾ ബോധപൂർവ്വം മറച്ചുവെച്ചതിന്റെ പ്രത്യാഘാതങ്ങൾ ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നു. ആദ്യ പുസ്തകത്തിൽ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ പ്രായോഗിക വശങ്ങൾക്കും, രണ്ടാമത്തേതിൽ (ഈവ്ഡ്രോപ്പിംഗ്) അതിന്റെ ആത്മീയവും വ്യക്തിപരവുമായ വശങ്ങളിലുമാണ് അദ്ദേഹം ശ്രദ്ധ കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുന്നത്. ചെവിയോർക്കലിനെ ഒരു കലയായി വീക്ഷിക്കുന്ന അദ്ദേഹം അതിന്റെ അതിരറ്റ വശ്യതയും ശബ്ദലോകത്തിലെ പരീക്ഷണങ്ങളും ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുന്നു. സംഗീതത്തോടും സംഗീതജ്ഞരോടുമുള്ള അടുപ്പം വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്ന അദ്ദേഹം ദൃശ്യലോകത്തുനിന്ന് ബഹുഇന്ദ്രിയമണ്ഡലത്തിലേക്കുള്ള സംക്രമണത്തെയാണ് മുക്തിപാതയായി കണക്കാക്കുന്നത്. പഠന വിധേയരാക്കിയ ഇതര എഴുത്തുകാരിലേറെയും കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ പ്രായോഗിക യാഥാർത്ഥ്യങ്ങളിലാണ് ശ്രദ്ധ കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുന്നതെന്നും വല്ലപ്പോഴും മാത്രമാണ് ആത്മനിഷ്ഠമായ അനുഭവലോകം പങ്കുവെക്കുന്നത് എന്നും ഈ ഗവേഷണം തെളിയിക്കുന്നു.

അധ്യായം നാല്: നിഭൃതപഥങ്ങളിൽ: എഴുത്തുകാരുടെ വ്യക്തിജീവിതവും സാഫല്യപ്രതീക്ഷകളും

നാലാമധ്യായം തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ട എഴുത്തുകാരുടെ വ്യക്തിജീവിതത്തെ ആഴത്തിൽ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുകയും അവരുടെ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ സ്വഭാവം, അതിജീവന തന്ത്രങ്ങൾ, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ സാധ്യതകൾ, പുനരധിവാസ നടപടികൾ, ജീവിത സാഫല്യം എന്നിവയ്ക്ക് പ്രാധാന്യം നൽകുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. താരതമ്യരീതി അവലംബിച്ച വിശകലനത്തിനായി എഴുത്തുകാരെ ജന്മനാ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതർ, പിൽക്കാലത്ത് (ആർജ്ജിതമായി) കാഴ്ചപരിമിതരായവർ, നിയമനിർവ്വചിത കാഴ്ചപരിമിതർ എന്നിങ്ങനെ മൂന്നായി തരംതിരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. അവരുടെ വ്യക്തിപരവും സാമൂഹികവുമായ ജീവിതത്തിലെ പ്രധാന സംഭവങ്ങളെ കാഴ്ചപരിമിതിയുടെ തോതിനെയും അനുബന്ധ

വൈഷമ്യങ്ങളെയും ബന്ധിപ്പിച്ച് വിലയിരുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. വിവാഹം, കുടുംബം, ലൈംഗികത, സാമൂഹിക നിലപാടുകൾ തുടങ്ങിയ വശങ്ങളും താരതമ്യം ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഈ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യങ്ങളുടെയും പരിമിതികളോടുള്ള എഴുത്തുകാരുടെ മനോഭാവത്തിന്റെയും അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിലാണ് അവരുടെ ജീവിതസാക്ഷാത്കാരം വിലയിരുത്തിയിട്ടുള്ളത്. അവരുടെ അതിജീവനത്തിൽ ബാഹ്യസ്രോതസ്സുകളുടെ പങ്കും സഹായവും വിശകലനം ചെയ്തുകൊണ്ട്, സാഹിത്യപരമായ ഒന്നിൽ നിന്ന് സാമൂഹികവും തൊഴിൽപരവുമായ തലത്തിലേക്ക് ഈ അധ്യായം കടക്കുന്നു.

അധ്യായം അഞ്ച്: ഉപസംഹാരം

അവസാന അധ്യായത്തിൽ ഗവേഷണത്തിന്റെ പ്രധാന കണ്ടെത്തലുകൾ സംഗ്രഹിക്കുകയും ഈ മേഖലയിലെ തുടർ ഗവേഷണങ്ങൾക്ക് ഉതകുന്ന നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ നൽകുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഗവേഷകൻ നേരിട്ട പ്രധാന വെല്ലുവിളികളും അവയെ അതിജീവിക്കാൻ സ്വീകരിച്ച തന്ത്രങ്ങളും രീതികളും ഈ അധ്യായത്തിൽ വിശദീകരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. കാഴ്ചപരിമിതരുടെ സാഹിത്യാനുഭവങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഭാവിദിശകളും ഗവേഷകന്റെ അനുഭവ വീക്ഷണകോണിൽ നിന്ന് ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുന്നു. പഠനത്തിൽ പരാമർശിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന പ്രധാന പ്രാഥമിക-ദ്വിതീയ പ്രഭവങ്ങൾ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിക്കൊണ്ട്, കാഴ്ചപരിമിതരുടെ ആത്മകഥകളിലെ വ്യക്തിപരവും ദൈനംദിനവുമായ വശങ്ങളെ സമന്വയിപ്പിച്ച ഈ ഗവേഷണം ഉപസംഹരിക്കുന്നു.