



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI  
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Programme of Study : **Ph.D.**

Thesis Title: **SELFHOOD AND NARRATIVE AGENCY: A STUDY OF INDIAN LIFE-WRITING AND FICTION ON PHYSICAL DISABILITY AND MENTAL ILLNESS.**

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**SHORT ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines the portrayal of selfhood and agency in Indian life-writing and fiction concerning physical disability and mental illness in the early twenty-first century. It argues that these narratives not only depict a transition from dependency to independence but also embrace the complexities and polyvocality inherent in disabled and mad identities. This nuanced portrayal contributes to a more diverse literary landscape. While protagonists grapple with challenges, they explore unconventional approaches to life, emphasizing the importance of sharing distressing experiences. The narratives serve as therapeutic counter-narratives, prioritize autonomy in healthcare decisions, and address systemic barriers. The examination of collaborative narration, embodied narration, and personal experiences of discrimination serves to elucidate the multifaceted nature of self-expression and resistance within the narratives of physical disability and mental illness. These explorations delve beyond mere storytelling techniques, revealing the intricate interplay between individual agency, societal structures, and the construction of identity within the selected literary works. The study draws from literary disability studies, mental illness and literary studies, life-writing, fiction, narrative theory, selfhood, and health humanities. It demonstrates how these narratives facilitate self-expression and challenge societal norms, particularly regarding family dynamics, gender roles, ethnicity, caste, and social class. Ultimately, the dissertation underscores the transformative power of storytelling in shaping individual and collective identities and contributes to ongoing dialogues in literary disability and mental health studies, health humanities, and narrative theory.