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Redefining Disability Studies: Inclusivity, Upliftment, and Liberation in Shivani Gupta's *No Looking Back*

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Abstract

Shivani Gupta's *No Looking Back* stands as a profound narrative of resistance and resilience, offering a critical counter-discourse to dominant societal constructions of disability. Through a personal narrative, Gupta recounts her experience of surviving two life-altering accidents that left her paralyzed and reliant on a wheelchair. Set within a socio-cultural environment where disability is frequently overlooked, her account brings to light the difficulties of navigating a world marked by inadequate infrastructure, limited legal provisions, and widespread societal neglect. Despite these obstacles, Gupta asserts her agency, challenging traditional views of disability as a condition defined by limitation and dependence. Rather, she frames it as a source of strength, transformation, and active engagement. This paper critically examines Gupta's memoir through the lens of disability studies, with particular attention to inclusivity, liberation, and upliftment. It analyses Gupta's lived experience as a disabled woman in India to understand how personal narratives can confront and disrupt dominant societal attitudes towards disability. The paper also places Gupta's autobiography within the theoretical frameworks of disability studies and feminist thought to explore how she constructs a redefined identity that incorporates both her gender and her disability. Moreover, it considers how her personal experiences inspire and shape her work as an accessibility consultant and advocate for inclusive public environments. Ultimately, *No Looking Back* emerges as a powerful account of individual and collective upliftment, redefining disability as a space of visibility and strength, and advocating for a more inclusive and just society.

Keywords: Disability Studies; Feminist; Inclusivity; Identity; Upliftment; And Liberation

1. Introduction

Historically, various societies interpreted physical, sensory, or cognitive impairments through religious or superstitious beliefs, frequently linking them to witchcraft, malevolent spirits, or divine punishment. This outlook remained prevalent until the Enlightenment in the 18th century, which introduced a rational and scientific understanding of human difference. The emergence of the medical model of disability during this era signaled a transition towards viewing disability as a pathological condition requiring diagnosis and treatment. This framework positioned disability as an individual shortcoming, focusing on the limitations experienced by those with impairments. Individuals considered irrecoverable by medical standards were often confined to institutions or placed in segregated care facilities (Barnes and Mercer, 2010). In opposition, the social model of disability—largely developed through the efforts of the disability rights movement—shifted focus from the individual's impairment to the structural and societal barriers that hinder full participation. This approach distinguishes impairment—a physical, psychological, or sensory condition—from disability, which arises due to environmental and attitudinal constraints. Disability studies, as an interdisciplinary

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academic field, challenge the notion that disability is solely a medical or private matter. Rather, it conceptualizes disability as a socially and politically shaped construct, advocating for the dismantling of exclusionary systems and the promotion of inclusive and equitable environments.

Current discourse increasingly identifies disability as a crucial field of critical inquiry and advocacy. Globally, debates around inclusivity, justice, and upliftment have gained strength, urging societies to examine and dismantle longstanding structures that marginalize disabled individuals. In nations such as India, these concerns are particularly pressing due to chronic infrastructural shortcomings and entrenched cultural stigma. In recent years, a noticeable rise in academic symposia, public conversations, and grassroots discussions has helped prioritize disability within both scholarly and civic realms. This pattern is observable in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and India, where intellectuals, activists, and citizens are collectively questioning established beliefs and promoting a reimagined understanding of disability as a matter of dignity and rights. However, exclusionary attitudes and insufficient systemic support for disabled people remain prevalent. As Mitchell (2020) notes, "Nearly every culture views disability as a problem in need of a solution, and this belief establishes one of the major modes of historical address directed toward people with disabilities" (p. 15). Such entrenched perspectives continue to influence legislation and cultural attitudes globally.

In the Indian context, thinkers such as Anita Ghai (2002, 2019) have played a crucial role in interrogating the marginalization of disabled people within both academic scholarship and routine social interactions. Ghai contends that disability in India is not merely a matter of medical classification but is also shaped by deeply embedded social prejudices and structural exclusion. Likewise, Renu Adlakha (2007) has investigated the interplay between gender and disability, revealing that Indian women with disabilities frequently endure intersecting layers of discrimination. Both scholars call for a more inclusive conceptualization of disability—one that moves beyond medical narratives to address the structural injustices framing disabled lives in India. Legal reforms in India have gradually progressed towards recognizing the dignity and rights of disabled individuals. The most notable advancement has been the implementation of The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (Rowdy Act), which replaced the earlier Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of 1995. This legislation aligns Indian law with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), ratified by India in 2007. It broadens the legal definition of disability from seven to twenty-one categories and endorses a rights-based, rather than welfare-oriented, approach. The Act mandates non-discrimination in education, employment, and public life, and requires that both state and private entities ensure inclusivity and appropriate adjustments. Nevertheless, scholars such as Dhanda (2012) have demonstrated inconsistencies in enforcement, often obstructed by administrative inefficiency and limited public awareness. Although the law marks a progressive legal development, its transformative capacity depends on rigorous implementation and a broader societal commitment to inclusion.

To summaries, while disability is gaining traction as an important academic and social concern, longstanding biases and systemic barriers continue to impede genuine participation and equity. The contributions of international and Indian scholars underline the necessity of sustained intellectual critique and institutional reform in order to cultivate a more inclusive and just society.

2. Literature Review

The interdisciplinary domain of disability studies has asserted the significance of personal narratives in contesting dominant medical and charitable models of disability. Central to this discourse is the transition from viewing disability as a pathological anomaly to recognizing it as a socially constructed condition shaped by cultural, political, and environmental influences (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2006). Scholars have posited that this reconceptualization allows for a more complex engagement with the lived experiences of disabled individuals, facilitating expressions of identity, self-determination, and resistance (Garland-Thomson, 2002; Kafer, 2013).

Life writing by disabled authors has assumed a pivotal role within this critical framework, offering first-person perspectives that challenge conventional assumptions and extend the boundaries of scholarly engagement. G. Thomas Couser (2005) argues that autobiographical writing by disabled individuals provides authentic counter-narratives that resist hegemonic portrayals and reposition disability as a valid identity category. Similarly, Susannah Mintz (2007) emphasizes that life writing by disabled persons functions as a form of cultural resistance, reclaiming narrative authority and asserting the visibility of disability within public discourse.

In the Indian context, however, academic engagement with disability memoirs remains relatively nascent, despite increased advocacy and awareness in the broader field of disability rights. The pioneering work of Anita Ghai (2003, 2009) has focused on the intersections of gender, disability, and marginalization in Indian society. Ghai focuses on how

disabled women's experiences are frequently rendered invisible, shaped by patriarchal expectations, socio-cultural stigma, and structural exclusion. Her scholarship calls for a more culturally nuanced disability discourse that takes into account the specific material realities and ideological frameworks of the Global South.

Shivani Gupta's *No Looking Back* (2014) represents a noteworthy contribution to this growing body of Indian disability narratives. Functioning as both a personal memoir and an activist intervention, it resonates with what Couser (2005) categorizes as "resistance narratives," in which the recounting of personal trauma simultaneously critiques the socio-political forces that sustain exclusion. Gupta's account engages directly with questions of inclusivity and spatial justice, echoing the concerns of scholars such as Imrie (1996) and Kitchin (2000), who investigate how spatial organization can perpetuate systemic inaccessibility and inhibit full participation.

In addition, Gupta's text lends itself to analysis through the lens of feminist disability studies—a critical subfield that interrogates how disability and gender intersect to inform subjectivity and social positioning. Scholars like Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1997) and Alison Kafer (2013) contend that gender and disability are mutually constitutive axes of identity, deeply embedded in power relations, embodiment, and representational politics. Gupta's dual identity as a disabled woman in a patriarchal society contributes valuable insights to this discourse, illustrating how liberation involves not only negotiating physical barriers but also confronting normative constructions of femininity and womanhood.

The literature also emphasizes on the role of activism in translating individual experiences into tools for collective upliftment. As Roulston and Barnes (2005) observe, the personal accounts of disabled individuals can become powerful agents of legal reform and societal progression. Gupta's post-trauma engagement as an inclusivity consultant and public advocate exemplifies this shift from private resilience to collective mobilization, aligning with Meosha and Shuttleworth's (2009) notion of the "politics of presence," wherein visibility becomes a form of political resistance and community affirmation.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature affirms the transformative capacity of personal narratives within disability studies, particularly when situated within critical socio-political and cultural frameworks. *No Looking Back* by Shivani Gupta emerges as a key Indian text that not only charts a journey of survival and liberation but also critically interrogates dominant narratives surrounding disability, gender, and inclusivity. By bridging individual testimony with broader structural critique, Gupta's memoir contributes meaningfully to the ongoing project of redefining disability in the Indian context.

3. Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded within the interdisciplinary sphere of Disability Studies, a field that critically examines traditional medicalized views of disability and redefines it as a construct shaped by cultural, social, and political conditions. A key analytical lens employed in this study is the distinction between the medical and social models of disability. The medical model treats disability as an individual deficiency requiring intervention or cure, frequently leading to the marginalization of disabled individuals by focusing on their supposed incapacities. Conversely, the social model shifts attention away from the individual's impairments and towards external hindrances—be they physical, systemic, or attitudinal—that obstruct equitable societal participation (Oliver, 1996; Barnes and Mercer, 2010). This model advocates a transformation in understanding, from modifying the individual to reforming the broader societal framework.

This paper uses *No Looking Back*, the autobiographical work of Shivani Gupta (2014), as its principal case study. Gupta's account draws attention to the entrenched systemic challenges that disabled people encounter in India, while also illustrating how personal resolve, community support, and activist engagement can redefine identity and challenge dominant narratives of ability. The research also engages with feminist disability theory, which interrogates the intersection of gender and disability, and how these overlapping identities shape diverse experiences of marginalisation and self-assertion (Garland-Thomson, 2002). By interpreting Gupta's personal history through this theoretical lens, the study aims to demonstrate how life narratives can operate as potent tools for revealing inequality and promoting cultural upliftment.

4. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative methodology grounded in literary analysis and shaped by key principles within Disability Studies. The primary objective is to explore how themes of inclusivity, liberation, and societal upliftment are conveyed and re-envisioned in Shivani Gupta's autobiography *No Looking Back*. The core methodological tool is close

textual analysis, which facilitates a critical engagement with the memoir's thematic concerns, structural features, and its broader socio-cultural relevance. The study relies exclusively on Gupta's published autobiography as its data source, utilising it as a case study to interrogate wider questions relating to disability, identity construction, and social belonging. The text was purposefully selected for its alignment with the research aims, its autobiographical form, and its in-depth portrayal of disability within the specific context of Indian society. The analysis draws upon theoretical frameworks that include the social model of disability, feminist disability theory, and related discourses within the field. These perspectives assist in examining how disability is narrated, resisted, and potentially reconceptualised through personal storytelling. Special emphasis is placed on the intersections of gender, identity, and agency in shaping the author's journey towards liberation. This research does not utilise quantitative techniques or statistical measures, as it does not seek to produce statistically generalisable findings. Instead, it aims to offer a rich, context-sensitive exploration of how an individual's lived experience can interrogate and challenge dominant societal conceptions of disability. Through detailed textual analysis and critical interpretation, the study uncovers embedded power dynamics, structural exclusions, and signs of cultural transformation within the narrative. As the study is based entirely on a publicly accessible autobiographical work, there are no direct ethical implications; however, it is conducted with due respect and care in representing disability, with an aim to centre and honour the voices and experiences of disabled individuals.

5. Research Design

This research is carried out as a qualitative, interpretive, and text-based study situated within the interdisciplinary field of Disability Studies. It utilises a single-case study method, with Shivani Gupta's *No Looking Back* serving as the central text for examination. This methodological framework is suited to exploring how individual life stories both mirror and challenge prevailing socio-cultural and institutional narratives concerning disability. The study is rooted in a constructivist paradigm, which maintains that knowledge is shaped through the interrelationship of language, social context, and lived reality. The research applies thematic analysis to identify and interpret key motifs, symbols, and discursive elements related to disability, gender, identity, and resistance. These recurring themes are interpreted through the conceptual tools provided by the social model of disability and feminist disability theory, which are instrumental in understanding how individual experience intersects with socially constructed norms and marginalisation (Garland-Thomson, 2002; Oliver, 1996). Employing an autobiographical text as the main source of data allows for a focused and in-depth exploration of personal testimony as a legitimate and meaningful form of epistemology. This approach shows lived experience as central to disability discourse and recognises the critical role of first-person perspectives in countering dominant medicalised or deficit-oriented frameworks.

The study further adopts contextual analysis to examine how legal, cultural, and infrastructural realities in India shape the depiction and understanding of disability within the narrative. By positioning the memoir within its socio-political and historical framework, the research seeks to expose the structural inequalities and barriers faced by disabled individuals in present-day Indian society. Ultimately, the methodology integrates literary critique, theoretical reflection, and socio-cultural analysis to engage with *No Looking Back* as a text that interrogates and subverts normative conceptions of disability.

6. Data Collection and Sources

The primary data for this investigation is drawn from Shivani Gupta's autobiography *No Looking Back*, a first-person narrative chronicling her experience of disability within the specific milieu of contemporary India. Designed as a qualitative and interpretive study embedded in Disability Studies, the research employs close textual reading of the selected narrative to extract meaningful insights. Gupta's autobiography is examined not only as a personal account but also as a socio-political commentary that critiques a society structured by ableist ideologies. The data collection involved a systematic thematic review of the text, with emphasis on core areas relevant to the research objectives: inclusivity, liberation, identity formation, gendered subjectivity, and social engagement. In addition to the primary narrative, the research incorporates an array of secondary materials, including scholarly works, academic books, and policy-oriented reports from the areas of disability studies, feminist theory, and Indian legal-cultural discourse. These secondary sources provide essential analytical and contextual grounding, enhancing the interpretive depth of Gupta's story through critical engagement with key concepts such as the social model of disability, feminist disability theory, and narrative identity. Foundational contributions by scholars like Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002), David T. Mitchell (2020), and Lennard J. Davis (2006) inform the theoretical positioning and lend academic rigour to the interpretative approach. Moreover, significant legislative frameworks such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 are referenced to situate Gupta's experiences within the wider legal and infrastructural realities of disability in the Indian context. The assembled data are analysed through a qualitative lens that considers how narrative form, language, and autobiographical voice interact with broader questions of social critique and the pursuit of justice. This method enables

a nuanced exploration of the subjective aspects of disability while situating them within broader discourses of inclusivity, dignity, and upliftment.

7. Analysis

Shivani Gupta's *No Looking Back* offers a compelling narrative of endurance and transformation, confronting dominant societal attitudes and misconceptions surrounding disability. Through her autobiographical voice, Gupta contests the conventional medical model that interprets disability as personal misfortune or biological deficiency. Instead, she constructs a counter-narrative grounded in the social model of disability, emphasizing the structural obstacles—both environmental and ideological—that restrict the full integration of disabled individuals into society.

The narrative begins with Gupta recounting the night of a farewell gathering that ended in a devastating road accident. The event took place after she had hosted a party for friends before departing India for further education. Post-celebration, she and her companions set out to drop a friend who worked night shifts. Seated in the front seat of her boyfriend's car, Gupta travelled alongside a second vehicle of friends. As both vehicles sped along the deserted Ridge Road in Delhi, she recalls, "We were probably touching the 120 kmph mark on the speedometer... when everything seemed to spin out of control" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 1). The crash rendered her hospitalised and immobile. Reflecting on her new condition, she states, "For everything he asked, my answer was no... I couldn't" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 1), marking the beginning of her lived experience with a spinal cord injury and permanent paralysis.

After returning to Delhi, Gupta embarked on a drastically altered life shaped by physical limitation, emotional solitude, and a gradual reshaping of her understanding of disability. Her mother's second-floor flat proved inaccessible due to her wheelchair, necessitating a move to her grandparents' home in Faridabad—a space of both physical safety and inner turmoil. Although received with warmth, she confesses, "The weight pressing down on my heart refused to lift" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 1). Her disorientation was not only spatial but existential, as she grappled with the contrast between her former life and the current reality of constrained mobility, lost pleasures, and limited freedoms.

A crucial point in this transitional phase was the arrival of Putul, her first personal aide. Although Gupta acknowledged the need for such assistance, she also described its psychological impact. "Being so dependent made me feel extremely obligated to Putul for the services she was rendering," she notes, highlighting how emotional independence and privacy were compromised (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 1). She likens this condition to an enforced marriage, underscoring the tensions between dependence and personal dignity.

Gupta's journey towards self-acceptance unfolded gradually. Despite external perceptions that equated disability with helplessness, she observes, "I did require assistance to do things, but I didn't feel completely helpless" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 1). While her body was impaired, her sense of identity remained intact. She asserts, "I felt like the same person inside; it was just my physical appearance that made me uncomfortable about-facing people" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 1).

A significant moment of shift occurred ten months post-accident, when Gupta visited the local market in her wheelchair. What once was routine now symbolised courage: "That little task, which for twenty-two-odd years I had taken for granted, now seemed something exhilarating, requiring guts" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 1). This outing redefined her notion of capability—not as physical wholeness, but as autonomous action within new constraints.

Through repeated accomplishments like this, Gupta began to reframe her identity around resilience rather than restriction. "It was the accumulation of countless such little achievements over a long period of time that helped me to convince myself that my inabilities were not reflective of me; rather, it was all my abilities that defined me" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 1). Her personal narrative moves from grief to affirmation. While physically vulnerable, she explains, "internally, I felt stronger, taking charge for the first time in my life" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 1). Gupta's early encounters with disability thus illuminate the coexistence of isolation and inner liberation in the aftermath of trauma. Her struggle was as much against physical barriers as it was against societal perceptions and internalised doubt. Over time, however, she developed a reimagined life built on interdependence, purpose, and personal agency.

Gupta's narrative becomes a powerful depiction of liberation achieved through personal growth, particularly at the juncture of gender and disability. Her account demonstrates how access to education and affirming relationships can enable a disabled woman to transcend societal expectations and assert independence in private and professional realms. Despite recovering from a lung complication, Gupta attended a UN training programme in Bangkok titled "Non-Handicapping Environments for the Disabled and the Elderly," a milestone in her progression from self-doubt to upliftment (Gupta, 2014). She reflects, "I was happy, and I was no longer alone. I had Vikas with me" (Chapter 2). This

statement reveals the empowering role of emotional support in fostering self-confidence, especially in contexts where gender and disability intersect to deepen marginalisation.

The Bangkok programme unveiled to Gupta the institutional barriers confronting disabled populations, particularly women. She recalls how it validated her anger at being denied entry to a temple in her wheelchair, recognising that such moments were not personal shortcomings but systemic acts of exclusion (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 2). This realisation became a motivating force in her activism.

Gupta's collaboration with Vikas, encompassing both romantic and professional spheres, illustrates altered gender dynamics within disability advocacy. Although she acknowledges that Vikas was "far sharper in his work," she assumed leadership roles as coordinator and public spokesperson. Remarkably, this did not create friction; instead, Vikas's support affirmed her visibility (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 3). In a culture that frequently undercuts female authority—especially that of disabled women—this mutual respect presents a progressive model of gendered partnership.

In addition, Gupta's articulation of inclusivity as a right rather than charity reframes the discourse surrounding disability from benevolence to justice. She writes, "a non-handicapping environment was a most basic right for a disabled person—the right to be able to access all places with the same ease and dignity as a non-disabled person" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 3). This perspective brings forward a shift from medical intervention to structural upliftment, where the emphasis lies on reconfiguring space and attitudes.

Her belief that "inclusivity and inclusion... had to be looked at with the same seriousness as any other developmental issue" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 4) exemplifies a broader commitment not only to personal dignity but also to communal advocacy. Gupta's decision to delay the NGO's activities until acquiring adequate knowledge reflects her belief in ethical activism—liberation achieved through reflection and informed action. In this sense, her memoir repositions disability as a locus of strength and leadership, placing a disabled woman at the forefront of structural transformation and public representation.

Gupta's marriage symbolises not merely personal joy but also her emergence as a catalyst for upliftment and inclusive change. Her 2009 wedding to Vikas was a public declaration that countered societal prejudices about disabled women's desirability, autonomy, and familial roles. Recalling the day with deep sentiment, she notes, "We had very carefully, in advance, detailed each step of the ceremony to ensure that everything moved smoothly, without my disability becoming an awkward issue anywhere" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 4). In planning an accessible and dignified celebration, Gupta challenged the widespread assumption that disability necessitates exclusion from cultural and social rituals.

The marriage itself symbolises a reclamation of self-determination. Gupta had once believed that matrimony lay beyond reach for someone living with a disability, but her union with Vikas marked a significant transformation: "I had thought that marriage was the end goal for our long relationship, but it turned out to be a beginning" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 4). In this moment, Gupta contests not only her individual expectations but also broader societal norms, which often marginalise disabled women within familial settings and deprive them of the full spectrum of relational experience.

Her evolution into the role of a wife, particularly within the traditional structure of an Indian joint family, becomes a platform for transformation. Social assumptions shifted rapidly; as she notes, "From someone who was appreciated for managing her own life, I was now expected to be the heart of my family" (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 4). This role required both adaptation and negotiation, but also served to defy commonly held beliefs around dependency and incapacity projected onto disabled individuals. Her successful organisation of a family event for Vikas's birthday, where "everybody was convinced Vikas was happy," demonstrated that domestic competence and emotional fulfilment are not incompatible with disability (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 4). Besides, her partnership with Vikas exemplifies a relationship founded upon dignity and mutual regard. His role in assisting with her clothing and social engagements reframes care not as patronage but as shared responsibility. Their dynamic suggests a potential redefinition of traditional caregiving and gender roles within marriage, especially in conservative social contexts.

Gupta's life thus symbolises broader social movements towards inclusivity. Her personal experiences destabilise entrenched beliefs regarding disability, especially the perception that disabled women are burdensome or devoid of romantic and domestic potential. By publicly affirming her marriage and maintaining visibility as a disabled woman in an emotionally fulfilling, interdependent relationship, she broadens societal understanding and acceptance of disabled individuals across all life domains. The portrayal of her marriage in *No Looking Back* is not only a story of personal tenacity but also one of collective resistance. Through individual decision-making, public presence, and intimate evolution, Gupta reshapes both her existence and contributes to the wider reimagining of what love, agency, and inclusivity might resemble.

Her experiences post-marriage—adjusting to familial norms, asserting autonomy while embracing interdependence, and inhabiting the socially significant identity of wife—position her not as an anomaly, but as a forerunner. Her achievements in integrating into her marital household and hosting social occasions challenge longstanding social beliefs that exclude disabled women from full familial and public participation. As she reflects, “I finally had a family, something I had longed for all my life” (Gupta, 2014, Chapter 5), capturing both individual contentment and broader societal affirmation of her rightful place within cultural traditions.

Crucially, Gupta’s story demonstrates that liberation does not reside solely in physical or financial independence; it also involves the rearticulation of interpersonal dynamics, roles, and cultural expectations in ways that preserve dignity and promote inclusivity. Her capacity to perform the role of wife while honoring her identity as a woman with a disability illustrates that these positions are not contradictory but can coexist with strength and poise. In embracing love, home life, and kinship on her own terms, Shivani Gupta’s journey offers a forceful counter-narrative to prevailing disability discourses in India. It provides a vision of a society where inclusivity is inherent rather than conditional; where personal joy operates as a mode of resistance; and where individual testimony contributes to societal upliftment. Her marriage is more than a private achievement—it is an assertion of equal social belonging.

Through her memoir, Shivani Gupta rearticulates what it means to live with a disability within a culture often governed by exclusion and a lack of awareness. Her focus on inclusivity, liberation, and upliftment urges readers and decision-makers alike to confront the structural conditions that perpetuate marginalization. By embedding her life story within the discourse of disability justice and intersectional identity, Gupta not only resists erasure but actively shapes public thought. *No Looking Back* ultimately functions as both testimony and catalyst—dismantling stigma, reframing capability, and envisioning a society rooted in fairness, visibility, and inclusive dignity.

8. Conclusion

This study has explored Shivani Gupta’s *No Looking Back* through the perspectives of disability studies and feminist thought to show how personal storytelling can challenge medicalised views of disability and instead present it as a space of strength, agency, and social critique. By tracing Gupta’s journey of survival, identity rebuilding, activism, and married life, the paper reveals that disability is not simply an individual condition but a social experience shaped by gender roles, physical barriers, and cultural attitudes in the Indian context. Her memoir stands out as a powerful resistance narrative that questions stereotypes about disabled women, asserts inclusivity as a basic right, and validates lived experience as meaningful knowledge. Overall, the study shows the role of autobiographical writing in exposing social inequalities and imagining fairer ways of belonging, and it contributes to society by fostering awareness, respect, and inclusive values, while pointing towards future research and policies that centre on accessibility, gender justice, and the voices of people with disabilities.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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