


# Chapter 1

# Introduction to the Disability Discourse and Need for Assistive Technology

Saumya Srivastava

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9302-4092>

*Amity University, Lucknow, India*

## ABSTRACT

*Corporeal inefficiency debars disabled individuals from participating actively in societal development. This study confers a central position on disabled people while allocating a peripheral position to the non-disabled. Disability studies is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on the social, political, and cultural interpretation of disability. In contemporary times, we can use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist disabled identities lead better lives. These assistive tools are not only user-friendly but also help in creating an unmatched user experience. Assistive technology enhances the engineering of mobility, rehabilitation, education, welfare, and other facilities. Machine learning and telecare products enable people to come out of their homes and contribute to nation-building. In the process, this reduces dependence and fosters self-confidence in oneself. Prostheses, memory aids, wheelchairs, spectacles, hearing aids, etc. are some of the assistive technological apparatuses that make the lives of many disabled individuals easier and better.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In Indian mythology and tradition, disability is always seen as a product of divine punishment. Intellectual disability is often associated with the possession of evil spirits, witchcraft, and sorceries. The distorted representation of disability in Indian mythology has created a social barrier for physically and intellectually disabled people. In Indian mythology, disability is associated with evil. It is a culturally fixed notion that deformed bodies are the result of a person's moral depravity in the past. Even the greatest epics of all time, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, speak of the same. Manthara, a hunchbacked woman in the famous Indian epic, *Ramayana*, is known for her evil deeds. Shakuni in the *Mahabharata* is shown as a limping character in the narrative. The physical disabilities of Shakuni and Manthara, respectively, have been associated with the evil intentions and wickedness of each. It is the negative stereotypical attitude that inhibits the growth of society. Even the Greek myths talk about the same association of wrongdoings with corporeal distortion. Medusa in Greek mythology is portrayed as the most beautiful woman who the God of the Sea, Poseidon courted. Once, Athena, the goddess of warfare, wisdom, and handicraft, gets annoyed with Medusa and Poseidon for making her temple their abode of love. Therefore, she turns Medusa into a scary monster, with snakes trailing from her head. Her sight could turn anyone into stone. The subtext of the story is that distortion is always the result of wrongdoing.

*A sense of inequity comes to pervade the consciousness of the minority identity, and individuals can find no reasonable justification for their differential treatment. Individuals in protest against unjust treatment begin to develop theories that oppose majority opinion not only about themselves but about the nature of the society that supports the pejorative behavior. (Siebers, 2008, p. 19)*

The attack on stereotypes and discrimination led to the development of a distinct discipline of study, which came to be known as disability studies. Disability studies focus on the theory of inclusion. Its basic premise proclaims that disabled people should be treated and perceived as a part of the social system. Their identity should not revolve around their disability; rather, their abilities should be centralized to construct their new identities. All the metaphors attached to disability need to be deconstructed and redefined.

“Disability defines the invisible center around which our contradictory ideology about human ability revolves.” (Siebers, 2008, p. 8-9) Ability and disability are matters of potential or capabilities. There could be numerous activities in which a normal-abled person may find himself or herself incapacitated. One person can be regarded as abled or disabled only when he or she is compared to other human beings. The norms for the comparison are not stated anywhere. It is a hypothetical assumption that defines the structure of a perfect corporeal form. The masses, therefore, have

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