



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Ordeal by Fire: Representation of Disability, Gendered Self and Intimate Partner Violence in *The Other Senses*

### Introduction

Life-writing is a vital feature of the disability rights movement. It has emerged alongside disability rights activists' advancement of the social model of disability, as activists used their personal experiences of marginalisation to demand political rights, not medical cures. Internationally, the array of disability life writing is now vast and many types of disabilities are represented in them. However, this is still a recent development in India. In the last decade or so, disabled women have begun to challenge their marginalisation and inscribe themselves in the cultural mainstream through the medium of life writing. As opposed to some case studies available in India, the immediacy of the personal narrative conveys disabled women's distinct perspectives on sexuality, reproductive issues, appearance biases and other shared struggles. In a way, the genre empowers disabled women to tell their own stories that counter sexual and ableist marginalisation.

The sexuality and sexual desires of people with disabilities are often brushed aside as less significant than the other challenges they need to negotiate. Leading feminist disability scholar Thomson argues that women with disabilities, even more intensely than women in general, have been cast in the collective cultural imagination as inferior, lacking, excessive, incapable, unfit, and useless. In contrast to normatively feminine women, women with disabilities are often stereotypically considered undesirable, asexual, and unsuitable as parents. Disability life-writing repeatedly attests that adjusting to an acquired impairment is not as difficult as adjusting to the stigmatization and lowered social status that comes from moving into the community of the disabled (Garland -Thomson, 1567). Although women and men with disabilities share similar experiences of devaluation, isolation, marginalization, and discrimination, their fortunes diverge in important ways. Moreover, though domestic violence against women is a universal problem that occurs in all socio-economic and cultural population subgroups and in all societies, there are some forms of gender-based violence are faced by disabled persons in particular. Disabled women are often more vulnerable to domestic and intimate partner violence due to a lot of socio-cultural factors.

In the activism and discourse around domestic violence in India, the specificity of violence, and a wider range of emotional, physical and sexual abuse faced by disabled women largely remains unrecognised. Forms of violence against women with disabilities may include withholding of assistive devices such as wheelchairs or white cane to limit their mobility, and financial, verbal, and emotional abuse that creates and enhances a sense of powerlessness and dependency. When one is disabled and lives with the abuser, one is scared to talk. *The Other Senses* (2012), is an autobiography written by Preeti Monga, a blind woman, who wanted nothing but happy domesticity in life before the nightmarish intimate partner she endured at the hands of her alcoholic husband. My paper will focus on themes of love, longing and the traumatic abuse she endured at the hands of her alcoholic husband before she finally mustered the courage to walk out and fight for a dignified existence for herself and her children. Fighting back against marital abuse and domestic violence, she has carved a niche for herself as a trauma counsellor, corporate trainer, writer, aerobics trainer, public speaker, and director of Silver Linings Human Resource Solutions Pvt Ltd. It seems her main struggle was to overcome gender role cultural conditioning, and an internalised sense of diffidence and helplessness due to her impairment.

### Disabled Women's life narratives in English in India

Of late, the disabled women in India have begun to challenge the traditional misrepresentation of disability in culture and the assumption that being disabled is abnormal. Some of the remarkable autobiographies by disabled women in India are *Naseema: The Incredible Story* (2005) by Naseema Hurzuk, *As the Soul Flies* (2007) by Yasmeen Sawhney, *The Other Senses* (2012) by Preeti Monga, *No Looking Back* (2014) by Shivani Gupta, *One Little Finger* (2011) by Malini Chib, *River of Time* (2017) by Jeeja Ghosh, and so on. As one can see, most of these texts are published in the last ten/fifteen years, and it does seem to suggest a cultural shift in attitudes toward persons with disability in recent times. In line with the social model of disability, most of these texts seek to tell personal stories of disability in wider social and cultural contexts. These authors' physical or cognitive impairments are not the primary focus; instead, they document the everyday relationships, prejudices, friendships, and cultural representations through which a complex sense of identity is maintained in a wider social context.

The autobiographies tell these women's inspiring stories, heroic battles against adversity, prejudice, stigmas and stereotypes against disabled persons, their will to succeed and their search for identity in an indifferent, unsympathetic world. But they also consistently draw attention to the barriers, discrimination, negative imagery or lack of opportunity which shape experience. There is a danger of consuming these narratives as stories of individualistic triumph and strong will to 'overcome' limitations imposed by disability, as individualistic success stories in the urban middle-class milieu. However, as Simi Linton argues, one should not focus on celebrating the narratives as individualistic stories of triumph against insurmountable adversities because "it is important to understand disability as a socio-cultural and political phenomenon to counter the notion of disability as an inherent unchallengeable trait located in an individual" (Linton,533). The narratives are indeed much more than stories of triumph and 'overcoming' adversities. The autobiographies consistently reject the 'charity framework' and prefer the discourse of human rights and dignity of individuals to frame their arguments. They put forward a rights-based approach to disability and seek reorganization of society to include disabled people. It has been observed that disabled men and women narrate their experiences in significantly gendered terms, with both content and styles reflecting the way in which gender expectations are modulated by disability status.

### *The Other Senses*

*The Other Senses* is a compelling autobiography by Preeti Monga. She was born in a well-to-do Punjabi family in 1959. Monga was diagnosed with partial paralysis of both the optic nerves in her eyes in childhood. Initially, Monga seems to have internalised and guided by social attitudes, expectations and modes of behaviour expected of girls from her urban, upper-middle-class, cosmopolitan social milieu. There is a conscious attempt to project a competent feminine identity. Expelled from formal schooling, she focussed on doing things that interested her. She helped her mother in doing household chores. The loving family pitched in to make up for her lack of formal schooling and helped her in acquiring many skills like swimming, and dancing and also explored if she could take classical music as a vocation.

The narrative gives detailed, though ironic accounts of Monga's various attempts to find a loving life partner, trying to date pen friends. there is utter shock and disbelief when the handsome and seemingly perfect young man she fell in love with and got married, turned out to be an abusive, alcoholic husband. Her husband relished mocking and tormenting her on account of her impairment inside the house while presenting himself as a perfect and most amicable gentleman in the outside world. She gives a candid account of her helplessness, timidity, and vulnerability in the relationship that turned out to be a never-ending nightmare. Her well-to-do, protective parents never wanted or expected her to work outside and be financially independent. Her feminine upbringing equipped her with the skills to carry out domestic responsibilities supposedly necessary for women to have a fulfilled life in protected surroundings. However, lack of formal education and any sort of professional training eventually proved to be a major obstacle much worse than her physical disability. Her inspirational fightback speaks volumes about her indomitable courage and fortitude after she finally gave up the hopes and efforts toward 'saving the marriage'.

Generally, because they do not physically measure up to able-bodied standards, disabled women are not expected to adopt the roles of wife and mother. They are seen as lacking in desire and considered undesirable. They are often viewed as broken or damaged – and infantilised as being always in need of control or protection. Monga's autobiography not only refuses to acquiesce to such misconceptions but also challenges them. It was not easy to overcome her inhibitions and sense of disability as her personal misfortune but with a supportive family, she did dismantle the belief that disability equals tragedy and asserts the desire to live life to the fullest and an indomitable will to work for it.

### **Internalized Stigmatization**

As mentioned earlier, Monga was diagnosed with partial paralysis of both the optic nerves in her eyes in childhood. This diagnosis threw her comfortable middle-class existence into turmoil. Initially, the family hoped to find a remedy and consulted a large number of eye specialists across various cities in India. Monga, unaware of the gravity only tried to avoid using spectacles, she writes that she would misguide the doctors in every possible way to avoid spectacles and would be overjoyed when the doctors said that no lenses seemed to solve her problems (25). Her parents were quite protective and supportive. Though the diagnosis must have upset them greatly, she was not treated any differently on account of her impairment. Monga differentiates between two kinds of life that she has lived, marked by normalization within the family and humiliation outside it. Though visits to various doctors in different towns in the hope of finding some remedy became a routine part of her childhood, she seems to have had a fairly normal childhood as she describes various picnics, playing with kids, dancing lessons and travelling during vacations despite gradually diminishing eyesight.

Soon, due to her visual impairment, Monga was denied admission to regular schools and writes about being gradually left alone by friends and out of the social circuit. She writes about feeling completely bewildered and feeling guilty of some crime she had committed. Suddenly, she "seemed to have been transformed into a strange pitiful object to be handled with extra consideration or simply left alone!" (27) The societal attitudes seem to have led to internalized stigmatization of disability in her mind. She grew up with a sense of guilt and diffidence. Monga felt certain guilt for causing suffering to her parents on account of her impairment as it developed further and she was expelled from regular schooling. She never dared to voice her feelings because she felt guilty about causing any further suffering to the people than she had already caused with her various illnesses and handicap. Thus, whatever decision her parents took regarding her education, what hobbies she should pursue, and so on, she meekly obeyed rather than voicing her desires. She felt that she must do everything to bring them happiness. Monga seemed to have grown up with a feeling of guilt about the impact of her impairment on her family despite being brought up in a

supportive and loving family. Though they never made her feel that she was a burden, there seems to have been some self-blame and a sense that ‘I am the problem’.

Being part of a well-educated and sophisticated family, there’s certain class consciousness and Monga is defensive about not having the formal education and degrees like other blind people when the blind school people disapproved of the way she was brought up “I was far better off than any of them...I had acquired an excellent personality, very good communication skills, a great amount of general knowledge along with excellent survival skills. I had lived in mainstream society and was perfectly capable of conducting myself in any given situation without invoking too much pity or unnecessary alarm” (92). Monga painstakingly learnt typing and is sceptical about the use of Braille in establishing a link with the world where ultimately, she needed to survive “no matter what is said about teaching and training persons with disabilities in special ways, we eventually have to coexist in this one world with all its inhabitants”. She also felt proud of being able to conceal her blindness, “usually not many people guessed that I was blind, and instead wondered why I acted somewhat strangely in doing certain things” (92).

However, Monga also lets us know that she would have loved to attend a school meant for blind girls but her parents did not agree to the school’s terms and conditions which meant she would have to live in a hostel on the campus with other girls. She was thirteen and felt annoyed with her mother for making such a fuss, “other girls were living and studying here in the hostel’ I thought to myself, ‘then why was I not being allowed the privilege?’ however, she kept quiet as “I never dared to voice my feelings and thus diminished the ray of hope that had momentarily illuminated the darkness that had illuminated my soul” (46). When her parents proposed she should pursue music as a career, she meekly agreed though she had no interest whatsoever in classical music and wasted five years of training as it led nowhere. Her parents wanted to explore distant learning options, but she refused, she felt not interested in studying subjects that would be of no practical use to her because by this time she had already made up her mind that she didn’t wish to take up a job and “would prefer to get married and raise a family instead” (53). Thus, it seems obvious that her father’s transferable job and their reluctance to keep her in a hostel meant for blind girls in Delhi in her adolescence closed all options for further education so grooming herself for and waiting for getting married became the sole focus of her life.

### **Longing for Love, Marriage and a Home of One’s Own**

It seems cultural conditioning and gendered socialising made Monga overlook the importance of good formal education. She naively thought that her family background and sophistication would be enough for smooth-sailing into adulthood and settling down into blissful matrimony. Indian women’s autobiographies, in general, tend to be quite reticent on the topic of love and sexuality. They chose to write about their desires and longings in an indirect, vague manner to avoid any public scrutiny of their personal lives. Societal attitudes towards people with disabilities, general levels of deprivation and the overall conservatism of Indian society also serve to silence both personal and political discourse on sexual pleasure and disabilities. Disability rights movements have focussed on education, employment, inclusion and accessibility in the mainstream. However, recent autobiographies, by women like Malini Chib, Gupta and Preeti Monga are quite forthcoming about their need for connection, mutual support, intimacy and pleasure. They make a point that the internal makeup of people with disabilities is no different from anyone else and just like everyone, they too have needs, dreams, and desires.

Writing about the formation of gendered sexual identity among disabled persons and how they engage with themselves as sexual beings, Adhlakha writes that in addition to the specific constraints imposed by a particular disability, such experiences crystallise within the broad rubrics of culture, socialisation, socio-economic class, gender, caste and other specific locations that contribute to particular configurations of gendered sexual identities at the individual level. In most cultures, the pleasure associated with sexual intimacy is both decried and denied (Adhlakha,5). Monga on the threshold of adulthood, engages with herself as a typical young, urban, upper-class girl in her ideas about dating, the image of the ideal man, her fantasies and so on, being as yet completely unaware of how the world outside her family sees her ‘impairment’.

Ghosh argues that women with disability face double invisibility as both subjects and objects of desire as the social perception of disabled people as asexual impinges on their identity and experience as feminine beings. Women with disabilities may, as a result, portray themselves as ultra-feminine to counter such stereotyping and find themselves subscribing to traditional notions of femininity more than non-disabled women, mainly because avenues for subversion of their disabled and gendered identity may not be available to them (Ghosh,30). Monga’s urban, upper-middle-class location seems to have contributed to the particular configurations of gendered sexual identity at the individual level. She writes a lot about her adolescent fantasies and daydreaming about marrying a handsome young man and living happily ever after. Daughters in the family were usually married off quite early and she writes about her anxiety that no ‘husband-hunting’ began for her even when she turned eighteen. “Therefore, rather than waiting for someone to find her a husband, I decided to look for one myself...I looked everywhere, in my neighbourhood, among friends, relations and acquaintances... to my utter disappointment, nothing seemed to click. Time went by, with few one-sided crushes and a great deal of daydreaming” (73).

Inside her home, Monga has never felt like being disabled. It is only when she was looking to get married, that she experienced how disability could affect a person’s life chances. Monga writes about her own natural desire to find a supporting, understanding husband as well as about the anxiety of the extended family and relatives that enhanced her sense of being a burden on the family. “Why the world around was leaving no stone unturned to see me married so that I would be off my parent’s head... it seemed that I was committing a cardinal sin by remaining single, and in my parental home” (93). By the time, Monga

was barely twenty-one, the issue of her marriage had become a nightmare. In retrospect, she feels that it was blown out of proportion. She recalls many humiliating experiences as her extended family began to look for a 'suitable' boy for her. She was so sold on the idea of a caring husband and a home of her own, that every proposal of marriage would fill her empty, romance-deprived heart with a ray of hope. The desperation of getting married was huge as friends or relatives in her age group were getting married. She writes, "It was a nerve-shattering experience to watch prospective grooms and their relatives sprint out of our home when they learnt of her impaired vision. None mustered courage or courtesy to so much as meet me" (93). The way people rejected marriage proposals without even caring to know about her as a person, her qualities etc. really hurt her.

Keith was the elder brother of Sandy's (her brother) friend. He worked for a publishing house and came across as a very courteous, soft-spoken and friendly person. He came into her life after many heart-breaking experiences. For the first time, he made her feel that her disability is of no consequence. Monga was completely blown over by his charm as he was a good singer, a cook, played the guitar, ran all kinds of errands and was extremely dependable. She had never before experienced such care, kindness, and benevolence, the entire family was taken over by his good manners and gracious nature. Keith too made confessions of falling in love with her, of his good fortune to be with a family as loving and caring as theirs and they agreed to get them married. Keith's parents fiercely opposed the match and he left them and came to live with Monga's family. This provided her with an additional assurance of his intentions and strengthened her trust in him.

Monga writes that her dominant feeling on her wedding day is a sense of relief "felt a heavy load lift off my soul" (98). She was convinced that the only way 'not to be a burden on one's parents is to get married. All she wanted to do was to assume the feminine role of a homemaker, supported, protected and honoured by a loving husband. Due to her impairment, she must have felt heightened anxieties on part of everyone around her, as to who will marry her, whether will she be forced to live a lonely, joyless life and who will take care of her if something happens to her parents and so on. Marrying at the 'right' age and to a 'right' person in terms of class, and compatible social and educational background is still the most desirable social goal/achievement for young women and Monga too (rather naively) thought marriage with Keith will mark the end of her ordeals as a blind woman because it marked her acceptability and gave her a 'proper' feminine gender identity.

### **Emotional, Psychological and Economic Abuse: Trauma of Intimate Partner Violence**

In drastic contrast to her expectations of love, companionship and domestic bliss, Monga started her married life with a strong dose of abuse and threats of violence from her drunken husband. She had wanted to set home of her own and felt she could easily do so with support from Keith. There was a natural reluctance to place a further burden upon her parents but they agreed to Keith's desire to stay with them, thinking it was a temporary arrangement to get Monga settled into her new responsibilities. Keith's abusive behaviour crushed her self-esteem and confidence, "I spent the remainder of my wedding night weeping and clearing up the disarray and wondering what I had got myself into" (99). Very soon, it became a regular feature, leaving her frightened, sad and insecure all the time. She could not understand the trigger for such violent behaviour, because in the morning after, Keith seemed to have absolutely no recollection of the night's episodes, nor was he willing to talk about it. If she tried to discuss the issue with him, he would pick up a fight with her or paint a rosy picture and brush her concerns off. She asks, "was this all I had been praying for all these years? Wasn't I better off without a husband?" (99). Monga felt humiliated when her husband left his job abruptly, demanded money from her parents to start a business and subsequently squandered it. Her parents meekly complied with his wishes for her sake. To evade any unpleasantness at home, she did not dare utter a word or make a sign that might meet his wrath or displeasure, yet constantly feared his unpredictable outburst of abuse or sarcasm. She had wanted to free her parents of the 'burden', instead, they had to support her husband in addition and there was a baby on the way too, such was her desperation that she "began to derive consolation in the thought of dying in childbirth" (103).

When Keith managed to hold a steady job, they lived in a separate flat on their own. But even then, most part of his earnings would go toward his entertainment. Whether it was entertaining friends or purchasing the bare necessities of daily life or funding children's education, Monga's parents were unquestioningly expected to pay for it. He also taunted her about spending when she couldn't earn anything. Monga writes that her husband would get drunk and start lashing at her, the verbal assaults always contained threats of physical violence and reminders that her family ought to be grateful to him for marrying the blind, good-for-nothing daughter and comply with his demands. The less any of us protested, the greater the advantage he took.

Monga writes about being ridiculed and made fun of by her husband, which was intensely humiliating because he had been aware of her condition before marriage, "Keith would hand me an empty plate after rattling an empty serving spoon on it, then urge me to eat, saying with sarcastic mirth, 'here, eat!' and when I put my hand on the plate searching for the food, he would have a hearty laugh!" (105). Till the time she married him, she had never felt she was blind, "but now my blindness was rubbed into me as often as was possible: 'Hey you blind bat' he would yell, 'what do you think of yourself, you should thank your stars that I married you... don't you all ever forget it'" (105). He wanted her to feel obliged because such a good-looking, jovial man has agreed to marry her despite his parent's opposition, "I felt stifled and indignant, plunging deeper and deeper into self-pity and the clutches of terror, forever expecting to be lashed out at" Ironically, to the outside world, he continued to play the doting husband part to perfection. He spent a larger part of his time running errands for friends and neighbours, lending a shoulder to sad and lonely women, and solving their problems while his wife and children craved a few moments of love and care.

She writes of numerous instances of utter humiliation and embarrassment when Keith would get drunk till he collapsed in the parties, "can you for a moment imagine my plight? I couldn't see and Keith would be too drunk to drive us home... refusing to accompany him to places which I have been invited would mean asking for trouble, and accompanying meant disgrace and risk! If I remained silent at a party, he was displeased, if on the other hand, I socialised, I was accused of flirtation" (113). According to him, she did nothing right, "I was crazy and stupid, he told his friends"(ibid). Monga felt things would

improve if she starts sharing some financial responsibilities. She decided to take an aerobic instructor's course with Veena Merchant, the famous Aerobics instructor of the hit programme 'Keep fit' in the late 1980s. Veena Merchant was reluctant initially because there has not been any precedence even in America, but Monga persisted and within three months she launched her aerobic regime. However, her newfound financial contribution, as well as professional success, only triggered further negativity in her relationship with Keith. Unfortunately, she had an accident and could not keep the momentum going for the aerobic classes. Only Monga's family knew about the true colours of her husband, to the rest of the world Keith was that jovial, helpful neighbour next door, a perfect husband who loved and looked after his blind wife, and children. Monga too helped him in maintaining this facade because she too pretended that all is well in her marriage.

Monga tried to break this abusive relationship many times. She would return to her parents with a resolve never to go back. Keith would beg forgiveness and repeatedly request her mother to give him another chance to do better. He even went to the children's schools and manipulated them emotionally. The innocent children too begged her to forgive their father. In a society where marriage is perceived to be the "be all and end all of a woman's life, there's a great degree of stigma attached to divorce. Keith's charm offensive would often convince her mother to give him another chance in the interest of 'saving the marriage' for the sake of children. Monga too dreaded the prospect of living alone rest of her life. though she understood that she needs to do something to take control of the situation, she would be overwhelmed by a sense of her limitations due to her lack of formal education and visual impairment, "who will give me a job with just a class ten certificate" (114). She even thought of opening a day-care facility for children of working mothers, but "it was difficult enough to look after the two of my own, so how could I care for others". With no workable solution emerging, she felt frustrated, "every time I felt hurt or upset, I would retaliate through open verbal battles, subjecting the children to unpleasantness and suffering... it was quite strange that from the quiet and peace-loving individual I had been, I was becoming an aggressive retaliator" (115). Monga felt guilty about having burdened her parents with her troubles. "I agreed that it was my mistake to have married this man and that I had not been able to handle my post-marriage situation as I should have". Keith, with his chronic drinking problem was unable to hold a steady job and continued to abuse her physically and emotionally. The children were mercilessly beaten, she remembers many times "laying my head at his feet, begging forgiveness for anything I may have done... if only he would leave the children alone" (131).

The proverbial final straw came when after one violent fight, Keith simply threw her out of the house, in the middle of the night. Barefoot and clad only in a cotton night dress, she sat on the ice-cold stairs for what seemed like hours. Her children somehow managed to open the door and bring her back inside as they wept together, she was 'praying the neighbours did not hear. I couldn't bear any more pity' (132). When a neighbour alerted her mother about the incessant fights and violence, she came running to take her back but Monga simply refused "I am not going anywhere" I declared, "because in a few months someone or other will coax me into reuniting once again. I can't bear it any longer. Let me cope with my lot however I can, please. I will manage somehow or the other" (150). Her younger brother, working by now, assured her that no one is going to send her back, she and her children will stay with them for good. Settling in the third bedroom of their house, she knew that her attempts at marriage-saving are done now, "I was really glad at being thrown out of my own home, for at least, that incident had pushed me beyond my comfort zone and I was once again endowed with the wings of courage. It can't get any worse" (151).

Monga finally realized, "this was a full-scale battle I had to win for my children and me: the right to live, the right to safety, the right to be happy, the right to love and be loved... and the right to be human. We had done nothing to deserve being subjected to such atrocity, we were going to fight for our own home, peaceful existence and dignity" (131). Many times after violent fights and arguments, she had asked herself, "why hadn't I even tried to look beyond the spectrum of growing up, marrying and bringing up children, and thereafter awaiting death... thirty-three years of my life had gone by during which I did have some accomplishments to my credit, but these now appeared to be mere trifle?" (143) But she lacked courage and succumbed to the pressures of 'saving the marriage' arguments, hoping things would improve somehow, they never did.

### Concluding Remarks

Leaving her husband brought a positive change in her outlook along with some excellent opportunities. Though initially, she felt quite nervous and anxious about the travel opportunities she made up her mind to say yes to every opportunity she got. She got an invitation to go to Calcutta for the disabled people's international conference (DPI) as a resource person for the 'sports and fitness' session as the expert on aerobics. This, and many such opportunities to meet and interact with disabled persons boosted her confidence. The admiration and accolades she received as an expert aerobic consultant helped to get her self-esteem and confidence back. Here onward, the narrative focuses on Monga's determined fightback against circumstances where the primary struggle seems to overcome her own diffidence and inhibitions. It's an upward curve with struggle and joys of achievement, overcoming her inhibitions and conditioning, and acquiring mobility skills (for instance, the art of using a white cane, she had none). "Rather than feeling the usual embarrassment at walking into the wrong room, mistaking the window for the door, and bumping into the pillars and walls, I laughed at my goof-ups. I asked everything and everyone that made a noise and moved, for help, and nearly died laughing when I realized it was a dear cow to which I was asking, 'excuse me, can you help me?' (154)

Monga joined the National Association for Blind in Delhi to teach blind children aerobics and typing, though the money would only be enough to pay for her travel expenses, clothes and toiletries, she had to make a start somewhere. Soon she learned to travel independently and made forays into marketing by using her natural flair for selling. She promoted pickles at fairs and outside the shops. With the help of her friend, she got a special government loan meant for disabled persons, "walking the streets and markets in the burning heat of summer, and the freezing cold nights, stumbling over stones and steps and facing pitiful remarks and glances only helped strengthen my determination" (158). Thus, gradually, with determination and a lot of support from family and friends, she not only managed to carve a dignified living for herself but also fulfilled her dream of helping other disabled persons as a counsellor and consultant.

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