



PROBLEMS FACED BY PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PERSONS AND THEIR AWARENESS TOWARDS WELFARE MEASURES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT :

The physically challenged persons are one of the excluded sections of the society and also they face number of problems in their daily life. In order to bring them in the main stream both the central as well as the state governments are introducing many welfare measures and schemes. To avail these welfare measures and the schemes, first of all they must aware about the same. The present study is conducted among the physically challenged persons about their problems in the daily life and also their awareness about various government welfare measures. The physically handicapped face problems as they attempt to adjust the demands of living in social environment. Their problems are not only those caused by their disability but also that of adjustment in a world that has apathetic or hostile attitude towards them magnifies their troubles and threatens their very existence as human beings. They face psychological, educational, employment and social problems. Among these, the most difficult is the adjustment to the hostile social forces in the society; disabled person suffers with the erroneous beliefs, which dry up their day-to-day way of life.

KEYWORDS : *Physically Challenged Persons, Problems, Policies, Programmes.*

INTRODUCTION

A physically challenged person is one who suffers from the loss of a limb or deformity in physical or mental capability whether due to nature's foul play or an unexpected unfortunate accident. It is estimated that about 12 millions Indians, about 1.8 percent of Indian population have at least one disability or the other. The physically challenged who are also termed as handicapped, disabled or physically or mentally disadvantaged are having more than one type of physical disability. The number of physically challenged person is increasing every year because of the accidents taking place on roads, railways, even airplanes because of mechanical or human errors in this era of fast developing science and technology. The natural calamities caused by heavy rains, floods and earthquakes also add to the number of the physically challenged.

Throughout centuries, the disabled have been oppressed marginalized and stigmatized in almost all societies. They constitute a section of the population, which is most backward least served and grossly neglected. Person with disability are the poorest of the poor and weakest of the weak, who have been socially, educationally and economically disadvantaged; thus having customarily denied their right to self-assertion, identity and development. Now where is this victimisation more glaring than in matters of education, employment and physical access. Disability is not all alone sometimes impairment and handicap was used interchangeably, but these terms has different meanings and describe different concepts. To promote appropriate use of these terms, in 1980 the World Health Organization established the

international classification of impairment, disability and handicap, which define these concepts: Impairment – refers to the loss or abnormality of psychological, physical, or anatomical structure or function at the system or organ level that may or may not be permanent and that may or may not result in disability. Disability – refers to an individual limitation or restriction of an activity as the result of impairment. Handicap – refers to the disadvantage to the individual resulting from an impairment or disability that presents a barrier to fulfilling a role or reaching a goal.

HISTORY OF SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS IN INDIA

It has been a part of India's Cultural heritage and legacy to help poor and the needy even at a great personal sacrifice. In keeping with this tradition, every possible protection to the physically handicapped was debated by the society. In India we do not find any tangible instances of the inhuman practices of exposure and destruction which characterized the primitive attitude towards the disabled. A foreign writer has stated, "In ancient India, the physically deformed children were cast into the Ganges".

UNO AND THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PERSONS

The whole world is aware of the magnitude of the problems of the physically challenged and the United Nations seized the problems it is, is undertaking studies and research of the causes of various forms of disability and trying to extend its help-financially and humanitarian through its various agencies. The World Disabled Day is observed on the 'third Sunday of March' every year all over the world to make people in different countries aware of the problems of the physically challenged and the sympathy and assistance they deserve and need to cope with and overcome their disabilities to the maximum possible extent.

As per Census 2011, in India, out of the 121 Cr population, about 2.68 Cr persons are 'disabled' which is 2.21% of the total population. In an era where 'inclusive development' is being emphasised as the right path towards sustainable development, focussed initiatives for the welfare of disabled persons are essential. This emphasises the need for strengthening disability statistics in the Country.

Disabled Population in India

Residence	Persons	Males	Females
Rural	18,631,921	10,408,168	8,223,753
Urban	8,178,636	4,578,034	3,600,602
Total	26,810,557	14,986,202	11,824,355

Source: Censuses 2011

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the concern of the centre and state governments about the problems of the physically challenged.
2. To examine the policies and programmes undertaken by the Central and State Government aimed at the welfare of the physically challenged Persons.
3. To assess the attitude of the community and the family towards Physically challenged Persons and understanding their problems and the extent of support extended to them.

METHODOLOGY

The present study based on Secondary Sources, books, Journals, published books, reports of government departments and census, reports of those voluntary organizations engaged in welfare of the physically challenged persons, articles appearing in the press and the journals on the issue. UNO Study Reports, World Bank Report and Study Reports of other International Agencies have also formed part of it.

COMMON PROBLEMS OF THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PERSONS

The existing transportation and infrastructural facilities available to disabled are hardly adequate. Public transport related problem comprises the problems related to design of the vehicles (high and incompatible steps of vehicles from the platform level). Road constraints involve encroachment of bus stops by vendors, temporary structures and parked vehicles stopping of buses far from actual bus bays. The disabled person is largely dependent on a family because they get economically and emotional support from family. The disabled person also gets emotional support from friends and relatives and also gets encouragement. The Government also as part of welfare measure introduced various welfare schemes to benefit physically challenged persons. However, there exists a gap in the utilization of the services. Hence, there is a need to study in detail about the problems, support systems and utilization of rehabilitation measures introduced by various agencies. As a matter of policy, Government has extended the rehabilitation programme in the field of medical, education, psychological support etc., for disabled persons.

SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS FOR PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PERSONS PEOPLE

Physically Challenged Persons sometimes have difficulty doing things and other people may take for granted, such as travelling on public transport, climbing stairs or even using some house hold appliances. However, the greatest challenge that disabled people have had to face has been society's misperception that they are the "breed apart". Historically they have been pitied, ignored, vilified-even hidden away in institutions. Until the second half the 20th century, it was unfortunate today that the disabled people have some abilities, needs and interests as the rest of the populations. Nevertheless, discriminations continued to exist in certain important areas. Some employers were reluctant to take on or promote disabled people; some landlords refused to give the land on rent to them; and courts sometimes deprived them of basic rights, including custody of their children. In recent decades, this situation has undergone some positive changes through adjustments in legislation and public attitudes. Also people with disabilities have lobbied for their rights as full citizens and productive individuals.

PROBLEM OF PHYSICAL MOBILITY

There are hundreds of activities which a person performs from the moment he wakes up in the morning till he goes to sleep at night. The activities comprise everything entailed in human life and relationships. Many of such activities require physical mobility of some degree or the other. A person with a normal body performs these activities without noticing the importance of mobility involved in the process.

EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

Education is a link between medical and vocational rehabilitation which plays a vital role in the social rehabilitation of the disabled. It is more important than that of the muscular strength or swiftness in the movements of the joints in a body. It is that valuable tool with which the handicapped can conquer their disability. In it lies the greatest hope of overcoming physical handicaps. The education of the crippled child must follow the law of compensation i.e., the development of intellectual abilities to compensate for physical inadequacy.

CONSEQUENCES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

To the extent that development efforts are successful in bringing about better nutrition, education, housing, improved sanitary conditions and adequate primary health care, the prospects of preventing impairment and treating disability greatly improve. Progress along these lines may also be especially facilitated in such areas as:

- The training of personnel in general fields such as social assistance, public health, medicine, education and vocational rehabilitation;
- Enhanced capacities for the local production of the appliances and equipment needed by disabled persons;

- The establishment of social services, social security systems, cooperatives and programmes for mutual assistance at the national and community levels;
- Appropriate vocational guidance and work preparation services as well as increased employment opportunities for disabled persons.

Since economic development leads to alterations in the size and distribution of the population, to modifications in life styles and to changes in social structures and relationships, the services needed to deal with human problems are generally not being improved and expanded rapidly enough. Such imbalances between economic and social development add to the difficulties of integrating disabled persons into their communities.

ECONOMIC REHABILITATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Economic rehabilitation of Persons with disabilities comprises both wage employment in organized sector and selfemployment. Supporting structure of services by way of vocational rehabilitation centres and vocational training centres has been developed to ensure that disabled persons in both urban and rural areas have increased opportunities for productive and gainful employment. Strategies for economic empowerment of persons with disabilities highlight (i) Employment in Government Establishments. The PWD Act, 1995 provides for 3% reservation in employment in the establishments of Government of India and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) against identified posts, (ii) Wage employment in Private sector Development of appropriate skills in persons with disabilities has been encouraged for their employability in private sector, (iii) Vocational rehabilitation and training Centres engaged in developing appropriate skills amongst persons with disabilities keeping in view their potential and abilities. Considering rapid growth of employment opportunities in service sector, persons with disabilities has been encouraged to undertake skill training suitable to the market requirement, (iv) Proactive measures like incentives, awards, tax exemptions etc. has been taken into consideration to encourage the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector. (v) Self-employment: Considering slow pace of growth in employment opportunities in the organized sector, self-employment of persons with disabilities will be promoted. This has been done through vocational education and management training. Further, the existing system of providing loans at softer terms from the NHFDC is being improved to make it easily accessible with transparent and efficient procedures of processing.

The socio-economic situation in the country has been changing since the mid-eighties, especially as a result of the New Economic Policy. There is an increasing recognition that economic growth, although essential for dealing with many social problems, often is accompanied by acute social problems in the absence of deliberate social planning. A strategy of overall development should, therefore, include as an essential component, those social welfare activities that help to ensure that national plans and policies are fully responsive to the needs and aspiration of the people.

Physically Challenged Persons have enough potential to contribute to the society and its development provided they are allowed to fully participate through recognition of their rights and dignity. The legislations meant for safeguarding the persons with disabilities and the various policies / schemes / programmes must be able to address the issues of alarming rate of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty among the persons with disabilities. The issue of accessibility correlates the issue of education and employment and economic development of a country. Therefore to incorporate provisions regarding accessibility in legislations and to execute them is the need of the hour, including the removal of discriminatory provisions that are still prevalent in some legislation. However, laws and policies alone may not be enough. Public perception, attitude and awareness have significant role to play. There is a need for social change through public awareness. There should be endeavour for attitudinal changes in the sense of bringing a culture of belonging. The public in general may be empowered and educated to take action and advocate the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities.

WELFARE OF PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PERSONS IN INDIA

India is the largest democratic country in the world and is on its way to become a key player in the global scenario. It is our responsibility to ensure that this developmental cycle touches all the citizens of this country – the able and, especially, the disabled, who are often referred to as the invisible minority. But before we stamp them as minority, let us consider the recent census reports. According to the 2001 census the government figure for the physically handicapped was 2.1% of the entire population. A reserved guess would place that figure between seven to ten crores. The National Policy identifies the Persons With Disabilities (PWD) as necessary and valuable assets of this country and the basic goal is to create an atmosphere for them in conjunction with the basic constitutional rights i.e. equality, freedom, justice and dignity. This will also guarantee equal opportunities for the PWD thereby ensuring the protection of their rights and enabling their full participation in the society.

The primary objectives of the National Policy are:

1. Physical rehabilitation which includes medical treatment, counseling, providing aids and appliances.
2. Educational Rehabilitation which offers vocational and on-hand training.
3. Economic Rehabilitation ensuring a better and dignified life in society. India implemented the CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) act in 2008 which was enhanced by the National Center for promotion of Employment of Disabled People (NCPEDP) and Disabled Rights Group (DRG). The Government has envisaged a number of schemes to promote the standard of life of the PWD in general. Some of these schemes are:

1. Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids/ Appliances (ADIP) involving physical rehabilitation of the PWD by providing them with aids and appliances
2. Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS) a multi-faceted scheme that addressing all the possible aspects of rehabilitation.
3. Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act aimed at providing funds for projects involving construction of public buildings, support the regional institutions that provide service to the PWD and creating awareness.

Some of the steps taken by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Health and Family Welfare in India are:

1. District Rehabilitation Center (DRC) Project started in 1985.
2. Four Regional Rehabilitation Training Centers (RRTC) operative in Mumbai, Chennai, Cuttack and Lucknow under the supervision of the DRCs since 1985.
3. National Information Centre on Disability and Rehabilitation.
4. National council for Handicapped Welfare.
5. National Level Institutes- NIMH, NIHH, NIVH, NIOH and IPH
6. The adoption of the National Policy for PWD in 2005 (discussed before).

It is evident that the government is sincerely putting in effort for the life enrichment of the PWD. But we, the able-bodied also have a certain duty towards the physically handicapped and the disabled other than reserving a seat for them in one corner of public vehicles.

Schemes for Physically Challenged Persons

Section 33 of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) (PWD) Act, 1995 envisages three percent reservations for persons with disability in identified posts in Government establishments.

Under the Scheme of Incentives to the Private Sector for Employment of Physically Challenged Persons, the Government of India provides the employer's contribution for Employees Provident Fund (EPF)

and Employees State Insurance (ESI) for 3 years, for employees with disabilities including visually impaired persons employed in the private sector on or after 01.04.2008, with a monthly salary upto Rs.25, 000.

The National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC) provides concessional credit to Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) for taking up income generating activities by self-employment.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) guarantees employment to rural household adults including differently abled persons. Under National Rural Livelihood Mission(NRLM), a provision of 3% of the total beneficiaries has been made for PwDs.

Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) provides pension to BPL persons with severe or multiple disabilities between the age group of 18 to 79 years @ of Rs. 300 p.m. per beneficiary.

Under Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS), financial assistance is provided through Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for various projects for providing education, vocational training and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

Under the National Scholarship Scheme which is funded from Trust Fund for Empowerment of PwDs financial assistance is provided to students with disabilities to enable them to pursue professional or technical courses from recognized institutes and get employed/self employed. Under the Scheme every year 1000 scholarships are provided to the students with disabilities through out the country. 30% scholarships are reserved for girls. Only Indian nationals are eligible for scholarships.

National Fund has a scholarship scheme for students with disabilities. 500 new scholarships to be awarded each year are equally distributed (125 each) for the four major categories of disabilities viz. (i) Orthopaedic (ii) Visual (iii) Hearing and (iv) Others. 40% of the scholarships in each category are reserved for girls.

Scheme of 'Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship' provides scholarship to students with disability to pursue M.Phil and Phd. programs in higher education. It is implemented by UGC.

Social Welfare department organizes tour every year for three to four days for the physically challenged persons. Only nine respondents have attended such tours. Except one all respondents have received financial assistance, two fifth of respondents have received the identity card but many of them feel it was not much use. All respondents have received 10 kgs of rice per month but they complained that it was not regular. One fourth of the respondents have participated in awareness camp and four respondents have utilized welfare schemes for the professional training for typewriting and computer course. Three fourth of the respondents came to know about various welfare scheme from the Anganwadi workers, Two third of respondents stated that they follow cinema actors as role models in their life.

CONCLUSION

Physically Challenged Persons is a complex social issue and it is increasingly becoming a major concern all over the world. The number of disabled people is increasing across the world due to various reasons. Physically Challenged people comprise a significant minority in most countries and their number also constitutes one of the largest minorities in the world. Traditionally, disability has long been considered to be an index of marginality. They faced direct and indirect discrimination and were not able to enjoy the full spectrum of civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights. Whatever the perception of the society towards the persons with disabilities may be, it has to be fundamentally accepted that disabled people are integral part of our society. No person can in fact claim to live long without experiencing some kind of disability or claim to be completely disable-free. What matters most is that every person must be able to feel that (s)he is part of the society without any kind of bias, prejudice and discrimination. If the society can properly address the concerns of the persons with disability, they too can contribute a lot for the development of the society.

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