

A Journey of Resilience and Triumph: An Inspirational Qualitative Case-Study of After Amputation and Prosthetic Fitment

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Abstract: *This qualitative study delves into the remarkable life of Mr. Vikrant Sharma (Pseudonym), a 57-year-old individual who, despite facing the adversity of bilateral leg amputation, has not only triumphed over his physical limitations but has also become an inspiration for many. Through personal interviews, Mr. Sharma shares his life before and after amputation, the details of the amputation procedure, his journey as an amputee, and the transformative impact of prosthetic fitment on his life. His story is one of resilience, courage, and the power of embracing opportunities in the face of challenges. This study aims to shed light on the experiences of differently-abled individuals and inspire others to overcome their obstacles with determination and hope.*

Keywords: Prosthetics, Amputation, Qualitative study, Inspiration, Differently-abled.

1. Introduction

Human experience is often marked by unforeseen challenges and obstacles that test the limits of resilience and fortitude. In this qualitative study, we embark on a compelling exploration of the life of Mr. Vikrant Sharma (Pseudonym)—a distinguished railway professional whose narrative unfolds as a testament to the transformative power of the human spirit in the face of adversity. The focal point of our investigation is the pivotal event of bilateral amputation that reshaped Mr. Sharma's life, providing insights into his experiences before and after this life-altering incident.

Before the fateful day of December 15, 2013, Mr. Sharma's life was characterized by a rich tapestry of cultural immersion, adventure, and a successful career as a railway driver spanning nearly four decades. The narrative takes a close look at the circumstances surrounding the amputation, detailing the surgical procedures and the subsequent prosthetic fitment process. It unfolds as a story of recovery, adaptation, and the remarkable impact of advanced prosthetics on Mr. Sharma's ability to not only regain his daily routine but also to pursue ambitious feats such as mountain climbing and long-distance driving.

This study seeks to shed light on the intricate interplay between the human spirit and technological advancements in prosthetics, offering a nuanced understanding of the individual's journey from vulnerability to empowerment. Mr. Sharma's story, as narrated in this research, serves as a source of inspiration, inviting reflection on the profound

resilience that can emerge from the crucible of life-altering challenges.

2. Methods

The study is a qualitative study, and data was collected through a semi-structured interview with the amputee to gather in-depth qualitative data about his life before amputation, the amputation procedure, his journey as an amputee, and his experiences after prosthetic fitment. The researcher conducted an in-depth interview with Prosthetic user, which lasted for 90 minutes. The interview was recorded, and the data were transcribed. The Prosthetic fitment and the interview were conducted in Artificial Limb Center of the Northern Railway Central Hospital, New Delhi. Informed consent was taken from the subject before conducting the interview. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes (Houghton et al., 2015; Stake, 2005).

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the transcript was segregated into six key themes: Life before Amputation, Amputation Procedure, From being an Amputee to Prosthetic user, Words of Inspiration and Aspirations for the Future. All the five themes have been thoroughly described with the transcript to describe the journey of Mr. Sharma-A expedition of Resilience and Triumph.

Life Before Amputation: Mr. Sharma's life before amputation was a tapestry woven with diverse interests and passions. He was an active individual who engaged in stamp and coin collection, radio communication, adventure travel, writing, dancing, cooking, and mountaineering. His dream of becoming a pilot or train driver eventually led him to a fulfilling career with the Indian Railways, where he achieved significant milestones.

"My life story is very interesting like a film script, I am very versatile person from very childhood, my father taught me all sanatan cultural mantras and kathas, we have a strong faith in our mythology, more over today you can see it's proof in me, the power of "SRI RAM NAAM" as accident happened, I started chanting the name of Sri Ram. I start from childhood, I was studying my formal education, Stamp and coins collection, listening Radio of many countries by being the president of Dx-Club, adventure travelling, writing, Dancing, (college functions could not complete without my dance program) cooking, tracking (Nattha top in 1998), mountaineering (I completed Sri Kailash Mansarovaryatra in 2007). . . etc were my hobbies, flying planes, driving trains, or shipping, was my childhood passion, I could not join Indian air force, but same time in 1984 there were the vacancies of Asst. Loco pilots in Indian Railways (at that time it was known as "A" grade F/M, I worked hard, and after written, interview, psychology and finally Aye One medical test, I qualified to join Indian Railways, JHANSI Div. As Asst. Driver, I joined on 19-05-1986, I made some good achievements from my training period to till now service period, and also got outstanding service award, today I have completed 37 years of spotless services, I promoted from asst. Driver to driver Goods then driver passenger then driver Mail then High speed driver for high speed trains Like Shatabdi, Rajdhani. . . etc."

The transcript describes the diverse talents and characteristics of Mr. Sharma before undergoing amputation. The study emphasizes the amputee's religious faith, particularly how he invoked the name of God (Sri Ram) during and after the amputation process. This aligns with earlier research findings suggesting that spirituality can have a positive influence on an amputee's ability to confront major life challenges such as amputation (Imeni et al., 2018). Additionally, this is in accordance with the research by Peirano and Franz (2012), who asserts that existential spirituality significantly impacts life satisfaction, general health, and social integration. In summary, the verbatim explore the multifaceted nature of the amputee, their spiritual coping mechanisms during amputation, and the potential positive effects of spirituality on an amputee's overall well-being based on existing research.

Amputation Procedure

On December 15, 2013, Mr. Sharma experienced a life-changing accident when he slipped from a train and suffered double leg amputation. He underwent multiple surgeries, including the amputation of both legs. His left knee was initially at risk, but thanks to the expertise of Dr. Sanjay Tripathi, it was saved. Mr. Sharma faced excruciating pain but persevered without painkillers.

"I was successfully driving the trains from JHANSI TO DELHI AND ITARSI, unfortunately on 15-12-2013 I slipped somehow from the train, when I was going to Sikadhrabad for some work, I found my both legs cut then I was sent to civil hospital Betul where initial treatment was done then sent me to Padhar hospital for further treatment, there AMPUTATION DONE ON SAME DAY, I stayed there for 2 days only, but as the Doctor was thinking to remove the left Knee, at the same time. My friend Dr. Sanjay Tripathi who is very experienced Orthopaedic Surgeon suggested the Doctor of Padhar hospital to send me to Jhansi. I come to Jhansi on 17-12-2013, then on 17 Dec. my left leg amputation done and finished and the Doctor could save my left Knee, there was some collection found on right leg so on 23 Dec. Again Dr. Tripathi took me to OT and did the cleaning and finishing of amputation, I had a lot of unbearable pain but I was told to bear it and no to pain killer, I followed, and was released from hospital on 7 Jan.2014, I was at home a dresser coming to my home alternate days for dressing, by the grace of the god, I could recover very fast, it was 10-05-2014 when I reached to ALC Delhi for fitment of prosthetic."

Mr. Sharma in the above verbatim discusses how early treatment and expert medical advice could save his left knee from being amputated which could have been considered as a medical error. Rodziewicz, et, al, (2018) in literature Medical error reduction and prevention, lists a number of crucial aspects in the prevention of error and the development of a culture of safety for patients. This paper highlights the importance role of an inter-professional team in improving care for all patients. In the present case – study Mr. Sharma's knee could be saved because of inter-professional medical decision and on-time action.

From being an Amputee to Prosthetic user: After his amputation, Mr. Sharma embarked on a remarkable journey of recovery and rehabilitation. He began walking with prosthetic limbs and gradually regained his mobility. His resilience was evident as he ventured into crowded markets and resumed his daily activities. Dancing, mountain climbing, and even long-distance travel became an integral part of his life once again.

"Amputation is like a curse, but today's technological scenario and people like Dr. M. C. Das has converted it into an opportunity. Amputees can walk, run, dance, drive and do whatever that wants to do. I did my entire research in this regard during my rest and recovery period at home. I collected entire information from all sources in the world, what is available and where it is available, what facilities are provided by the government etc. After wound healing I got the Jaipur foot fitment, started my first walk on it, then at ALC Delhi high tech Prosthetic with basic foot on which I regain my entire previous life activity back and started driving within 8 months, after 2 years I got the fitment of K2 label which was very comfortable and more powerful, now I have gotten K3 label which is really excellent for my activities. Though In our country high tech. Prosthetic is very costly and out of purchase power of a common man, so people compromises with Jaipur foot, that is also very good but not very comfortable, but because I am railway servant so I got it on railway's account, In fact the ALC Delhi is

extra ordinary place for people like me. It is equipped with all advanced machinery and facility, it could be only possible by the efforts of Dr. Vaishya (HOD ORTH.) & Dr. M. C. Das, took care of me and provide me the best as according to my requirement. ”

Researchers in the field of disability have always pointed that disability in our society is believed to be a “Devine punishment” and curse (Ahmad, 2018; Oliver, 1989). In the present study the participant highlights how his disability turned out from a curse to opportunity because of the high end Prosthetic technology. The participant also draws attention to the fact that the high price of these advanced prosthesis in India which makes it out of reach of most people in India. The high price of advanced technology is a major problem for prosthetic users in developing countries like India (Paternòet, al., 2018). As the participant was a railway employee he could avail these advanced technology which is available in Northern Railway hospital, New Delhi, but majority of Indian population live below poverty line and they are provided with the basic prosthetic technology which does not provide the needed features of light weight and high performance prosthetic components.

Prosthetic fitment played a pivotal role in restoring Mr. Sharma’s independence and confidence. He credits the advanced prosthetic technology for making his life easier and allowing him to resume activities he cherished. His ability to drive a car without any change in the vehicle is a testament to his determination and the capabilities of modern prosthetics.

“It was a great experience when I started my journey just like a new born baby, and started one step by one step like falter, after about 20 days I come out on the road and walk in crowded markets, which develop my confidence then I speed up my walk, I got some wound, but I continue and also curing wounds, after fitment of advanced prosthetic I took my car in the ground then vacant road then in to crowded market that was my success, then I go to Jakhoo hanuman temple (about 8100 ft.) Dec.2017 and climbed, then go to the top hill of Nainital climbed there (8200 ft.) and by latest in 2022 I went to Ladakh and climbed so many hilltop (about 14900 ft.), as dancing is my hobby so I start dancing with in the 8 month of fitment of prosthetic. Recently in Aug. .22 to Jan.23 I have explored extreme north TURTUK (LADAKH) TO extreme west NARAYAN SAROVAR extreme south KANYAKUMARI, Now a days I do everything as before amputation, yes the speed has been some less. I think now I have been a special person, better than normal. ”

“The effect of prosthesis on my personal life is very good, I think without prosthesis I will feel like disabled, but these high tech Prosthesis has made my day to day life and daily routine very easy, though some times and some where some limitations but those are very few occasions, I can not think to live without prosthesis, it’s just like my real part of the body. ”

According to the research by (Behera & Dash, 2022), there is a ambiguity in amputees response to the prosthesis they use where some participants feel very negative and ashamed for their prosthesis and try to hide their identity as prosthetic

users; they term the prosthesis as a “plastic leg” or “shoe”. In the same research there were a set of participants who were very positive about their Prosthesis and it is a crucial part of their body as prosthesis had help them in achieving their normal life and restoring their self-esteem, self-image and self-confidence. In the present study the participant speaks about feeling that prosthesis is like a part of his body which bring about his real body, this statement is demonstrates that prosthesis as well as the strong self-determination of the participant has helped him in re-establishing his self-image and self-confidence.

Words of Inspiration

Mr. Sharma’s message to amputees and differently-abled individuals is one of hope and opportunity. He encourages them to see their disabilities as opportunities for personal growth, emphasizing that with determination and the right support, they can achieve their goals and set new milestones.

“This accident taught me a lot, after amputation I could understand the life style, Limitations, and problems of disabled people, which I could not understand without it, Means now I could complete my knowledge of this field also with various other fields, and I achieved one more philosophy of life. I thank to this Govt. of India who has changed the title Differently abled in place of Disabled, and amending the PWD act with various powerful changes, People like me or any type of disability should take it as an opportunity, I never think myself as an amputee, and also the person who does not know about me can not judge that I am amputee, people say to me is there any problem in your legs, when I say that I do not have legs at that time the person surprises and could not believe, I have to show them sometime my prosthetic, My walking is so fine and seamless, I always keep my activity label on the top, yes everything depends on us what we want to do ? once you decide you will achieve it, In my view people like me have more opportunities which they should grave and set some milestones”

According to Brady, (2008) and Jung, et, al (2022), high acceptance of disability and encouragement leads to high self-esteem and confidence, which is in unison to our study as the participant in our study accepted his amputation and took it as an opportunity to achieve new heights. He also speaks about the word disabled being changed to differently abled by the Govt. of India which have had a positive impact on the mind set of not only disabled but have also impacted the societies perspective towards disabled.

Aspirations for the Future

Mr. Sharma’s aspirations for the future include setting benchmarks in various fields, such as long-distance car driving, mountain climbing, rock climbing, dancing, and more. In pursuit of these aspirations, he appeals for corporate sponsorship under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility (CSR), as he believes that such support can be a catalyst for the realization of his goals.

“The human nature is not to stop till last breath, so my aspiration in further life is to set some bench marks in various fields like Car driving, Mountaineering, Rock climbing, Dancing. . . etc , I appeal from here for the

support from various big houses who can provide me sponsorship under corporate social responsibility to achieve my goals. I assure that the support by any means to me will not disappoint to any supporter. ”

4. Conclusion

Mr. Vikrant Sharma's life journey stands as a resonant testament to the invincible human spirit, and the capacity to transform challenges into opportunities for personal growth and unprecedented achievement. The study illuminated the transformative potential of advanced prosthetic technology which along with the courage and determination of Mr. Sharma gave him wing to fly despite all odds. This qualitative study serves as a beacon of inspiration for amputees and other differently-abled individuals, illuminating the path of triumph over adversity. The study emphasizes the profound significance of support, tenacity, and a resilient, optimistic outlook in surmounting life's most daunting obstacles.

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