

Think India (Quarterly Journal)

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ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

DISABILITY, REPRESENTATION AND LITERATURE

held on 03 October 2019 and Organised by P.G. & Research Department
of English

S. T. HINDU COLLEGE, NAGERCOIL-2, Tamilnadu, India



Redefining Parenthood: A Psychoanalytic Study Of Shilpi Signodia's *Innocent Wings*

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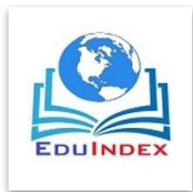
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Abstract

Disability Studies concentrates on the struggles of the person who are differently abled from others. The term “Disability” can be regarded as either physical or psychological illness. In society, people treat those disabled persons with sympathy which make them feel inferior. The paper entitled “Redefining Parenthood: A Psychoanalytic Study of Shilpi Signodia's *Innocent Wings*”, highlights the dilemma of a dyslexic child and his mother's effort to bring out the child from its impairment. Dyslexia is a learning disorder characterized by difficulty in reading, writing and spelling. It also includes late talking, learning new words slowly, struggle to pronounce easy words and delay in learning to read. This paper attempts to enunciate the fact that children with learning difficulties are not ignorant. They are restricted by their impairment in expressing their talents. Upbringing of a child is an art and the parents' role as a mentor and soulmate occupy a vital space in this entire process. The novel depicts the real life



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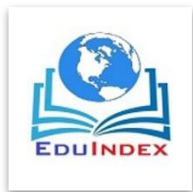
incidents of a mother and her struggles in making her son, Rudra lead a normal life. Imposing elders' dreams upon a child, can have an adverse effect of transforming a child from differently abled to disabled. The ground level work in the life of these little ones enriches the future of the children and the society.

Keywords: Disability, Dyslexia, Learning Disorder, Impairment, Parenthood.

Disability Studies is a new area in the field of literature which exposes the dilemma of the disabled people in the society. It emerged during the period of late twentieth century. Disability Studies portrays the physical and psychological problems of the people. It splits into two different concepts like impairment and disability in which impairment means illness of a person's mind or body whereas disability is a social construct. The main aim of this studies is to improve the social status of the disabled people. Disability can also affect the person due to their genetic disorder that affects the mental and physical health. The person who suffers with disability are not completely disabled but they are differently abled. According to the article in *A Guide to Disability Studies*:

While this studies focuses on the physical and mental issues and disabilities, it also looks for the way to broaden the views and perspective of literature, culture, history and policies at the national as well as international level. This will be helpful in developing the field of study and learning about disabilities from the experiences of different places gained in different times and situations.

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The novel *Innocent Wings* (2018) chosen for this presentation is the case study of a Dyslexic child, a four-year-old little boy, Rudra, son of Asha and Harish. The family lives in Hyderabad. Rudra is in his Grade One who is affected by Dyslexia with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder simply known as ADHD. Dyslexia is a learning disorder characterized by difficulty in reading, writing and spelling. It includes delayed speech, struggle to pronounce simple words, slow learning and reading. With these difficulties, one cannot judge them ignorant. Dyslexic person sees the world entirely different from others. The society cannot say that they are disabled only because they think differently.

Shilpi Signodia narrates the real life experiences that happened from 2014 in the life of Rudra. The novel depicts the struggles of a mother who detects her son's disability in his reading as well as in writing and the difficulties in her journey to bring her boy lead normal life like other children. The writer wants to bring Asha, Rudra's mother as an example for other parents in the society in handling and understanding the minds of the affected young wings. She also expresses how a mother should take care and behave softly with those up growing buds. This book is a short fiction which beholds the struggles of a child, Rudra, affected with Dyslexia and the efforts of his mother, Asha, to tackle it.

The aim of this paper is to bring out the lapses on the part of the parents in the art of bringing up a child and the nuances that they should keep in their mind while moulding them. The behaviour of a child gets shaped by its parents and social experiences. In the article *Psychodynamic Perspectives on Personality*, the argument of Freudian psychoanalytic theory says, "During each stage, a child is presented with a conflict between biological drives and social expectations; successful navigation of internal conflicts will lead to mastery of each

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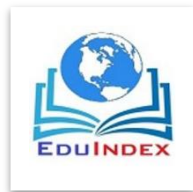
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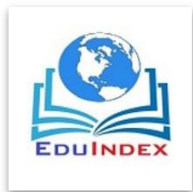
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developmental stage, and ultimately to a fully mature personality” (np). Asha, mother of the dyslexic child attempts to be an exemplary mother in this novel. In one of the Parent Teacher’s Meetings, Rudra’s class teacher complaints to his mother about Rudra’s lack of performances in academics and his frequent use of washroom in order to skip his class hours. This is the first incident from which Rudra’s mother understands that her child, Rudra is psychologically not well and that there are some problems in him. Rudra’s father, Harish also suffers from dyslexia and it seems to be a hereditary disorder. Without knowing this fact, the parents and the teachers blame the children for the lack of performances in their academics.

Every child is unique in its way. The parents cannot force them to be like other children. Usually, the children with Dyslexia are smart as their peers. But they struggle more in academics, which does not mean that they are not interested in their studies. The parents also assume that their children do not perform well in their academics. In the review, *Innocent Wings: Shilpi*, the reviewer emphasizes, “Don’t assume that good grades and benchmark performances in the academics is the only parameter to define the capability of your children, let their innocent wings fly, let them to be from no one to only one in their schools” (np). Normally, mothers of the young children are thrust under pressure. A single lapse on their part in their children’s life destroys the future of their own children. This pressure aggravates when they get low marks in their academics. The same thing happens in the case of Rudra’s mother, Asha. Her tantrums and yelling make Rudra feel emotionally sick. And it increases when his class teacher, Meenu, continue to scold him. The early phase of the children’s life should be more pleasant and they should not be pressurised by academic success.



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In the life of Rudra, his problem becomes more visible only after his younger brother, Karthik's birth. The little boy feels lonely and left alone by his own mother and father. Most of Asha's attentions are turned towards her five months old little boy, Karthik. When Rudra had just joined his Grade One in new school. His previous primary school had an entirely different environment when compared to his new school. He does not understand the happenings in his class. Rudra struggles to understand the environment in his new school as well as in his house. He recently receives a new little family member, his brother, on whom his mother and father pay more attention. But Rudra wanted his mother's attention. This is a basic mindset of the children when they have their new siblings. Asha knows that her son, Rudra needs her more. As a mother, she should pay equal attention to both of her children. The support of the mother boosts up the children and helps them for speedy recovery.

The author genuinely expresses her concern for affected children through the depiction of Asha's efforts in interviewing the school faculties, physicians, psychologists and also the parents whose children have also been diagnosed with early stage of Dyslexia. In the result of those interviews, the parents and the school faculties were ready to understand the seriousness of their child's problems and take immediate measures to cure the affected children. Shilpi stresses the point that children are freshly heated clay and better results are in the hands of the parents, teachers and also with the society that mould them into good citizens. Ignorance, isolation and harsh behaviour towards a child results in unimaginable effects on them. Slow learners, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, ADHD and many more disabilities are there which are not much given importance. If anyone finds out these difficulties at the right age in a child, it will be easy to cure at that initial stage. Even a child's shyness to talk before the people other than

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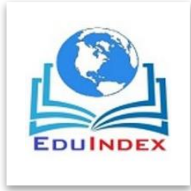
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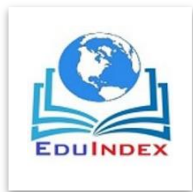
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its family is also a noticeable thing. These kind of changes are noticed more when Rudra is promoted to Grade two, where his new teacher, Shina helps him and suggests Asha to consult their school counsellor.

The innocent children may be affected by one of those difficulties which are not their mistakes. These disabilities are linked to their genes or due to the over indulgence of the parents or to any shocking incidents happened to the child. The child undergoes a lot of psychological disabilities. After knowing about Rudra's psychological struggles through Dr. Divya's counselling classes, Asha spends her time with more confidence in him and he starts to mingle with his peers. Asha's closeness is also one of the reasons for Rudra's fastest recovery from his defect. Even punishing or beating the affected child does not make any sense but makes the case even worse. So being a parent, they should understand their child's sufferings, but in most of the cases parents fail to understand the situations of their children and they force them to live like other persons in the society. Asha and Harish also decide that they will never engage in any harsh arguments or any serious fights with each other. Instead of understanding their children, the parents expect their children to understand them. For the sake of a child, the parents have to sacrifice their anger, rudeness and violence. Little harsh arguments between parents can also create a great impact in the minds of the children.

The young innocent minds are stressed by both its parents and teachers, which happens in the case of Rudra. The present educational system also pressurises the young minds. Asha shouts at Rudra when the boy gets ready for his school. If a day begins with negative comments, the children's mind slowly loses its confidence which will automatically affect the



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body as well as their mind. Shilpi wants to advise her readers through the mother in the novel as:

Every child possesses his own identity, he has his own views and demands. We as parents cannot rule them because they are dependent on us, but instead, we need to stand with them when they need us. We are being offered a duty to take care of the child by the Almighty, but we mistakenly consider it to be a right.

The results could be harsher than what I have faced. (33)

The child easily absorbs the environment without knowing the goodness or bad impact on it. It is the duty of the parents to create a peaceful environment to these blooming buds. The innocent wings' only hope is their mother and father. It is better to prevent first than healing the wound. In the case of Asha, she fed up with Rudra's lack of performance in academics as reported by teachers in the Parents Teachers Meeting. After her success of being a dutiful mother, she feels happy at Rudra's performance. She feels proud to be a mother, when the teacher comments, "Ma'am, your child is out of the world. The way he frames a sentence is not possible for a student in grade five. He has genes of a writer" (98). Asha awaits to hear this kind of appreciation about her son from others.

Finally, Asha understands the fact that if a child finds some difficulty or loses its confidence in certain things, they will never do it again. Even though Rudra shows his mastery in the game that he has chosen to play, he frequently switches his choice of games. Rudra easily gets bored with playing the same game for a long time. He does not stay stable in his work. And this brings lack of concentration and confidence in him. Rudra's parents failed to encourage him, whenever, he lacked confidence. It is the role of the parents to encourage their

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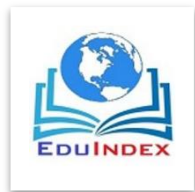
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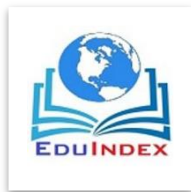
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children. They have to keep the little one stay up with positivity. In the present world, people run behind money and in search of time to fulfil others' dream project. Consequently, the innocent souls are the one who suffer a lot. If any child has a problem like Rudra's, he has to be given special attention by his working parents which would boost their self- confidence enhance the perfection of their performances.

When Rudra undergoes some struggles in his action as well as in his health, Asha is the one who suffers a lot. The environment becomes an unbearable situation, when she witnesses her child struggles to act as others. The terrible condition of the children shatters the parents' hope with their children and the parents undergo depression. Asha breaks down in many situations when she is unable to tolerate her son's sufferings. In this competitive world, mothers like Asha, forget that their children might have some unique talents. The stereotypical mindset of the parents is that they want their children to live their life which are suitable to social norms. If the child like Rudra behaves different from others, the parents and the society stamp them as a disabled child.

Dr. Divya brings the lost confidence in Rudra which turns him into a shining star in his class. Slowly, Rudra shows his interest towards literature. He starts to read books all the time. Asha's motherly love heals Rudra and soon he starts to bring out the writer in him. Until the parents make sense about the abilities of their children, both the parents and their children lead a life of dejection and depression. In the context of Asha, she is lucky to get some good people's help which changes the life of Asha and Rudra. Arrival of Shina teacher in the life of Rudra brings about the turning point. At this critical situation, the grown-ups also need some solace. Both Asha and Harish are lucky to have some people like Ms. Shina mam, Shivani, Dr.



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Priya, Dr. Reddy and Dr. Divya. These persons have created an impact in the life of Rudra which decides his better future. Dr. Divya is the child psychiatrist whose counselling classes make great impact in Rudra as well as Asha. Asha also learnt the method of parenting and at last she proves herself as a successful mother.

There is no child in this world born without talents. Building a paradise is not an easy task. Likewise, bringing up a child is also given more importance. Instead of discouraging a child, the parents and the teachers have to understand their abilities and one should believe in their talents. Parents are the powerful beings in the life of their children who make their life either a heaven or a hell. If the parents lead them in the right path they will not enter into the pathetic world of stress. The children will lead a free life and consider their parents as treasure. Parents have to do some basic work in the life of these little ones which enriches the future of their children and the society. In this story, Asha's care and her right decision at right time to change her attitude towards Rudra, brings a tremendous change in Rudra's behaviour. The author also requests the parents to let them fly freely in their own paradise.

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