

Welcoming Diversity: From Exclusion to Inclusion

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 asserted that: "Everyone has a right to education." Disabled children and adults are however, frequently denied this fundamental right. This is often based on an attitude that disabled people do not count as full human beings, and so are somehow the exception in terms of universal rights. Exclusion from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of communities has been one of the greatest problems facing differently abled in society. Such societies are neither efficient nor desirable. Over half a billion persons are disabled as a result of mental, physical or sensory impairment. These individuals are often limited by both physical and social barriers which exclude them from society and prevent them from actively participating in the development of their nations. Approximately 80 per cent of the world's disabled population lives in developing countries. It was believed that disabled people brought bad luck because they had been cursed or had a spell placed upon them by witchcraft. They were often viewed as not fully human or possessed by evil spirits. This made it easy to make fun of or ridicule them. They became the butt of jokes and symbols for all the ills of the world. Clowns, court jesters and 'freak shows' are illustrations of this. There are many cultural and literary manifestations of this thinking which are still being reinforced in myths, legend or literature. Even modern films, comics and television programmes draw upon and reinforce these negative stereotypes. Stereotypes are bundles of negative and untrue perceptions which often precondition how people treat and respond to disabled people. After a long struggle the world is now moving towards accepting, responding and respecting differently abled.

From Exclusion to Inclusion:

Differently abled were denied and excluded from society. Later their acceptance was started but it was in the form of segregation. The understanding of disability lead to their integration and the global knowledge of disability as diversity lead them towards inclusion. The journey of differently abled had a beginning from denial of society- excluded from society. They were neglected from society;

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considered as less than human being. It was the time of asylums when as a disabled, their disability was understood as the cause of their problems. They were either killed or excluded from society. Later, with the emergence of humanitarian philosophy their acceptance was started, but they were segregated from society, kept away from society. They were treated in asylums. After the development of understanding of disability there was a significant towards integration of differently abled. But their participation was still limited by societal attitude. A lot of work has been done to accept that disability is different. After the innovation and development of new technology and understanding the attitude was changed. Disability is not a disease. In the current the knowledge of disability disability as part of human diversity and humanity is important. As disability is a universal feature of the human condition, it is not undesirable. It is emphasized on including and valuing all in the sphere of society. Disability is different, not less. It is not a defect or a weakness. It is a different way of being. The purpose of disability is to help people to live with dignity and to participate in society. It is not to be excluded from society. It is to be included in society. It is to be valued in society. It is to be accepted in society. It is to be embraced in society. It is to be included in society. It is to be valued in society. It is to be accepted in society. It is to be embraced in society.

Models that Explain the Journey from Exclusion to Inclusion:

The Charity Model:

The charity approach gave birth to a model of mental care, ranging from isolation and the marginalization of people with disabilities. Unfortunately, in some contemporary parts of the world the reflection of this model can still be traced. For instance, the findings of an investigator project undertaken by the National Human Rights Commission of India between 1997 and 2000 revealed that a large number of mental health institutions today are still being managed and administered on the custodial model of care, characterized by prison like structures with high walls, barbed wire, locked wards and locked cells.

The Bio-centric Model:

As medical science developed it was applied to disabled people with a view to 'curing' them or making them 'normal'. The trouble was and often still is that medical science did not know how to get rid of many types of impairments. However, medical knowledge has massively increased in the last 120 years. This medical model approach focused on the idea of mental function of disabled people and led to them being viewed as negative or in deficit, needing to be made normal. The only trouble was that in the majority of cases this approach did not

work. Even where it did work, the disabled person was seen as a collection of symptoms to be treated or subjected to therapy, with their ordinary life put on hold. What disabled people 'could not do' led to their being categorised by type and degree of impairment and as a result labelled, separated and related to differently abled from non-disabled people. This attitude often reinforced and was grafted on to the range of persistent traditional views outlined above and became a potent means of oppression.

The Functional Model:

In the functional model, entitlement to rights is differentiated according to judgments of individual incapacity and the extent to which a person is perceived as being independent to exercise his/her rights. For example, a child's right to education is dependent on whether or not the child can access the school and participate in the classroom, rather than the obligation being on the school system becoming accessible to children with disabilities.

The Human Rights Model:

The human rights model positions disability as an important dimension of human culture, and it affirms that all human beings are born with certain inalienable rights. Over the last 35 years disabled people themselves began to challenge the consequences of medical model thinking on their lives. This model approach recognises the need to: change people's thinking about disabled people; alter the environment to make it accessible and transform organisations and their policies, practices and procedures.

Factors Responsible for this Journey towards Inclusion:

1. **Philosophical Approach-** It emphasized that all human beings are born equal and they should be united for the welfare of mankind. As Roosevelt said “the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much but it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”
2. **Psychological Approach-** It held the view that disability is not the restriction, but it is individual differences which must be celebrated. It views disability as diversity that should be promoted and celebrated.
3. **Sociological Approach-** It has its humanistic approach as all the human being in society should be given equal opportunities and should not be discriminated on the basis of any deformities.

4. Constitutional Provision- It legitimated the rights and opportunities of disabled person. It ensures equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation.
6. International Legislations: International legislations globally legitimated the rights and ensured the participation of differently abled in inclusive education.
5. Awareness Programme- It changed the view of people towards disabled. Bringing positive attitude towards disability that is the most important factor towards the emancipation of disability as diversity and disabled as differently abled.
6. Advocacy- Advocacy of the promotion and empowerment of disabled person brought a significant change in the attitude of society.
7. Education- Education played an important role in changing the attitude towards disabled. It has strengthened differently abled. It has changed the view of society towards disability from burden to contributing member.
8. Development in Technology- It has brought confidence in differently abled changing the attitude towards disabled. It has enabled and brought access to differently abled.
9. Understanding of Cultural Diversity: The understanding of cultural diversity as universal phenomena has led to the acceptance of differences as diversity.
10. Willingness to be a Welfare Society: The humanitarian philosophy is the advancement of development of society ultimately leads the society to be welfare state where each and all may share equal opportunities, equal rights and equity.

Conclusion:

Thus, we see that there has been an evolutionary process in the journey of differently abled *from cage beds to inclusion*. In this concern “*the shift from charity thinking to social and human rights thinking*” has been indispensable. The philosophical, psychological and sociological approaches have paved the path of the journey towards a positive attitude towards differently abled. Since the scenario has been changing but still there needs to be done lot to have a global approach towards making inclusive society- towards welcoming diversity.

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