

The Little People: an Alienation from the new line Society

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Abstract

The term “Existential Crisis” has a big impact in the modern era. It has turned out to be the greatest question one has in life, with an unknown and unwanted solution left behind. Though this question has engulfed each one of us in its own way, still we, who call ourselves to be ‘normal-beings’ find some way out but what about the neglected communities, especially the dwarfs. The question of existentialism and the quest for leading a normal life like others keep them haunting throughout without even a mere option of solution

In this research article, the predicament of the little people is discussed in detail, from the ancient ages to modern times with reference to facts and figures, scholarly articles, books, pamphlets, factual data and conducted-interviews. It also focuses on the problems faced by the dwarfs in each and every sphere of life and ultimately accept what is shown by destiny. It is almost clear that these people are no different from others, yet counter injustice without any fault of theirs.

Keywords: Dwarfs, Midgets, Little People, Disorder, Body Cult, Identity Crisis

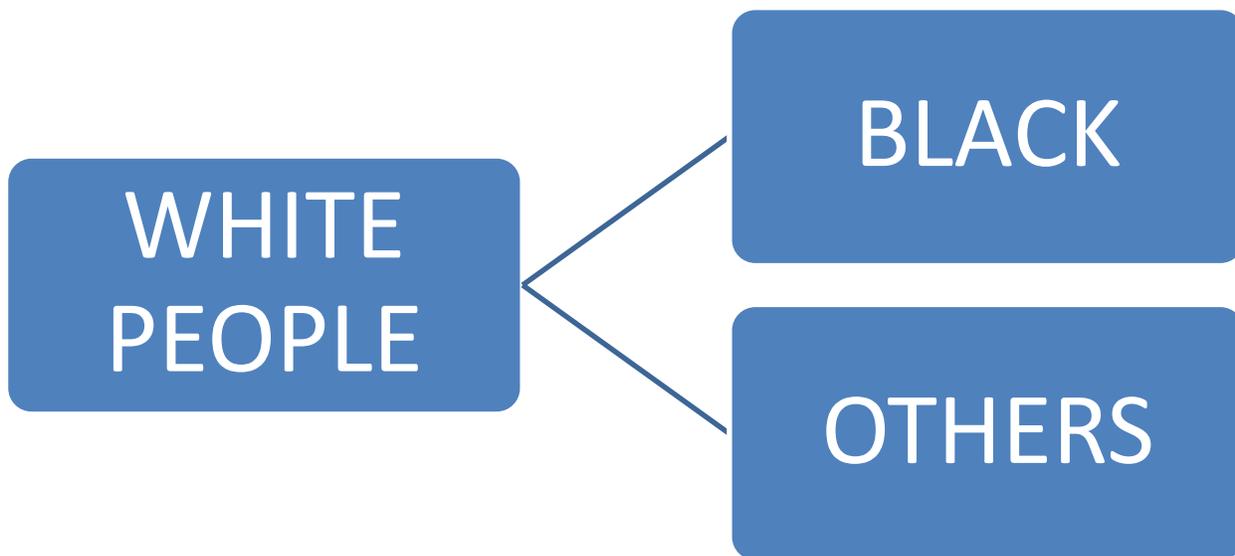
*Do not jeer at a blind man nor tease a dwarf
Neither interfere with the condition of a cripple;
Do not taunt a man who is in the hand of god,
Nor scowl at him if he errs.*

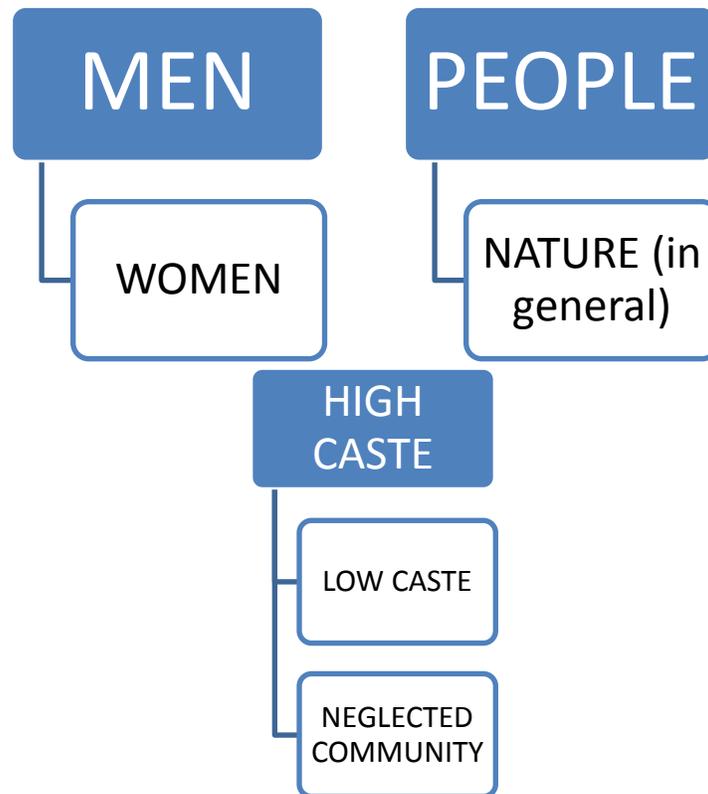
Amenemope, “Book of Moral Teachings”

The above mentioned lines by Amenemope, a wise man of Egypt, advocated respect towards individuals with disabilities and celebrated the well integrated position of the dwarfs in ancient Egyptian society. The indication of the positive attitude toward dwarfs in ancient Egypt is revealed in moral and wisdom teachings. Ancient Egyptians had a strict code of ethics which commanded respect for dwarfs and individuals with handicapping conditions. But who cares about the days bygone, the case is antithetical in the existing scenario of the world.

When the world has place for its each and every creature, why it happens that some are discarded like garbage keeps cultivating my mind and even disposing them off from our lives does not seem to be much difficult. The question of being human with inhuman deeds and racial thinking has become a mere issue to be put forth. Words like ‘equality’ has secured its position in the books only, else how many people and to what extent do they utilize such words throughout their life. From the past till present, it has been clear to us that in order to survive in this society; we don’t even give a second thought to crash down the other in as many suppressive ways as we can. Thus, this suppression has become a major part of our existence, for instance, the whites ruled the blacks and other parts of the world, men ruled over women establishing a patriarchal society, people ruled over nature in general and ultimately higher castes ruled over the lower castes. Here stands a major question – Why! Perhaps we do not want to find out the reason; we never did earlier too.

Hierarchy of Suppression





The blacks and browns, the women, the nature, the lower caste people etc have become a part of neglected community or say are powerful enough to make the suppressive categories feel insecure of their own existence. Let us travel a little deeper to dig out another neglected minority called DWARFS – earlier known to be the little people are a mere element to be mocked at. When Newton’s Law of Motion states “Every action has an equal and opposite reaction” here its different, here the reaction caused to these minorities are not of their own actions rather the actions of others similar to them in appearance.

“Studies on the Dwarfs’ occurrence and consequences” states that Dwarfism occurs when an organism is short in stature from a medical condition that causes slow growth. In humans, dwarfism is defined as an adult height of less than four feet. For a person with dwarfism, height discrimination can lead to ridicule in childhood and discrimination in adulthood. In UK, US, Canada, Australia and other English speaking countries, people with dwarfism are preferred to be called “Little People”. Historically the term “midget” was used to describe “Proportionate dwarfs” but now this term is regarded as offensive.

The consequences faced due to social prejudice against extreme shortness are lack of employment opportunities and reduction of social and marital fortune. Self-esteem may suffer and affects family relationship. Children with dwarfism are particularly vulnerable to teasing and ridicule from classmates; they may feel isolated from their peers. Extreme shortness can interfere

with activities of daily living like driving. Their short stature bowed knees and short fingers can lead to back problems and difficulty in walking and handling objects.

Though they are born to normal parents, have normal siblings, get admitted to normal schools, and yet are treated differently by others due to some deficiency in their organs and short stature. They are made to feel inferior though no harsh words or direct comments are passed on. Take for instance, even a person with dwarfism wants to ride a bike or drive a car, he is not let to perform the activity by others who believe him not to be capable enough. Moreover, the real meaning of friendship even gets changed in these cases where a dwarf is often avoided by other friends in a conversation ultimately leading to his humiliation. So society comprising individuals like us turn out to be a great havoc for this community..

Dwarfism is connected to various fields to study. Literature is mainly concerned with the collected creative writing on a particular subject that imbibes the existential crisis of modern people and their struggle for life. A kind of unethical treatment encourages the misinterpretation of the dwarfs in literature. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the dwarfs are portrayed sometimes as dirty, messy and sometimes easy to anger. In the novel, *The Dwarf*, Par Lagerkvist, the author mentions, “dwarfs understood nothing” and “squeaked in a very miserable castrato voices” (27). In another work, dwarfs are referred to have “small hands” and “smell like cabbage”.

“Dwarfs in ancient Egypt”, a historical review by Chahira Kozma, Professor of Pediatrics and Metabolic Disorder, Georgetown University Hospital, Washington DC, USA, states that based on the record left by their art, the ancient Egyptians documented the presence of dwarfs in almost every facet of life. Due to the hot dry climate and natural and artificial mummification, Egypt is a major source of information on Achondroplasia in the old world. The remains of the dwarfs are abundant and include complete and partial skeleton. Dwarfs are employed as personal attendant, animal tenders, jewelers and mainly entertainers. Some of the dwarfs achieved important status and had lavish burial places close to the pyramids. There are at least two dwarf-gods named Ptah and Bes. God Ptah was associated with regeneration and rejuvenation i.e. reversal of aging. The God Bes was a protector of sexuality, childbirth, women and children. Dwarfs were accepted in ancient Egypt, their disorder was not shown as physical handicap. Wisdom writings and moral teachings in ancient Egypt commanded respect for dwarfs and other individuals with disabilities.

One of the best documented genetic disorders is Achondroplasia, with Egypt being a major source of skeletal remains for this condition in the ancient world. The sources of evidence of dwarfism in ancient Egypt come from biological remains and artistic evidence including funerary gifts. A determinative or a symbol depicting a dwarf with short limbs and a normal trunk usually accompanies these words. While many types of dwarfism were documented in ancient Egypt, most skeletal remains and artistic pictures identify short limb dwarfism, mainly Achondroplasia. The ancient Egyptian artists develop standards for depicting dwarfs that deviated slightly from normal. They were portrayed with a small disproportionate statue. The head was large, the torso was relatively long and both upper and lower limbs were short. The

legs were frequently bowed. Often dwarfs were illustrated with lordosis i.e. curved spine and protuberant abdomen. The earliest biological evidence for dwarfism in ancient Egypt dates to Pre-dynastic Period called the 'Badarian Period.' The pictorial sources of dwarfs in ancient Egypt especially during the old kingdom are quite abundant and include tomb and vase paintings, statues and minor arts. A funerary gift depicting a female dwarf is on display at Cairo Museum, Egypt. She is naked with two bracelets and armlets and wears a wig of short curly hair. She has the typical facial features and bodily characteristics of achondroplasia. In addition, she has bowed legs and clubfeet deformity.

Artistic evidence shows that there were several elite dwarfs from the old kingdom who achieved important status. They were Seneb, Pereniankh, Khnumhotpe and Djeder. The dwarf Seneb served during the fourth dynasty of Pharaohs Khufu and Djeder. Seneb statue is on display at Cairo Museum. Seneb, the father was most likely an achondroplastic dwarf though his wife and children are of average size. Dwarf Pereniankh or "the Dancing Dwarf" was a court official in the 5th or 6th dynasty. His tomb is located in the vicinity of the great pyramid. The tomb contained his skeleton with the diagnosis of achondroplasia. Egyptologists have suggested that Pereniankh was the father of Seneb. Dwarf Djeder's naked figure is on display at Cairo Museum, Egypt, showing an accurate depiction of the features of achondroplasia with short hand, shortening limbs and protruded abdomen. Dwarf Khnumhotep had achieved courtly status and held the title "overseer of clothing" suggesting that he belonged to the household of high official. His small figurine is on display at Cairo Museum, Egypt with elongated skull and shortening of proximal parts of his upper limbs, arched back and protruded abdomen. Apart from this, several reliefs from the old kingdom tombs depicts male and female dwarf entertainers, dancing, singing or playing music. The facial features and short limbs of dwarf musician are characteristics of achondroplasia. Several Egyptologists and researchers have concluded that the image of short people in ancient Egypt is essentially positive. According to them, achondroplastic dwarfs had magical significance and they were associated with sun god. The function of dwarf was the protection of the living and the dead from dangers facing those including diseases, venomous animals, snakes, crocodiles and other dangers. In incantation 3, against the snakes in the Magical and Medical Papyri of the new kingdom, the name of dwarf in invoked for protection from the snakes.

*"o, dwarf! My magical powers are against my enemies. To render
the influence of the poison of the snakes harmless. May they be
free from intrusion for ever."*

In the same Papyrus the dwarf god is invoked to stand by the speaker:

"O that dwarf of the sky, o that dwarf of the sky. O dwarf great of

*face, with high back and short thighs. O great pillars, extending
from the sky to the underworld. O lord of the great corps which
rests in Helipolis. O great living Lord [Leitz, 1999].”*

Women in childbirth also invoked the help of dwarf gods. In a pure Papyrus at Leiden, there is a spell to felicitate birth called “the spell of the dwarf”:

*O good dwarf, come, because of the one who sent us....come
down Placenta, come down placenta, come down!*

The prayer was to be spoken four times over a dwarf of clay placed upon the vertex of the woman who is giving birth. The women in pain shouts: “To the man for a dwarf – statute of clay” [Borghouts, 1971]. It also teaches that care for the old, sick and malformed is a moral duty because:

*Man is clay and straw,
the god is his builder.
The wise man should respect people
Affected by reversal of fortune.[Simpson, 1973]*

Thus, dwarfs were likely accepted in ancient Egypt and were given a visible role in the society.

In a book named “Representation Subversion and Eugenies in Gunter Grass’s *The Tin Drum*” Peter Arnds states in Chapter 3 “The Dwarf and Nazi Body Politics” (pg 49) the Nazi’s worship of the desirable body and their ill-treatment because of the race, political or religious belief of the undesirable body. They perceive that physical beauty is an indicator of life’s value and worthiness of life. This view was mainly adopted from Nietzsche. Around 1900, journals like “Beauty” and “Strength and Beauty” desire to heal the body from diseases of civilization.

The Munich Exhibition of Degenerate art was divided into two opposite parts, one that propagated the ideal of beauty, and the other that focused on cripples, disfigured bodies and bodies in pieces. The Nazis aspired to the former, the creation of beautiful bodies by going through the latter one – the bodies in pieces. In his speech at the opening ceremony of “House of German Art” and “Great German Art Exhibit”, Hitler pointed out that National Socialism had made it its task the free the Reich (third regime or empire) from all those influences that might be destructive to its people, and even if this cleansing did not happen in one day, everybody who participated in this destruction ought to know that the hour of his or her elimination would come sooner or later. Just as the greengrocer Greff hides his homosexuality behind his well-trained body, Oskar escapes persecution for a while because initially he hides his dwarfism in the body

of a child and later he proves his usefulness by being an entertainer at the front. Oskar's dwarfism is not congenital (physical abnormality) but the result of his will power. This element of pure fantasy clashes with the historical reality with the persecution of the "diseased" bodies. Oskar is safe from the Nazis for a while because he is not Jewish, although he is racially impure because of his Kashubian (west Indo-European ethnic group in North-Central Poland) background and the son of a Pole and moreover, Oskar's dwarfism would be reason enough to make him the victim of persecution.

The healthy body aesthetically appealed the Nazis. Since, it is the healthy body that can function well, it was considered useful for the building of the thousand-year empire. They went so far that even people with minor defects were killed. To maintain the health of the individual and overall health of the collective body, National Socialism relied largely on the beneficial impact of the physical education. The understanding was that if the individual body was not intact, the whole body of the people would suffer. Therefore, to recover its overall health, it's better to cut away the diseased parts of the collective social body. National Socialism tried to represent this people's body in its texts and public scenarios like in Olympics games of 1936. In view of the overall health of the collective body, it was each individual's duty to keep his or her body in good shape. Nazis created the term *Gesundheitspflicht* (the duty to stay healthy). Black bodies were considered natural miracles by the civilization. In view of such politics, Oskar's stunted growth was an alien to the German kind, degenerate and damaging to the health of the civilization.

Robert Bogdan, a professor specializing in the cultural foundations of Education and Sociology at Syracuse University got the idea for the book *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, when he overheard his then ten-year old son answering his friend's question about how you could tell in a certain movie who the good guys were, that "if they looked bad, they were bad". Bogdan then envisioned a book illustrating the preconceptions and prejudices associated with disability. But his book quickly moved beyond this view as he learned more and contextualized more, the world of the freak show. He had stated it to be an interesting topic filled with many familiar images of Colonel Tom Thumb, his wife and many other human oddities. Colonel Tom Thumb, stage name given to Charles Sherwood Stratton, was a dwarf who achieved great fame as a performer under circus pioneer P.T.Barnum. His parents became conscious when they noticed that he had not grown at all in the last six months of his life. They showed him to their doctor who said there was little chance that Charles would ever reach normal height. P.T.Barnum, a distant relative taught him how to sing, dance, mime and impersonate famous people. His tour to different places for performances made him an international celebrity. His marriage to another dwarf, Lavinia Warren became the front page news. Lavinia, his wife was an American Proportionate dwarf, considered to be desirable by the sideshows and museum of that era owing to its perfectly miniature characteristics. After a successful career as a well-respected school teacher, she went to work as a miniature dancing chanteuse (female singer).

As per Robert Bogdan, it is doubtless that many were exploited for all or part of their careers but he presents a business world of hype (publicity) and showmanship, where the freaks were largely less oppressed than liberated.

Dan Kennedy, a journalist and father of a dwarf daughter in his article, *Little People: Seeing the World through my Daughter's Eyes*, a paralyzed social treatise inside a tender family journal explains that dwarfism is a disability. A week after his daughter's birth in 1992, she was diagnosed with Achondroplasia, a common type of dwarfism. Doctors reassured them saying that she will have normal intelligence and normal life span. Dan and his wife Barbara quickly adjusted to the reality of the condition but to grasp people's attitude towards those with physical differences was difficult. While exploring dwarfism from ancient times, he finds that dwarfs held an honored position in some cultures where as in modern days, they are featured in freak shows and treated as human guinea pigs (person used as a subject for experiment) by Nazi scientists.

He profiles individuals whose small stature has helped them to succeed and others who have allowed them to be exploited and abused. There has never been a better times for those who are outside the mainstream and most parents do not wish these differences for their own children. He argues that there is a cultural value to preserving differences and that eliminating them may harm society in unpredictable ways.

Ken Fox, American business man, entrepreneur and investor reviewed a documentary film named *Starkiss: Circus Girls of India* in 2003. It shows the Great Ramayan Circus founded in 1924 is among India's biggest and best known traveling circuses where most of the troupe artists are underage girls from desperately poor, predominantly Nepalese Families who sold their daughter for a pittance. These chosen girls include two dejected dwarf clowns who are isolated from the outside world, forbidden to speak to anyone other than trainers and are taught to perform dangerous stunts. They are not paid during their first year making their life no better than bonded slaves.

An independent scholar, Betty M. Adelson in the year 2005, in the journal of *Disability Studies Quarterly* states that her journey towards understanding that eventually led to research and thus publishing two books about the lives of the very short, stigmatized people known as dwarfs began in 1974 when her daughter, Anna was born with Achondroplasia, the most common type of Dwarfism (vol 25, No. 3). She decided to write a cultural history of dwarfism and when searched for literary works about Dwarfs, she ended up with titles like, *Freaks, Victorian Grottesque and Human Oddities* – written from an alienated perspective. The authors described these individuals as immature with strong feelings of inferiority and because of their grotesque appearance; the dwarfs are apt to be employed in the circus.

The book “The Lives of Dwarfs: Their Journey from Public Curiosity toward Social Liberation” by Betty. M. Adelson as reviewed by many is extraordinary in its vision and makes it possible for both average and short statured people to challenge the collective understanding of dwarfism. It invites us all to re-imagine dwarfism as a livable experience and tenable way of being in the world. An unique contribution to the Literature of Physical Deformity and social isolation and a gift to those individuals for whom this is a personal struggle.

Betty. M. Adelson in her book states about dwarfism that they have borne the labels “freaks” and “oddities”, they have been collected as pets, displayed as spectacles and treated as comic relief spanning the centuries from ancient Egypt to the present, this unique social history chronicles the various ways this population has been exploited. Adelson, mother of a dwarf daughter brings special insights by tracing the widespread mistreatment of dwarfs over the centuries, endangered by their being viewed as curiosities rather than as human beings capable of same accomplishments as people of average height as deserve the same pleasures as others.

In the year 1934, Journalist Walter Bodin and Barnet Hershey wrote in *“It’s a Small World: All About Midgets:”*

What are they to do with their lives? Their choices are decidedly limited. Unlike normal children, they cannot plan career at will. Innumerable doors are closed to them. They cannot be aviators, policemen, electricians, chefs, laborer, bus-drivers, and clerks. The professions are close to them. A doctor, a lawyer, a school teacher no smaller than a small child, would not only be laughed out of countenance, but would probably starve to death (p. 89-90).

In the novel “The Thing about Georgie” by Lisa Graff, we find Georgie being a dwarf faces difficulties to do things that we take for granted. People notice him, stare at him and make fun of him for being what he is. There are enough trials in those tween years to make even the strongest lament to his fate- school, friends, the first inklings of romantic love, discovering one’s particular strengths and weaknesses. As said, no pain equals no gain because nobody escapes those years without learning some big lessons. Georgie though surrounded for the most part by kind and helpful people, finds himself in the middle of a change in his life from which there is no escape. With courage and smart thinking, he manages to recognize his worlds so that new things substitutes old habits and ideas and he can move forward with self-esteem and happiness.

Andy, the best friend of Georgie has never made him feel like there is something wrong with him where as Jeanie the Meanie, a bully keeps on harassing him since kindergarten days. Georgie’s classical musician parents who have always loved him for what he is, is a major reason that makes Georgie accept his dwarfism bravely. He parents had a hope before his birth that he would be a musician like them, they even tried to find an instrument he can play but they could not. Still Georgie loves listening to his parents play.

When Georgie finds his mother pregnant, thinks that one day all his charges will be taken over by him/her. He even gets more upset when he realizes that one day the baby will be taller than he is. He is used to taller children outside the house but not in his own house. He even feels as if his parents are paying more attention to the baby but later everything get sorted when he had a conversation with his family about the baby while returning from school after presenting a successful play and their answers pleases him.

Lisa Graff employs a nice trick in which almost every chapter is preceded by a diary entry where we are asked to do something that Georgie physically cannot do. Through these activities we get a sense of how brave Georgie is in having to face life as a dwarf.

There are many eminent dwarf personalities like Paul Leicester Ford, Benjamin Lay and Alexander Pope who have not only accepted their difference but also achieved success in life. Paul Leicester Ford, born in 1865 in Brooklyn, New York was the great grand son of Noah

Webster. He wrote about 70 pamphlets and books that is concerned about the history of United States. Although he was a dwarf and had a humped-back that prevented him from attending school, he was taught at home by private tutors and his sisters as well. Benjamin Lay, born in England in 1681 is considered to be the Quaker Dwarf who became the first revolutionary Abolitionist. Lay was barely over 4 feet tall and wore clothes that he made himself. He was a hunch-back with a projecting chest and his arms were almost longer than his legs. Being a vegetarian, he drank only milk and water as he was against killing of animals for food. He published over 200 pamphlets most of which were against slavery, capital punishment, prison system etc. and is mainly distinguished for his philanthropy and as a social writer.

Alexander Pope born in 1688, was an 18th Century English Poet best known for his satirical verse and use of heroic couplet. From the age of 12, he suffered numerous health problems like Pott's disease, a form of tuberculosis that affects the bone, which deformed his body and stunted his growth leaving him with a severe hunch-back. He grew to a height of only 1.37 meter or 4 feet 6 inch. Being a catholic, he was already removed from the society, his poor health alienated him further due to which he never married.

Stigma: Notes on the Management of spoiled Identity is a book by Sociologist, Erving Goffman in 1963 about the idea of stigma and what it is like to be a stigmatized person. It is a look into the world of the people considered as abnormal by the society. Stigmatized people are those who do not have full social acceptance and are constantly striving to adjust their social identities which includes physically deformed people like dwarfs, mental patients, drug addicts, prostitutes, etc. Goffman relies extensively on autobiographies and case studies to analyze stigmatized person's feeling about themselves and their relationships to "normal" people. He looks at the varieties of strategies that stigmatized individuals use to deal with the rejection of others and the complex images of themselves that they project to others.

Goffman identifies three types of stigma out of which physical stigma is one. It refers to physical deformities of bodies as in dwarfs. These stigmas may get transmitted through generations and contaminate other members of the family. Goffman discusses a number of responses that stigmatized people can take. They can make special efforts to compensate for their stigma such as drawing attention to an impressive skill. They can also use their stigma as an excuse for their lack of success, they can see it as a learning experience or they can even use it to criticize "normals" or "non-stigmatized people" as stated by Goffman. Hiding from realities can lead to further isolation, depression and anxiety and when they do go out in public, they can in turn feel more self-conscious and afraid to display anger or other negative emotions.

Stigmatized individuals can also turn to other stigmatized people or sympathetic ones for mental support. They can form or join self-help groups, clubs, national associations to feel a sense of belonging. They can also write books, produce and promote magazines to raise their morale. Goffman has stated some rules for stigmatized people to handle normal one which includes that one must assume normals are ignorant rather than malicious, normals with their views should be ignored, the stigmatized should try to reduce the tension by using humor or even self-mockery and should treat normals as honorary wise, the stigmatized should see oneself as "normal" to put "normals" at ease.

In the year 1997, John. H. Richardson first delved into the world of dwarfism as an Esquire reporter covering the annual convention of the Little people of America. Hanging out in

Atlanta, he found countless tales of typical of their types - dwarfs dancing, getting drunk, finding friends, making enemies and many more. He wrote about the torments of dwarfs struggling to balance the shock of their shared experience with desires and dreams of normalcy. The book begins at the convention, where Richardson comes across a caste of characters who with varying degrees of eagerness discuss the realities of rising chest-high to the most of the "tall - world". J.H. Richardson shares a hotel with more than a thousand dwarfs and over the course of a single week, he witnessed love, anger, fear and bravery, arrogance and humility, even a bizarre romantic deception - the entire spectrum of human emotion in one concentrated dose but at the end of the week, he discovered that leaving the "Little World" was not as simple as checking out of a hotel. At a time when bigger seems better and physical beauty serves as currency, the world of dwarfs usually passes beneath our notice and this has made the award winning author John. H. Richardson to bring the little world into focus.

He tries to offer us a glimpse into the essential human condition by introducing us to characters like a saintly but obsessed doctor who has dedicated his life to the treatments of dwarfs and has been rejected by the medical community and a mother who sacrifices her family to save her dwarf daughter. He follows two dwarf lovers from their first meeting through the struggle to overcome their fear and shame and find the confidence to love each other. Moreover, the author himself gets involved personally in a confrontational friendship with a female dwarf. Through these stories he makes us travel from classic theories of beauty to the history of the disability movement to postmodern theories of difference. He presents us a world that is a changed reflection of our own.

Richardson, a "tall" has always been fascinated by the dwarf world and in course came to realize he was doing much more than simply documenting the lives of a few quirky characters. He was entering another, sub-culture that has long been the subject of a peculiar fascination to many people but much misunderstood. One of his characters Anthony tells Richardson, "we're not little people. We're human beings encased in a short-statured body". Richardson states, "Dwarfs are like us but more so, as of the process of distilling humanity to fit their size also made it stronger". While reviewing this book Andy Battaglia, a New York writer who writes about art and culture states that, "this book about dwarfs ends up evolving into a story about the costs of people growing into and out of themselves."

Joan Ablon's *Living with Difference: Families with dwarf children* begins with the definition of dwarfism and then probes the range of family responses to the birth of a dwarf. The chapters explore through developmental and medical conditions, school experiences and the social world around a dwarf child. It even deals with the problems faced by a dwarf child to fit into the family system. He even describes about Little People of America, a national organization that provide information on dwarfism.

"In our hearts we are Giants" is a remarkable, never before told account, a moving and powerful tale of survival under a most extreme circumstances of the Ovitz family, seven of the ten members are dwarfs, bears witness to the best and worst of humanity and to the terrible irony of the Ovitz's fate: being burdened with dwarfism helped them endure the Holocaust. The story revolves around a beloved and successful family of performers who were popular entertainers in Central Europe until the Nazi deported them to Auschwitz in 1944, and they were widely known

as the Lilliput Troupe. The creepy fondness he developed for these small people who finally returned to their deserted village in Transylvania and eventually found their way to a new home in Israel. They resumed their careers, overcame their handicaps and became wealthy and successful performers. Their physical characteristics that frequently rendered them helpless made them endlessly appealing to the notorious doctor Joseph Mengele, who tormented them in the name of genetic research.

Even Though I'm Small – a mom's story for her daughter is a book by Karen Kelly Smith who gives a positive message to students about understanding and embracing differences. Kelly had questions in her mind, when she knew that she is giving birth to a dwarf daughter, doctors ensured her that Allie would become healthy and a happy girl as she is today. She was advised to educate other children about Allie's stature, as a result, they will be more accepting and understanding. When Allie's peer would have questions about why Allie was shorter than them, Smith said, "We taught her to tell other children that her bones just don't grow as fast as theirs. Kids are pretty understanding if they know what dwarfism is. If you don't talk about it, then you get the pointing and the starring". Allie while going to her school, for the very first time, gets nervous thinking what will others' kids say when they see her! Will they make fun of her? Will she have any friends?

To address the questions further, Smith decided to write a book. Being a teacher herself, Smith knew what kind of book would appeal to children. She used some rhyming lines like "Even though I'm small, I can do it all," to show how Allie can do anything her peers can do. Sometimes she needs to do those things differently. Kelly writes, Allie, her daughter was born with a form of dwarfism and is shorter than everyone else. Her classmates soon learnt that even

"Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece" by Veronique Dasen who examines dwarfs in myth and everyday life in ancient Egypt and Greece where physical beauty was highly admired even to excess. The spectacular forms of dwarfism were always a focus of interest, and it is the most depicted disorder in antiquity. Dr. Dasen brings together a whole range of unpublished or little-known iconographic, epigraphic, literary and anthropological evidence. Dasen opens her book with a question- "In ancient Egypt and Greece, physical beauty defined in terms of proportion, was highly admired. What happened to those who conformed neither to these 'ideal proportions' nor to norms of human appearance?" She attempts to answer this question with particular reference to dwarfs. The chapter starts with the typology of growth disorders including a table of main types of dwarfism.

She quotes there is no sign in the literature about the nature of disorder or of the difference between various forms. Egypt, says she, follows and worships the dwarf gods, the longest devoted to Bes. She acknowledges that the reason for transformation of Bes from his original leonine form into a grinning dwarf is not clear. She suggests the reason that this might have incorporated a belief in dwarfs as familiar protective beings. The chapter on Human Dwarfs is based overwhelmingly on the evidence of art. The only information that Dasen could give us from the Old Kingdom reliefs was, Dwarfs were frequently represented as part of the household in royal and noble tombs, and conclusion can be drawn about the role that they played, as personal attendants, tenders of animals, entertainers dancing and making music and as jewelers. Less informative about the actual status of the dwarfs are the figurines which predominate in the

Middle Kingdom, whereas there is a remarkable absence of dwarfs in household scenes in the New Kingdom when in contrast the number of dwarf-gods increase. One can never get into conclusion regarding the status of human dwarfs in Egypt. Dasen concludes that “ancient Egyptians welcomed short statured people and there are no signs of rejection or exclusion.

The information about dwarfs in Greece do not cover all the periods and the literary sources are very sparse. Dwarfish figures occur in myths in the guise of pygmies. Dasen examines the literary account and finds that dwarfs appear as liminal, wild but inoffensive things like powerless pygmies. There are some vase-paintings and Attic-red figures carrying a child, basket or shield in the 2nd half of 5th century and middle of 6th century which offers the hope of answering Dasen’s questions like what were the normal attitude towards dwarfs and their status in society, yet the materials were in damaged condition. There is only one picture of female dwarf that implies that women were not accepted to the same extent as male. They could not admit female deformity. Some of the remains showed that the dwarfs were engaged in same sort of activities as the normal-sized Athenians, but again, interpretations of these run into problem. “Are the dancing dwarfs entertainers, or are they Komasts?” Dasen can only conclude they did not differ by clothing or behavior from other citizens.

“From the Freak Show to the Living Room: Cultural Representations of Dwarfism and Obesity” by Laura Backstrom states, dwarfism became constructed as an Identity Project with the aim of bodily acceptance. The mostly positive historical characterizations of dwarfs allowed them to easily adopt the tenets of the Disability Rights Movement as they evolved from the freak show performances to television as an educational platform. They have adopted a social model of disability, positive social identity, self-acceptance and full social-participation.

Body Cult states great devotion or worship to one’s body. It is the situation in which people have intense admiration and regard body to be very special. Body culture studies and analyze culture and society in terms of human bodily practices. This study includes studies of dance, game, medical culture, working habits, gender and social culture, race, sexualities and bodies that are ill and disabled. “The Body in Modern American Fiction and Culture” , an Overview, focuses on the African American writings in relations to nations of beauty, strength, pain and property, illness narrative, the problems and possibilities of narrating bodily experience with particular emphasis placed on the act of looking at the body.

In ‘The Challenges of Having Sex as a Little Person’ a seminar at Little People Association by Naccarato, an agent for the Internal Revenue service for decades who changed her profession to Clinical Sexologist reason being a rare kind of dwarfism called Kniest. Standing at a height of 3 feet 10 inches, she has become something of a pioneer in the LPA Community. She is a speaker at their conference where she broke through conservative boundaries to talk the ins and outs of sex and intimacy with various limitations that may come with life as a person of short stature. She started with Little People of America, an umbrella organization that provides support to people of short stature for information on scholarship and medical procedures to specially designed kitchen appliances. Naccarato is the first in her field to extensively study the sexual needs specific to the Little People Community, on the physical, emotional and psychological level. She explains, “This is so critical because it tells me that Little

People do want more satisfaction in their sex life even if they are physically limited and are receptive to change and education”. She further says, “When I speak regarding Little People, there are little people who don’t consider themselves disabled because they don’t have any really strong physical limitation – but most Little People do”. Some have no medical limitations – they are just short.

Cara Reddy was born with achondroplastic dwarfism and says that Little People are often treated as less than human. Her family protected her without letting her hide from the world. She was tired of strangers’ inappropriate reactions. “My parents were shocked and upset, knowing that my life would be hard”. “Living as a little person is like being the main attraction at the circus every day of my life. Its like celebrity without fame or money and that’s pretty accurate”, says Cara. People hold their hands over their mouths and laugh, trying to look away but also alert their friends. They whisper – there’s a midget walking in a mall. When she passes a store, someone spots her and bring their whole family to stand in the store window to laugh and jeer. “My existence is a joke to them”. When these people refer to little people, they often say, “Look at it”. “To them I am not even a human. I’m a different species. Inside I was crying and wishing I was someone else. I was often the target of bullies in school and my teachers though never outwardly say anything but made it difficult to participate in activities”, states Cara. One of her friend says, “Cara is always trying to prove she is normal. To this Cara says, “I am normal. I have the same thoughts, feelings and desires. The world treats me as if there is something wrong with me. It took me a while not to trust the world’s openness”.

When she moved to New York to start work as a photographer, she finally had to face difficulties as she is a Little Person. Cara states, “I wake up in the morning and I am startled because someone interrupts my morning routine by pointing, laughing or taking a picture. I am the little person that deserves ridicule. I am late to work, running with a body that doesn’t have the greatest leg-span”. She adds, “I have different level of response to people’s reaction – If someone laughs, I ask, ‘What’s funny?’ Most of the time people run off in embarrassment. If people use the word ‘midget’, I say, ‘It’s called dwarfism. Don’t use that word.’”

While little people were originally famous for simply being little, its great to see that many of the individuals on this list have grown to become well-known for their own personal skills and accomplishments. Some of them are:

Antara Sengupta, a Mumbai based independent Journalist and a research fellow observer at Research Foundation, Mumbai reports in “Youth Ki Awaaz”, “It’s a hard life for Dwarfs in India” and presents the facts as below:

Mahendra Vinayak Agavni, a peon in Indian Navy is a dwarf of 3 feet 5 inches tall, for close to 20 years now has been taking the train to Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminal (CST) daily, has figured out his own way through crowds states, “I hold on to people’s bags and let other people push me in the compartment. Everything I can do is an ordeal. There is no place that’s not a struggle to get in and out of for people like me.”

Mallesh, a crown in a circus says, “I looked for other jobs. But people I met took one look at me and told me I was useless. That I was too short to fetch things from high places and that I won’t be able to sit on a normal chair and work. They were not wrong. I’m not even tall enough to pee in public urinals. I have gotten used to life as it is. Things won’t change. No one is hearing us.”

Dwarfs face problems that most other people don’t give a second thought to, like, most find door handles placed too high for them. Public urinals are not fixed while keeping dwarfs in mind. Chairs and desks are not dwarf-friendly. Public transport does not have ramps for easy entry and exit for them and even cars don’t come equipped with specifications to suit their needs.

M. Srinivasulu of Network of PWD organization in Hyderabad says, “With discrimination over the years and the absence of jobs, they can’t elevate themselves from their current economic situation. With no education, they are forced to do low-paid jobs.” In 2005, Srinivasulu formed a group and filed a petition in Andhra Pradesh High Court seeking special status for dwarfs which demanded free public transport passes, right to education and loans at low interest. They got a favourable response and these facilities are provided to the dwarf population in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Javed Abidi, World Chair of Disabled People’s International and Director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, Delhi, says, “There is a need for social awareness and public sensitization. They are laughed at, stereotyped for certain jobs and discriminated against in several spheres – these need to be corrected.”

In India, besides Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Kerala has done something to help this community. In U.S.A, dwarfism is a recognised condition under the Americans with Disabilities Act. As we have associations like LPA in U.S.A, similarly there are little people groups in South America, U.K, Canada, New Zealand, California and Atlanta. Abidi adds, “ In India, sympathy is seen mostly for the people with disabilities that are orthopaedic in nature, or visual or hearing impairments but the problem is that a very few organized groups are fighting for the rights of dwarf population. They should get together and demand their rights.

Srinivasulu states that it is important to give them Political reservation because if they are not politically represented, it will be tough for them to for their own rights.”

“Shadowy Dwarf: A source in Hindu Mythology”, a prose work in *Democratic Vistas*, Walt Whitman refers to the Vamana Avatar of Lord Vishnu and this legend tells of a demon named Bali who having conquered the Gods, declared himself as the ruler of the earth, atmosphere and heaven. Vishnu took birth as the dwarf-Vamana, requested Bali a mere three steps of land for his own sacrificial ground. But when Bali accepted without any protest, Vamana revealed his identity and expanded to the size of universe and crossed earth, atmosphere and heaven in three strides, ultimately giving the king immortality by placing his foot on his head.

The need to refer this mythological story as a part of my proposal is to bring forth that everything lies in our mind and we create reasons of our own because when, we people, especially Indians worship the Vamana incarnation thinking it to be Lord Vishnu, though we

never have witnessed it, then why is it difficult for us to think dwarfs as normal human beings and not as mere objects of humiliation!

Andrew Solomon's *Far from the Tree*, brings forth the questions – what happens in families where a child displays traits the parents do not have, especially if they are undesirable ones. By reflecting on his own development as a gay and dyslexic child of straight parents, Solomon researched ten groups of anomalous children, one being Dwarf among them and tried to determine how their identity are formed or changed by such parent-child disparities, they should acknowledge a common identity as being anomalous apples that all fall far from the tree. In the third story, "Dwarfs", he states the feeling of a woman, the mother of a teenage dwarf who is desperate to start dating. Many dwarfs experience their condition as an identity and some to have children who are also dwarfs, raising question about the ethics of selecting for difference. But neither dwarf nor average-height people have reached full agreement on whether dwarfism is a disability but it is certainly a difference, perhaps the most immediately visible of those chronicled in *Far from the Tree*.

In the mythological Story of *Apasmara, the Dwarf*, it represented ignorance and epilepsy, also known as *Muyalaka* or *Muyalakan*. So as to preserve knowledge in the world he could not be killed which meant attaining knowledge without struggle, dedication and hard work. To subdue *Apasmara*, Lord Shiva adopted the form of *Shri Nataraja* and performed the cosmic dance of *Tandava* and suppressed *Apasmara* by crushing him with his right foot. He is one of the few demons destined to immortality and it is believed that Shiva remains forever in *Nataraja* form suppressing *Apasmara* for all eternity.

The mythical story accounts that these creatures are strongly associated with death because of their deeds and with the evolution of their mythology, they adopted modern image of short height and ugliness still suppressed by the society in general though their deeds are not dreadful.

Books like *Memoirs of a Midget* by Walter de la Mare focuses on *Midgetina*, the dwarf protagonist, who in order to make herself independent revolves through the situations and portrays herself as a spectacle in the circus thus, objectifying herself. *Stones from the River* by Ursula Hegi reveals a young dwarf girl named *Trudi Montag* who has trouble accepting change. Being no less than a normal human, she goes through rejection and struggles to gain acceptance in the society. *Arzee: The Dwarf* by Chandrahas Choudhury reflects the suffering caused to *Arzee* being a dwarf that is witnessed in every alternate dialogue, he constantly struggles to prove himself a man. The chapter depicts the ups and downs in his life, his shuffling between hope and dread, between the yearnings of body and soul against the pulsing of the great city around him, yet it relieves the audience that at last he found a place for himself in the world of "fives and sixes". *The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb* by Melanie Benjamin portrays the journey of young *Mercy Lavinia Warren Bump Stratton (Vinnie)*'s longing to see the world and overcome the challenges in her size. She started as a entertainer on a riverboat, after which rest of her years she spent in the public eye.

Although some of the writers and authors have contributed to the society, yet the solutions remain unanswered. A research scholar undertaking research on dwarfism will surely be troubled to face the challenge as hardly any literary research has been done on this specified topic. Availability of primary texts and secondary sources can provide a proper platform to study the case and highlight the problem faced by these so called “Little People” all over the world.

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