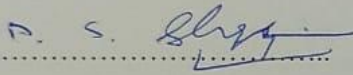


CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this research titled '**Media Representation of Disability Issues in Context of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016: A Study Based in Gujarat**' incorporates the results of an independent study carried out by Shastri Parth Shailendrabhai under the guidance of Prof. (Dr.) Niti Chopra for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Journalism & Communication. The contents presented herein have not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of this or any other university.



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07/03/2024

[External Examiner - Referee]

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research work presented in this doctoral thesis titled '**Media Representation of Disability Issues in Context of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016: A Study Based in Gujarat**' represents the results of my own independent research. The descriptions and narrations found therein are entirely original. Throughout the work, both in the text and bibliography, I have clearly cited and acknowledged the various sources from which information is drawn.

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Acknowledgement

The present work is a testimony to the support and encouragement from my guide Professor Dr Niti Chopra. She was the catalyst for this journey and remained a guiding force throughout (more than) five years of the present study. There were times when I had given up hopes of completing it, but she remained a rock-solid support to ensure that the work sees light of the day. Right from the initial meetings to zeroing-in on the topic to intricacies of methodology and regularly reviewing it and suggesting changes, this work is as much as a fruit of her labour as it is mine.

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of persons with disabilities, he not only gave his valuable time and resources for the work but also got me in contact with several other key persons from the field.

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Access to previous editions of Divya Bhaskar would not have been possible without the support of state editor Devendra Bhatnagar and city editor Mrugank Patel.

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Precursor: A Personal Perspective

It was mid-2017 when Niti ma'am called about start of the doctoral program at the faculty and encouraged me to apply for the same. I had a deep urge to pursue doctoral studies, but I had umpteen excuses not to take it up, the primary one being my work as a journalist that left little time for any other pursuits. However, encouragement and guidance from the faculty members helped make up my mind to take up studies again.

When it came to choosing a topic to stay with for at least four years, there were several options ranging from media's role in getting Ahmedabad a World Heritage City tag to impact of digital platforms on newspaper industry. But eventually it got zeroed-in on disability due to several factors. The seismic changes caused by Accessible India and the RPwD Act were still being discussed, and as a reporter closely covering disability issues for over a decade I gravitated towards the theme. Well-wishers like Dr Punani ensured all support and convinced me that a study exploring role of media and media-disability sector interface can also help NGOs working in the field.

After starting the studies in 2018, the first two years saw completion of teaching, seminar participation and PhD coursework. In 2020, the world was struck with Covid pandemic and as a health reporter, I was immersed in coverage for one-and-a-half years. Data collection for the study remained on hold and even the PhD study had a big question mark on it – I was not sure I would be able to complete it. But support from Niti ma'am and others helped sail through those difficult times. The period prompted some inevitable changes in methodology.

Highlight of 2021 remained a certificate course on disability studies from Delhi University in online mode that gave a much deeper and richer perspective of the field including underlying theories, different models, practical implications of moves such as Accessible India and the RPwD Act, and latest research in the discipline. Dr Shilpa Das of NID also put me in touch with Disability Study India online platform that served as a valuable resource.

Past five years brought me much closer to the disability field and gave me an insight into functioning of mainstream media. Being part of an organization for 16 years now, the work gave an outsider perspective and provided an opportunity to delve into societal perception and role of media which has implications for other minority communities, too.