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Life of a Blind Woman: An Intersectional Study of Disability, Gender and Race in Elizabeth Kata's Novel *A Patch of Blue*

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Abstract

It is worth noting that persons with disabilities experience various notions of disability in their everyday lives in many ways. In the case of women with disabilities, the experience becomes an increased risk for emotional, physical and sexual abuse. This problem is argued through the Social Model of Disability Studies. Though written on the backdrop of the growing civil rights movement and campaign going on from 1954 to 1968 in the United States, Australian Writer Elizabeth Kata, in her 1965 novel *A Patch of Blue*, has portrayed daily-based experiences of a visually impaired girl named Sleena D'Arcey who was accidentally blinded by her prostitute mother at the age of five. She knows only one colour, i.e. Blue, from her early childhood when she could see. So, the paper will focus on the intersection of disability with other aspects of subjectivity, like gender and race, based on the everyday experiences of Sleena as a visually impaired girl. And how the colour-blindness of Sleena is used as a strategy to overcome the racism will be another focus of the paper. In a way, these focuses also intend to examine the novel from a feminist perspective to argue that the intersection of gender and disability becomes a position of compounded vulnerability for women with disabilities to be doubly oppressed. Thus, the textual analysis of the novel would address some critical issues such as the idea of seeing, the importance of exterior entities for blind people, the idea of care-giving and care-seeking, dominant ideology, special abilities of blind people, power, identity politics, corporeality, institution, racism, stereotypes of blindness and the like.

Keywords: Disability, gender, colour, racism, identity.

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Introduction

In modernity, the everyday becomes the setting for a dynamic process: for making the unfamiliar familiar; for getting accustomed to the disruption of custom; for struggling to incorporate the new; for adjusting to different ways of living. The everyday marks the success and failure of this process. It witnesses the absorption of the most revolutionary of inventions into the landscape of the mundane. (Highmore 02)

To define the concept of everyday life, it suggests a process of living life exploring the heterogeneous interplay between the macro-level domains of daily work, challenges and non-work obligations on one hand and the micro-level of pondering daily activities and the ordinariness of life, of being on the other. Like habits, ordinary events occur repeatedly in our everyday lives, whether we are at work, in our leisure time, asleep, awake, on the street, or in our personal lives. In this process of repetitive occurrences, a person is continually being reshaped or recreated every day through the externalisation and internalisation of different subjects. In a way, everyday life constitutes a person's normal existence, showing how does he/she typically act, think and feel daily. Within the everyday practices of life, we can see numerous possibilities, including interplays of power, questions of dominance, hegemony, and ideology. For a person with disability, this everyday practice of life is quite different. The disabled role within the context of everyday life is defined by those who consider themselves normal in society. If we think closely, we will see that disability is a part of everyone's life. None is perfect in all fields. Physically or psychologically, we are fragile and disabled in some way or another. But, the binaries like normal/abnormal, perfect/imperfect and beauty/ugly that are ingrained in our mind perpetuate 'disability' by making it a 'problem' for the person living with it. It is worth noting that persons with disabilities have experienced various challenges in their everyday lives in many ways. But, in the case of women with disabilities, these challenges sometimes put them at greater risk for physical, emotional and sexual abuse. In Disability Studies, these kinds of issues are addressed in the social model, which includes discrimination, oppression, and stereotyping in society.

Elizabeth Colina Katayama (1912-1998), known by the pseudonym Elizabeth Kata, is an Australian Writer who wrote the novel *A Patch of Blue* (originally published as *Be Ready with Bells and Drums* in 1961) in 1959 against the backdrop of the growing Civil Rights Movement and campaign going on from 1954 to 1968 in the United States. It was time to annihilate racial discrimination, segregation, and disenfranchisement in the United States. Though the novel depicts especially the love relationship between a white girl and a young black man, it also portrays the categories of disability, class and gender in society. And, the Disability Rights Movement was greatly influenced by the Civil Rights Movement during that second half of the 20th century, and it created the ground for its emergence as a new perspective challenging the traditional ableist understanding of normal people on physical impairment or disability. In a way, this novel approaches an intersectional link between the themes of disability and racism. As Shelley Tremain in her introduction to *Foucault and the Government of Disability* observes, “Academics who conduct their work under the rubric of disability studies have begun to problematize the foundational assumptions of many disciplines and fields of inquiry, as well as the methodologies that they employ, the criteria of evaluation to which they appeal, and the epistemological and social positioning of the researchers and theorists invested in them” (Tremain 02).

Though the academic engagement with disability is rather recent, the roots of neglect and discrimination against persons with disabilities can be historically traced. While many consider disability to be only physical or mental in a clinical manner, it impacts individuals and groups in multiple ways. The Social Model of Disability points out that “persons are impaired for several reasons, but that it is only by society that they are disabled” (Bolt 530). In a way, it is important to study the life of individuals who identify themselves as having a disability and being a woman to inquire how their multiple identities lead to possible injustice and oppression. And various nuances, notably the ideology of ability, long-standing association of stigma with bodily difference, having extraordinary senses, patterns of behaviours, use of artefacts such as black glasses and the like, play an important role in the everyday life of a blind woman. So, the lack of visual ability of a woman is corporeal in sense

because it not only suggests “the physicality of the body” but also gives an idea of “a complex composition of physiological, intellectual and emotional aspects of human beings.... Meanings of corporeality depend on the standards that are established. Standardising is a way in which knowledge about the world is produced and acted upon certain cultural contexts”, which “are primarily dominated by normative ideas that contain binaries such as health/ill-health, whole/part, good/evil and so on” (Anand 262). Thus, Elizabeth Kata, in her novel *A Patch of Blue*, has portrayed daily-based experiences of a visually impaired girl named Sleena D’Arcey who is blinded accidentally by her prostitute mother at the age of five. Here, her disability is gendered and she is nullified, abused and discriminated against not only by strangers but also by her immediate family. Later on, she falls in love with a black young man named Gordon Ralfe, who served in the Navy at one time. So, this paper will argue not only the nuanced view on impairment of blindness but also focus on the intersection of disability with other aspects of subjectivity, like race and gender, based on the everyday experiences of Sleena as a visually impaired girl.

Disabled Female Body as ‘Other’

The novel opens with Sleena informing the readers how she became blind. When she was five years old, one day her father came back unexpectedly from the war and found that her mother Rose-ann was in a relationship with her friend. They started arguing with themselves and, in a fit of rage, her mother threw acid at her father but it missed, consequently making Sleena blind. In the meantime, her father killed Rose-ann’s friend and was taken to jail for the murder. Sleena remembers the last colour which she was familiar with, which is red – the colour of the dead man’s blood. And, the three colours – blue, black, and white were known to her beforehand. After becoming blind, she starts hating ‘everything black’ and believing ‘bad-hearted’ people as black and ‘good-hearted’ as blue. After her husband went to prison, Rose-ann along with Sleena had spent the next 13 years living with her alcoholic father Ole Pa in a small city apartment. Rose-ann and Ole Pa work in the same building, respectively as room attendants for ladies and gents. Besides, Rose-ann works as a prostitute. She is abusive and always

hurts her blind daughter, Sleena, who is compelled to do all the household works, like cooking and cleaning. Sleena has no friends, rarely goes outside the apartment, and has never received any education. No one shows interest in taking her to the nearby street and park outside the home. She recalls the last time when she was nine years old and Ole Pa took her out of the apartment. She says, "It was strange to be out of the room. I had been out of it so few times since I had been made blind" (Kata 02). Being a blind girl, she is represented throughout the text as the 'other' because her disability causes fears and anxieties concerning 'able-bodied' mortality, and she very easily presents herself as the 'other'. Such strict segregation of herself from the public sphere, as represented in the beginning chapters, gives an idea of ideological distinction between the 'public/private' and the 'bahir/ghar' (world/home) that leads to the specification of social roles by gender and disability. According to Nandini Ghosh, "The bahir was seen as the domain of practical considerations and dominated by the profane activities of the material world, while the home was posited as the representation of one's true identity, one's spiritual self; and women became the representation and repository of this inner/spiritual domain" (202-03). In a way, for Sleena, being a blind woman, home that is 'ghar' represents her inner normal-self, whereas the outside world that is 'bahir' represents her outer abnormal-self as 'the domain of practical considerations'. However, later on, one day when she was with her grandpa outside the street, she met a girl named Pearl, and made a friendship with her, but she didn't know that Pearl was a nigger black girl. After that, with the influence of Ole Pa's abominable attitude towards the nigger girl Pearl, she discarded her as a friend because she hated the colour 'black'.

In the novel, Elizabeth Kata has used the method of intersectionality between race, gender and disability studies. This intersectional method is a conceptual framework that actually makes us recognise the multiple social identities and the oppression arising as a result of these identities. It is not simply about bringing together these identity markers in one thread, but to consider how each support or deals with the constitution of one another to decentre the centre and bring marginalised identities to the centre. So, the 18-year-old girl, Sleena is doubly marginalised for being a female gender and

having visual impairment. She was sexually assaulted by one of prostitute Rose-ann's customers. Since then, Rose-ann has been treating her badly. She says to her lover Gordon, "My life was disgusting. I'd even been raped by a casual customer of my mother's" (Kata 92). Here, the female disabled body of Sleena is represented as the ground of oppression and sexual politics. According to Nadia Brown and Sarah Allen Gershon, "Feminist scholars have argued that the body is both socially shaped and colonised. The politics of the body, different from the body politic, argues that the body itself is politically inscribed and is shaped by practices of containment and control" (01). Patriarchal society always views women as inferior to men, which creates the ideology that the body of women is something to be abused, used, objectified and controlled by superior powers. As a victim of sexual violence like rape, Sleena experiences the humiliation that the blind woman's worth and dignity depend on her mere bodily functions, seen especially as a commodity for the business of providing male sexual satisfaction. This intersection of the subjugated identity of the female gender and disability results in a qualitatively different experience for her. As offered by Mr Faber, she does a job of stringing beads – a kind of typical job assigned for someone who is blind. She can't even spend the money earned from her labour; it further goes to her mom Rose-ann. It is also true that, unlike Sleena, women with visual impairment face many problems in case of getting an education and earning money for themselves. Such an exclusion and abuse of a female disabled body can be understood through Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's idea of the 'normate' as she defines it as "the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them" (08). Therefore, in the novel, the unusual treatment of Sleena by her family prescribes the body's engagement with disability as 'special', 'extraordinary' or 'abnormal' – an imposed identity.

However, such forcing of Sleena into sex work and confining her in the home by her own mother debunks again the scholar Nandini Ghosh's idea of 'bhalo meye', i.e. 'good woman' who "is both a morally upright woman as well as a woman with all functional capacities required for taking on familial and marital responsibilities" (Ghosh 113). As she says in her article "Experiencing the body:

Femininity, Sexuality and Disabled Women in India”, “Norms of appropriate behaviour, however, are used to curb the freedom of disabled girls, with threats of loss of reputation as a ‘good girl’. Disabled girls experiencing their bodies as restrictive in sexual relations, find their freedom further restrained in terms of protecting their reputation as a morally upright woman” (114). So, it is the patriarchal ideas that enable Rose-ann to doubt the sexuality of her own blind daughter, whether she is capable of taking all responsibilities as an ideal ‘good girl’ usually performs in terms of reproduction, childbearing, rearing, and nurturing. She uses the disabled body of her daughter like an object for sex business, and after that, we have seen in the text that she has rented a separate room to conduct her liaisons or sex work. In repeating the words of French Revolutionary writer Simone de Beauvoir that is “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir 273), we may also say that Sleena is not born, but rather becomes a woman with disability by us. All her personal desires, fantasies and pleasures are dominated by the matter of patriarchal discourse and ‘governmentality’ which establishes norms and rules in the society. To point out the predicament of women in patriarchal society, Beauvoir states that, “Sometimes the ‘feminine world’ is contrasted with the masculine universe, but we must insist again that women have never constituted a closed and independent society; they form an integral part of the group, which is governed by males and in which they have a subordinate place” (567). Such nullification for being visually impaired and an incomplete physical body, therefore, creates a process of ‘alterity’ or ‘otherness’ which not only puts Sleena at a disadvantage but also prevents her family cum society from directly experiencing and internalising her life. Neither Rose-ann nor Ole Pa shows proper empathy for her. A profound misfortune is uttered by her when Ole Pa asks how she can do the work of threading beads in the darkness of night at the park. She answers, “He can never realise that dark and light don’t exist for the blind – only dark” (Kata 32). In a way, she locates herself in the class of blind people. At a psychological level, such perceived differences lead her to accept her visually impaired body as devalued in comparison with other able-bodied women. Her visual impairment has left her seeing only one colour, i.e. black and thereby, she despises everything black. She

considers this darkness as an enemy and hates black colour in many forms, even for humans, as we have seen in the case of a nigger girl named Pearl at the beginning of the novel. But she was not familiar with the idea of racism at that early age of nine. Such colour blindness of Sleena becomes a metaphor in the novel. Through this metaphor, on one hand, Elizabeth Kata shows how a disabled woman like Sleena can prove her functional capacities by successfully making a heterosexual relationship. And, on the other hand, through the representation of colour blindness, which makes it possible for White Sleena to love Black Gordon, Kata overcomes the problem of racism and tries to give the message of 'equality, fraternity and liberty'.

Importance of a Caretaker for a Blind Woman

In the nearby park where the blind Sleena often passes the time by threading beads, one day her bead box falls into the grass and she can't find all those beads lost in the grass. When she starts crying, Gordon comes to help her find the beads. From then on, they became good friends and gradually started loving each other. But Sleena didn't know that Gordon, like Pearl, was also a 'nigger'. Gordon plays the important role of a caretaker for Sleena because Caring matters most for a disabled body. Upali Chakravarti in her article "Ethics and Practice of Care: A Focus on Disability" says, "Care, it is said by many care ethicists, is a good thing because it meets the needs of others. Put that way, it is easy to see how it plays into the individualised model of care...In particular, it assumes a norm for bodies, and disabled bodies are those departing from this norm, and so requiring care which can bring them back to the norm" (159). After falling in love with Gordon, Sleena transforms into an understanding and mature being. She is going to develop into a tolerant individual. Gordon asks Sleena to be considerate towards people of colour as well. He arranges for her to attend a special school for the blind and helps her meet another blind girl named Alice Braddon so that she can gain more confidence in life. Such admission of Sleena to a special school for the blind gives an idea of institutionalisation, which Disability Studies Scholars addressed as an 'active process'. According to Licia Carlson, "the various calls either to institutionalize people with disabilities (thereby removing them from mainstream

society) or else to deinstitutionalize them (with the aims of normalization and integration) reflect complex social goals" (312). But Gordon's choice of a special institute, not the ordinary or normal school for Sleena's education, situates her in the customary idea of exclusion or marginalisation as a disabled 'other' from the mainstream society. However, to Sleena, who is oppressed, marginalised and not cared for being blind, Gordon is the only hope for freedom. She can live independently outside her patriarchal family after meeting him. He gives her a newfound identity. So, to some extent, all the cares from the side of Gordon create a kind of 'norm' for the disabled body of Sleena to live within the society happily, out of all identity politics.

Metaphor of the Colour 'black' –Representing Both Racial Skin and Visual Darkness

Being a black person, Gordon is also represented as a racial other. Here, his character exposes the stereotyping of dominant whites towards black men in the 1960s, which addresses the negative effects of white supremacy and how systematic racism marginalises African Americans from the mainstream of American society. It is not only Sleena's white racist family that disapproves her love for Gordon but also Gordon's brother Paul too, who supports 'dominant ideology' of racism and repeatedly points out the failure or impossibility of their love relationship which becomes morally superior than society's racism and ableism – the question is how can Gordon being an ableist 'racial other' dare to love with a white visually impaired girl. Here, the problem is more with skin colour than with disability of Sleena. However, when Gordon takes Sleena for the second time to his apartment, Paul rebukes Gordon by saying, "Have you got rocks in your head? Bringing that girl here again? ... I can't imagine how you let yourself become involved with a business like this. A blind girl to boot! Gordon, I think she comes from a trash heap" (Kata 114). Paul's words here indicate both the 'others' being racial and disabled identities. However, on the other hand, Sleena couldn't even know that Gordon himself is a black man until her mother and her mother's friend Sadie make fun of her for loving a black man by using the racist term 'nigger' at the end of the novel. In a way, the discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes based on racism are

partially maintained by the dissemination of ideology through words, images and behaviour. To some extent, it is the white racist family of Sleena that works as an institution to idealise her thoughts on the black people or niggers. Living in or aware of a racialised society, innocent Sleena sustained a stereotypical contemptuous attitude toward black people in her mind. She believes that niggers are not human in nature. They are dirty, rogue and untouchable. However, when Gordon tries to change her false idea towards niggers, she replies, “Ole Pa says they are apes from Africa. Ole Pa says they stink, “No stink like the bad smell of a dinge,” that’s what Ole Pa says and it’s true. A nigger ever touched my hand; I’d cut it off – no kidding” (Kata 128). Here, such fear of the loss of sexual purity by the touch of a black person makes Sleena a ‘Colonial/Imperial Woman’ through unfolding the idea of ‘racism’ – a sociocultural concept which justifies the humiliation of people of colour through the process of dehumanisation and the dominant constructions of gender, sexuality and class.

At the end of chapter twenty-nine, when Gordon is rescuing fallen Sleena from the rose garden, she screams out in pain. Yanek Faber, the son of Mr Faber, who is present in that park, hears the sound and shouts for help, telling Gordon to leave Sleena alone: “Leave her be. Leave Sleena be. You Goddam nigger” (Kata 136). At that time, after listening to Yanek’s use of the word ‘nigger’, Sleena gets shocked, thinking that there is an unknown black man who is touching her, which she never expected in her life before. She immediately commands that unknown nigger person to get his hands off of her and she starts combating with him. And this unknown nigger person is none other than Gordon himself. In a way, a misunderstanding has crept between them. Observing their quarrel and fight, some people gather there and try to duel with Gordon for teasing a blind white girl. Gordon is humiliated in public. But here, since Sleena had been blind from the tender age of five, she wouldn’t have properly understood how someone could be racist over the colour of one’s skin. Later, she realises that Gordon is the same black man to whom she had misbehaved and starts weeping for her intolerance. So, this prolonged negation and insult towards Gordon refers to the colonial conflict between the whites and the native blacks, where one develops only in contrast with the other. For

whites, the blacks are always the negative, primitive 'other'. They cunningly make the blacks put on, in Fanon's phrase, 'white masks', which creates an identity crisis for blacks. In a way, both Sleena and Gordon undergo a crisis of cultural identity – the latter is for disability and the former is for racism. In chapter thirty, this crisis is worth noticing when on one hand, Gordon becomes hopeless by saying that Sleena is 'destroying' him, and on the other, repenting on this last word of Gordon, Sleena also says "he had been wrong" (Kata 140), it was she who has destroyed herself because she would never hear or be with him again in future. The tiny ray of hope that had lightened her darkness is now erased. She comes to know the politics of identity and says, "How strange it was. How very strange. All my life I'd hated black, hated it so much and yet – beautiful people in my life had been coloured..." (Kata 141). Then, she remembers the words of Gordon that he had been unable to master on something called 'tolerance'. But it makes her happy to think that she can master the art of 'tolerance' by considering blackness as something positive and beautiful in her life, which Gordon has always tried to teach her from the beginning. And, as her only childhood friend was a Black girl, she repents apologising to Pearl, saying that she loves her, and tries to prove to be a real tolerant individual. It suggests that, in her mind, psychologically, Gordon's outside status of 'blackness' positions him closer to her own outsider status as a 'woman with disability'. Here, the disability encompasses two forms: one physical and the other cultural. From the perspective of culture, it could be told that both Sleena and Gordon experience a form of 'cultural imperialism' which, the prominent scholar Anita Ghai in her book (*Dis*) *Embodied Form: Issues of Disabled Women* opines, "connects those who have and who continue to be discriminated against based on race, disability, national or ethnic identity; it means to experience how the dominant meanings of society render the particular perspective of one's group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as other" (40).

Hence, colour plays an important role in the novel. After meeting with Gordon, Sleena shares a memory with him that blue is the only colour she remembers from her childhood when she could see. And this memory of blue stands out against the black-and-white conflict. She refers to good people as 'blue-hearted'. In her childhood,

she was looking at the sky through the window all the time. She says, “Forever looking up at the sky. I never got tired of looking at it. So high and clean, way up there. I will never forget blue. That’s for sure” (Kata 06). Here lies the significance of the title “*A Patch of Blue*”. The reference of ‘Blue’ in relation to the ‘Sky’ indicates equality and oneness. We are all living under a broad, colourless sky which receives us with open arms, irrespective of race, religion, or caste. There is no discrimination like disability and racism. So, if the whole sky or the universe is colourless and equal for all, then why do we, the humans, discriminate with each other based on our ability or skin colour in such a small planet called Earth?. Here, a patch of Blue for Sleena becomes a colour of emancipation, not only from her disability but also from the racial conflict between white people and black people. Moreover, as said by Simon Dickel, “this conflict is negotiated through the trope of blindness: Sleena is depicted as the only white character with an ability to perceive Gordon’s humanity beyond his Blackness because she is blind and does not see the colour of his skin” (124). Thus, this metaphor of colour-blindness is used as a strategy to overcome racism in the text. It makes us understand so clearly what Pearl S. Buck said in his memoir *The Child She Never Grew* that “all people are equal in their humanity and that all have the same human rights” (52). This racism would come to an end only when we stop acknowledging racial differences.

Representation of Special Abilities of a Visually Impaired Woman

In this way, dealing with colours, Elizabeth Kata also develops a type of knowledge production that depicts the limitations and abilities of being a blind woman. However, despite her visual impairment, Sleena has a deep sense of hearing and understanding. In *Book II of Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke says that “the sources of all knowledge are based firstly on, ‘sense experience’ through organs like the red colour of a rose, the ringing sound of a bell, the taste of salt, and so on and, secondly on ‘reflection’ that is one’s awareness that one is thinking, that one is happy or sad, that one is having a certain sensation, and so on” (88). So, unlike a normal person with visuality, a person lacking sight is primarily isolated from the knowledge of ideas about colour and light and is

“subsequently dependent on secondary qualities of descriptors – words and touch” (Michalko 220). In the same way, Sleena’s dependence on the sense of hearing and touch is emphasised in the text. She can realise everything like the fallen leaf, a faraway striking sound of a clock and the secret conversation of Gordon and his brother through the deep sense of her hearing and touch. Her power of hearing is so sharp that she can make sense of the beauty of nature in the park by hearing its various sounds. She says, “Owing to the fact that I’m blind, I can’t see. Owing to the fact that I’m blind, I can hear much clearer than seeing folk... Perhaps being blind, because it takes away the sense of seeing, perhaps it gives another sense in its place – A sense of knowing things, of being aware” (Kata 114:79). Actually, Sleena uses her other senses of perception in a perfect manner, which substitutes the mode of seeing. It extends the idea of seeing with the denial of disability that not only visuality can make us see, but also other sensory senses like hearing, touching, smelling, and the power of understanding can enable us to see with perfect imagination. Like her, one can perform the activity of seeing through another mode with the power of hearing, touch and perception. So, a specific kind of ability besides Sleena’s blindness is prevalent throughout the novel.

Materialistic Approaches Connected to the Blind Personality

Despite this intersectional position taken within disability studies, people with visual impairment, particularly under the materialist approaches, continue to inhabit the margins of society. The attitudes, patterns of behaviour and artefacts that characterise blind people are not inherent in their position but socially created. For example, as we have noted in the text, Gordon has gifted ‘a pair of dark glasses’ to Sleena to use for looking more beautiful. Actually, here, Sleena’s use of these dark glasses does not strengthen their love relationship; rather, it is used to shield the disclosure of blind people’s eyes from the visually ableist normal public of our society. The social marginalisation of a disabled body leads Sleena to hide her blind eyes. In a way, disability structures the everyday lived experiences of blind women, in terms of beauty and appearance and in the expected roles of productive and reproductive responsibilities like a ‘good woman’. Then, the reference of ‘bells’ and ‘drums’, which sounds for

a pure-hearted girl but not for blind, ignorant Sleena as she cannot recognise real Gordon, recognises his skin colour at the end, suggests that ableist discourse in society creates a kind of corporeal criterion which introduces the norm of normative and perpetuates the ableist ideal at the same time. In this respect, the observation of Shilpaa Anand is worth quoting: “the way societies respond to sightless people is likely to be determined by the ways in which that society composes knowledge about being sightless and goes about being sightless” (262).

Conclusion

To sum up, the experiences of disability that Sleena, as a blind girl, realises in her everyday life robustly present a disability centric ‘episteme’ that foregrounds disabled women, especially in the sense that they are not being identified as differently abled in our society. Unlike Sleena, the insignificance of the impaired female body in all domains of life ensures that disabled women are not liberated and are pushed into the margins of society. In spite of the limited possibilities of representing inter-racial romance, this novel, *A Patch of Blue*, becomes successful in positively depicting the love between Sleena and Gordon. Figuratively, this love of a blind girl with an able-bodied man also represents ‘disability’ without the bracket written as a ‘lack’ or ‘limitation’. At the beginning of the novel, Sleena is portrayed as a non-normative category of other. The intersection of gender and disability appears as a compounded vulnerability in her life. But at the end of the novel, it is again her visual impairment that makes her a tolerant individual, and through love and affection, she successfully overcomes the racial discrimination where the ableist society surrenders itself. In a way, from the ‘disabled other’, she transforms into an ‘abled subject’. Although the end of the novel remains incomplete, Sleena’s forgetting of the beads in Gordon’s apartment, as mentioned in chapter twenty-nine, suggests that the two lovers will meet again, get a chance to overcome society’s obstacles, and might even have a chance for a shared and happy future. So, the principle of love and hope drifts from a blind woman who never let her disability interrupt her way of life. Anita Ghai’s book *Rethinking Disability in India* aptly echoes this thought,

Systems of inequality based on caste, race, ethnicity, and gender seem to rely on dichotomies, such as 'Us' versus 'Them', 'Self' versus 'Other' or 'one' versus 'other', meaning not only difference and opposition but also superiority and inferiority...It is not difficult to pinpoint ideologies that permit us to think of ourselves as 'normal,' good, or worthy, and to think of others we perceive to be not like us in some way – physically, mentally, educationally – as disabled, and therefore not normal, not good, or not worthy. Then, we assign qualities to variable human individuals based on their inclusion in this constructed alterity (299-300).

Hence, the earth is a delightful place to live in, and if any flaw is there, one needs to correct the world with love and hope, as the novel seems to convey to us.

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