

# **Disability and Utility: Social Exclusion and Inclusion**

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It interesting to note that the United Nation celebrated disabled day on third December, 2013. The U.N. selected a very relevant theme for the day. The theme was Break 'Barrier, open doors: For an Inclusive Society'. When we apply this theme to Indian social and political structure, we do not see a flattering picture. It is a very sad state of affairs that in India, the disabled are the most marginalized and scattered minority. As far as their number is concerned, it is not very less. According to 2001 census, India has got around 21 million people who suffer from some kind of disability. Though it is a large number, it is unfortunate that they are neglected by society and the state.

Though a few people have been working in key position in Government sector, the picture is grim at large. The disabled of India has not got equal opportunity, let alone equality of condition. They had to fight for their very basic rights like anything in 1970s and 1980s. For example, there were issues about education and employment but other issues were also there during these years. One very interesting example I still remember. The students of blind school of King's Way Camp, Delhi, went on strikes after every summer vacation from 1981 to 1984. Their demands were very small in nature. The demands included sufficient food, proper school dress and basic educational facilities. It is an unfortunate that the authority turned a blind eye to their demands. The students at this school, still lack the basic educational infrastructure, hygienic living conditions and food.

After a long struggle, Persons With Disability (PWD) Act saw day light in 1995 and the disabled got some basic rights on paper at least. Though the importance of the act can not be ignored but it has failed to bring the persons with disability into the main stream. Only a few people have got jobs due the PWD Act.

The main challenges, which the disabled class is facing in India comes from society and Government as well. The disabled face exclusion and discrimination at both levels: society and work places. The Indian

state has failed to include the majority of disabled citizens in the mainstream. It is surprising that the society has a sick mindset towards disabled even 21 century.

I would like to mention some facts about the metro services which are based on the most modern system. There is no facility for the disabled in the real sense of the term. It is interesting to note that many visually challenged people have fallen into Metro line in recent times and they have hurt themselves like anything. The disabled have gone to the appropriate authority to make a complaint about this sad arrangement but no body has paid due attention to it.

Now, question arises as to how to change the destiny of the disabled and make them a part of society in a proper way? There are different models to solve the problem of the disabled. The first model is known as medical model which focuses upon treatment and rehabilitation. The second model is social model which gives stress upon social attitude, culture and welfare schemes. In my opinion there should be the third model. I call it the utility model. Under this model, I think that the disabled should be made human resources, and society and the Government must take steps to develop their human capacities. But the grim fact of present time is that due to sick mindset of the community, many people have been trying to make the disabled useless at work place by not giving them proper opportunity to work. They are knowingly place in those places where they can not perform their potentialities. I regard this another kind of politics played by so called elites to exclude the disabled from the system and society. It is unfortunate that it is not happening only to the disabled but the same method of discrimination is being applied to women, Scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. So, the utility model is very essential if we have to make the lives of handicaps comfortable, and their utility depends upon the attitude of society and the opportunity given by the Government. In the end, I would like to say that charity, lip service and hypocrisy of society will not simply work. The disabled should get self-esteem, respect and self worth so that they do not become a burden on society but make contribution to the world of which they are capable of doing. The need of the our is that society and political community should make genuine efforts to abolish barriers to include the disabled people in the mainstream of society. The disabled should also shoulder the responsibilities to fulfill their obligations as genuine citizens to become the part of Indian societal structure.

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