

Visible Illness and Social Stigma in Identity Formation in Selected Indian English Novels

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Abstract:

The study analyzes the literary depiction of visible illness and disability in Sudha Murthy's *Mahashweta* (2007) and Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1991), with an emphasis on the impact of social stigma on identity formation in the Indian socio-cultural setting. Drawing on Disability Studies and medical humanities, the study employs close textual and comparative analysis to explore gendered visibility, masculinity, and narrative agency. The findings reveal that stigma emerges from culturally constructed ideals of bodily normalcy rather than medical impairment. While *Mahashweta* emphasizes endurance and ethical autonomy, *Trying to Grow* foregrounds voice, humor, and resistance. Through comparative analysis, the study redefines dignity beyond bodily conformity and highlights literature's ethical role in challenging ableist and patriarchal narratives surrounding illness and difference. Together, the novels redefine dignity and challenge dominant narratives of normalcy in Indian English fiction.

Keywords:

Identity Formation, Indian English Fiction, Indian Novels, Medical Humanities, Social Stigma, Visible Illness.