



**CHANGING ATTITUDE OF OUR FAST MOVING AND EVOLVING SOCIETY
TOWARDS THE DISABLED PERSONS**

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Abstract

“Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you’re needed by someone” – Martina Navratilova.

It is often believed that people with disability are suffering because of their karma’s sin and the disabled people existed from a long time. Some of the example has been depicted in Mahabharata and Ramayana. People ridicule disabled people for their appearance and their disability. Social Attitude reflected the view that the Persons with disabilities were unhealthy, deviant and incomplete. For Centuries, Society as a whole treated them as an object of pity and fear which become an obstacle in the path of their participation and contribution in the society. As a result in the present scenario they are called Divyanjan instead of handicapped which is one step for changing their position/image in society. People started treating them as human being. Many efforts have been done by the government as well as private organization for making them the integral part of the society. Social Exclusion starts becoming social Inclusion.

Keyword: Persons with disability, attitude, society.

Introduction

A disability may be contribution of all such as physical, mental, emotional and developmental. Disability is a term which covers activity and participation limitations and impairment. Family and society show pity, sympathy, isolation or rejection towards the person with disability. They are treated as outsiders and a distance is maintained by the society. The overall development of disabled person depends upon how they are treated and

encouraged in the society which affects their personality. Disability is not the impairment itself, but rather it is the attitudes and environmental barriers that result in disability. 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. Kothari Commission was the first commissioned who talked about the welfare of the disabled people. Children with disabilities are often 'invisible' to service providers, and they are at greater risk of violence than their non-disabled peers. Disability is a social issue and there is a need that it should be considered and taken care by our Society.

Disability and Hindu mythology

In Hindu mythology, the interpretation of people with disabilities is negative, but also reveals a strong gender bias in terms of the capacities of disabled men and women. In the Hindu myths disabled men are in some cases dominant and competent people. For example the visually impaired king Dritarashtra and the orthopedically impaired Shakuni supported the forces of evil in the Mahabharata war. Such images of powerful but evil and cruel disabled men have been reinforced by historical figures such as Taimur Lang.

Common Attitude

How we judge/evaluate a person, thing or an idea depicts one's attitude. Disability and attitude go hand in hand. Attitude can create or remove hurdles in the life of persons with disabilities. According to Charles Osgood, attitudes can be divided into three dimensions:

Moral Dimension: things evaluated good or bad

Potency Dimension: strong or weak and

Activity Dimension: active or passive.

According to Chan (2002) the relationship with others is an important factor in disabled person's life to become part of the society. Attitudes and reaction to handicap are wide-ranging and complex. Open attitude towards disabled person can help in their inculcation in the society. Disabled persons are asked a lot of curious questions about how they became disabled and how difficult are that for them to cope up with the disability. People feel pity on them and feel uncomfortable as they have the opinion that they cannot share their thought / view with them.

Family's Attitude

Family members play an important role in providing care and support for PWD. PWDs have an increased dependence on their families as there is substantial lack of support in the community. Although parents do not experience disability themselves yet they have to adjust with multiple and conflicting responsibilities of the disabled child. Parents cope up with their

own individual problems with family roles and relations and simultaneously with the disabled child's physical and emotional problems and also deal with medical care. Some parents started over protecting their child out of sympathy. Child with disability increases the financial burden of the family. If the parents are economically stable most of the time it leads to a positive attitude towards the child.

Disability and Healthcare

According to medicine and health disability is defined as the cognitive and behavioral processes that involve favorable/unfavorable response to disability. The attitude of the general public is well documented that negative public attitudes promotes low expectations, discriminatory behaviors, and marginalization of PWD, whereas positive attitudes lead to acceptance of PWD and promote integration into society.

Attitude of society towards persons with disability

Murphy (1990) explains disability as a 'disease of social relation' and social relations between disabled and the able bodied are tense and problematic. They face a lot of prejudice, discrimination and avoidance in the society which often lead to the lack of esteem, confidence, and dignity and make them question when they even existed. Disabled Section are marginalized by the normal people. Marginalization in return creates a vicious circle around them and makes them isolated and cutoff from the society. Disability is erroneously associated with evil. These mere misconceptions have produced negative attitudes that stem from lack of proper understanding of disability and how they affect functioning. The persons with disabilities are "less handicapped by their own disability than by the social attitude" (Silver, 1957). More than physical disability the individual disabled face more problems in the societal attitude and behavior.

Institutional Attitude

Education enhances the overall development of a person and makes a complete Human being. Schools play an important role in a disabled person's life. Architectural barriers, Lack of Awareness, Financial Issues, teasing from friends, health related problems are various reasons due to which they aren't able to complete their Education. The nature of student's disability creates a stigma and it impacts the attitude of teachers as well as the peer's group attitude. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) has made a concerted effort to promote the inclusion of children with special needs to mainstream the society. In inclusion the responsibility on the school to make the social environment least restrictive and not conducive for learning for these children IEDC i.e. Integrated Education for Disabled Children is another effort made for the integration of disabled children with the normal

children. In Integration the Children with Disabilities are placed with the regular children in school and adapt to its environment. SSA and IEDC are the steps in this direction.

Process of Change of Attitude

Disability has always existed in our society, only the attitude of society towards disabled has undergone changes in our time. UNICEF also works with governments to ensure that family members of persons with disabilities, who are caretakers, and children with disabilities themselves, receive support from the State for disability-related expenses, sufficient training, counseling, financial help and care. They also assist efforts to ensure that all programs, including recreational programs, public services and other facilities are accessible.

“I was slightly brain damaged at birth, and I want people like me to see that they shouldn’t let a disability get in the way. I want to raise awareness – I want to turn my disability into ability.”- Susan Boyle

Government of India has taken steps in this direction and launched Schemes like Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan for universal accessibility of disabled people, Disha for early intervention and Readiness School, Gyan Prabha for Education support. Government is taking steps along with that Private organization, NGO are working too for the upliftment of Disabled people and changing attitude of normal people regarding disability. Stephen Hawking (the Physicist) was honored and respected all around the world despite of so many disabilities. Changes can be observed as Paralympics Player’s like Devendra Jhajharia, Deepa Malik are appreciated for their sports spirit and their achievement. The Changes may be slow and steady but can be observed in the upcoming years.

Conclusion

“I do not have a disability, I have gift! Others may see it as disability, but I see it as a challenge. This Challenge is a gift because I have to become stronger to get around it, and smarter to figure out how to use it; others should be so lucky.” - Shane E. Bryan

The Society needs to change its perspective of seeing Persons with disabilities. They are not weak and disabled but they need some help to cope up with the difficulties that they are dealing with. The people’s attitude around them makes a lot of difference in constructing and deconstructing the life of the PWD. Parents, Peer Group, Religion, Culture and Educational Institute needs to be the backbone of the disabled person. Rather than ridicule them and feel pity on them they should guide them in order to live a Respected and dignified life as they deserve to live like a human being. Government is taking steps on their part and every individual should take effective measure for changing the attitude of our society towards disabled people so that they can turn their disability into ability and can succeed.

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