

## UNLASHING THE POSSIBILITY AND POSITIVITY: A STUDY OF SHARON M DRAPER'S OUT OF MY HEART

<sup>1</sup>S. Jenitta, <sup>2</sup>Dr. J. Vasantha Sena

<sup>1</sup>Research scholar, PG and Research Department of English, A.P.C Mahalaxmi College for Women, Thoothukudi Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli- 627012 Tamil Nadu, India, Reg. No. 21122014012018

<sup>2</sup>Research Supervisor and Assistant Professor of English, P.G and Research Department of English, A.P.C Mahalaxmi College for Women, Thoothukudi Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli- 627012, Tamil Nadu, India

### Abstract

Disability Studies is a thriving interdisciplinary field which challenges traditional views of disability, advocating for a more inclusive and holistic understanding that recognizes the rights, dignity, and diverse experiences of individuals with disabilities. The article echoes the optimistic mindset of disabled to lead a good life against their inability by analysing the three levels of positive psychology which are the subjective, individuality, and the group level in. Sharon M Draper's Out of My Heart, which sketches the adventurous life of Melody, who is unable to walk and communicate as she is diagnosed with Cerebral palsy. The choice of Medi-talker and summer camp enables her to discover the undiscovered skills that she considers impossible to develop. Despite the societal and psychological barriers, a rehabilitation phase has offered her to view the inner potential and a positive mindset. Melody, with her Medi-talker and advanced wheelchair, has defeated the sense of caged and cornered and stepped into the euphoric life. Beyond the physical limitations, she has become sociable, skilful, and decisive after she has explored the positivity in her. The article further amplifies the role of positive psychology and rehabilitation to reach the state of unstoppable in the life of the disabled against societal perceptions.

**Keywords:** Disability, Positive Psychology, Assimilation, Potential, Assistive Aid and Sociable.

Sharon Draper is an American Children's Writer who emphasises the vital role of kindness, empathy and love with society through her novels. She becomes the voice for disabled children to live a good life. She believes that focusing on the skillful side of the disabled offers their true identity to them. With this notion, she has turned into a best-seller author for her work Out of My Mind. The work has introduced the striking character, disabled Melody Brook, to the world and wiped away the grief of the impaired by the assistance of technology. The author has tremendously highlighted the significance of never giving up attitude even if nature betrays the central character, Melody Brook.

The article analyses Out of My Heart, which sketches the adventurous life of Melody Brook, who is unable to communicate and walk due to cerebral palsy. Melody, with the assistance of rehabilitation technology, enrolls into a camp for disabled children which unmutes her hidden potential. The camp has created the place for true bonds, adventures, tranquillity and

decisiveness. Each disabled kid has been allotted a helper to do the needful for them. Melody has conquered the sense of otherness, inferiority, marginalisation and hurtful teasing.

The study of disability is an emerging interdisciplinary thrust area in research which discusses the physical and mental challenges of a Person With Disability (PWD). The term disability refers to functional limitations that restrict a normal lifestyle for the disabled. The restrictions are muted when the disabled understand adaptation, adjustment and the acceptance of the disability. Nowadays, it is feasible for the people with disabilities to live a normal life when they reach the state of rehabilitation.

The term **rehabilitation** is the phase where the disabled are restoring their mental and physical health. It is the reason for an altered lifestyle. In her book *Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law*, Haben asserts that alternative methods can provide disadvantaged people with a normal life in the eyes of a judgmental society. That is listed below.

Disability is not something an individual overcomes. I'm still disabled. I'm still Deafblind. People with disabilities are successful when we develop alternative techniques, and our communities choose inclusion. (45)

With the assistance of rehabilitation technology, family, friends, and technology aids, the disabled can restore their existing ability of developed abilities. When they realize this phase, they can reach independence, active problem-solving skills, positive self-esteem, and a sense of personal mastery.

The **positive psychology** of disability motivates the disabled to shed light on their ability to achieve their muted passions. There are three levels of analysis in positive psychology that encourage the disabled to overcome the challenges. They are the subjective level of analysis, individual level of analysis, and group level of analysis. Through this analysis, the disabled people can live a good life without complaining about limitations. Melody Brook reaches a euphoric state by viewing things optimistically. She stops caring about bullies and demotivators as she realises the value of being positive.

The People's personal construals of their life are encountered in the subjective level of analysis. They gain positive experience from the past, present, and future of their life by interpreting their own optimistic thoughts. The subjective experiences of PWD are exploring their hope, happiness, positivism, and life satisfaction. They are able to prevent themselves from frustration and hopelessness. According to Shane Clifton a satisfied mindset leads to happiness "The hypothetical example of the happy slave can be used to make the point: if a slave has a high degree of subjective life satisfaction, would we be compelled to agree with him?" (103). Melody turns hopeful when she finds the technology assistance in the name of a Medi-talker which rebuilds her with hope, happiness, and passion. The following words describe the Medi-Talker's cutting-edge characteristics in her book *Out of My Mind*.

We find adapted computers, talking boards that speak the words, push-button systems, and even devices that work with blinks or head nodes. Finally, we find something called a Medi-Talker that looks like a possibility. It has spaces big enough for my thumbs to get into and millions of words and phrases built into it. (129)

The individual level of analysis discovers the existing ability and gained abilities of differently disabled people. When the PWDs stick on to capitalise their strength over their limitations, it brings up psychological and physical recovery. This could lead to a tension free

world and a composed mind-set. Despite the limitations in the body, Melody works on her potential as a photographic memory, which refers to the people with accurate remembrance of past scenes. She pushes herself forward to express the tricky words with the assistance of a Medi-talker. She nurtures her skill with a school quiz competition that puts her in the limelight. When she departs to summer camp, she realised this is the camp for exploring the hidden talents of the specially challenged. She has started to do swimming, dancing, drawing, and paragliding which are her developed abilities. When she understands her individuality makes her realise life is a beautiful thing to cherish. The below quote discusses Melody's sense of excitement doing new things.

Since I don't walk, I hardly ever think about My feet. Except to make sure I'm wearing the latest kicks. But this made me think about what feet were made for running and dancing and actually propelling the body to move ahead. We made several imprints of my feet because our first trice got smeared. I should get an Olympic medal for supreme extreme food kicking, but the organ and grape-coloured foot art ended up looking awesome. Mama's gonna love this one. (193)

The group level of analysis opens up the gates of taking risks and attaining prosperity. The positive working place, civic-mindedness, and public gatherings bring responsibility towards oneself and society. This also provides institutional virtues, including fairness, humanity, and dignity. This promotes well-being in disabled people. During the camp, many special kids are split into groups having courageous group names such as The Panthers and The Fiery Falcon to do group activities like boat riding, horse riding, and indoor games. As long as Melody allows herself to engage with positive thinkers, it leaves her to do unimaginable things. Even one day, Melody along with her three friends stepped into the forest without telling anyone which leads them to be independent and decisive.

Rehabilitation is the state of accepting the reality of being disabled and excelling through it. Michael mentioned the importance of rehabilitation to become sociable in his book *The Politics of Displacement* through the following words.

Despite these criticisms and questions, the medical and rehabilitation enterprises remain two of the most important of the human service industries and this is closely connected with the way both practices are linked to social control and their theories fit with the ideology of capitalism and the construction of the able-bodied individual. (55)

It leads to the state of the good life according to Dunn in his *The Social Psychology of Disability*, "The Positive psychology defines the good life as one that personally satisfying, fulfilling and meaningful, which means it is partially idiosyncratic but also tied to shared perspectives regarding what is reinforcing in human experience" (116). There are three variants in life: pleasant life, good life, and meaningful life. The pleasant life is the phase where people are in a state of pleasure, and joy in the maximum days of their life span. The good life is a phase where people work hard to develop their skills. The meaning of life is the phase where people do service for the welfare of society and they are really concerned about others' needs. The impaired people can also reach all these levels in their lives when they attend the state of rehabilitation.

Being sociable is the outcome of rehabilitation which obviously provides an optimistic lifestyle to the impaired people. A good life is the result of caring, sharing and consoling others. When they pass and receive positive vibes from society, they strengthen their mental

stability. The central character Melody has got the chance to stay with several specially abled kids in the summer camp, which creates the space for socialising. They have gone on an adventurous trip without telling their officials which strengthens their bond, faith, and decisiveness.

The term Grit refers to achieving long-term passion in the positive psychology of disability. Melody in this novel, is stubborn enough to get into “The Green Glades Therapeutic Recreational Camp” (20), which is her deep-rooted aim. Due to her disabilities, society has treated her with the eyes of otherness but she is constantly trying to overcome her barrier in communication. As she concentrates on her ability to remember words to defeat the disability, she has figured out the assistive technology. During the camp, she notices her fellow participants with equipped and advanced wheelchairs to accomplish their long-term goal to attend the summer camp.

Eli Clare has coined the term ‘Supercrip’ for the disability community to differentiate the two different experiences of ableism: one is that disabled people are valuable when they achieve superhuman tasks such as riding a bike, climbing the mountain, swimming in the deep ocean and another is they are praised even they do usual activities such as feeding on their own, getting dressed and buying groceries. Melody Brook has indulged in several never-tried tasks such as swimming, horse riding, drawing, singing, boating, and dancing which are the skills that she never thinks to experience. Through the developed potentials, she has come under the ‘Supercrip’ disability community.

Despite the stereotypes of impaired people, Melody has proved the good life is possible by having optimistic thoughts and figuring out muted potentials. Positive thinking builds up mental strength with ourselves and others. By aiming at the skilful sides of PWD, life becomes joyful and meaningful. Melody has initiated a bright life against her disability with the assistance of technology and a positive mindset which leads her to say, “I thought, One day I hope to be able to do stuff like this by myself” (107). Therefore, Melody has turned unbreakable as she has realised the priority of optimistic mindset and to stay focused on her newly developed potentials.

### Works Cited

- Clifton, Shane. *Crippled Grace: Disability, Virtue Ethics, and the Good Life*. Baylor University Press, 2018.
- Draper, Sharon M. *Out of My Heart*. Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, 2021.
- Draper, Sharon M. *Out of My Mind*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2013.
- Dunn, Dana S. *The Social Psychology of Disability*. OUP USA, 2015
- Girma, Haben. *Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law*. Twelve; Illustrated edition, 2019.
- Oliver, Michael. *The Politics of Disablement*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1996.